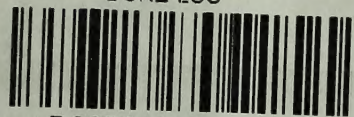


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AN
EXPOSITION
OF THE
OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT:

WHEREIN

EACH CHAPTER IS SUMMED UP IN ITS CONTENTS: THE SACRED TEXT INSERTED AT LARGE,
IN DISTINCT PARAGRAPHS; EACH PARAGRAPH REDUCED TO ITS PROPER
HEADS: THE SENSE GIVEN, AND LARGELY ILLUSTRATED;

WITH

PRACTICAL REMARKS AND OBSERVATIONS.

BY

MATTHEW HENRY,

LATE MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.

NEW EDITION, CAREFULLY REVISED AND CORRECTED.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

VOL. III.—PSALMS TO ISAIAH.

FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY.

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JANUARY 18, 1891

REPORT

OF THE

COMMISSIONERS

OF THE LAND OFFICE

IN RESPONSE TO A RESOLUTION PASSED BY THE SENATE

APRIL 18, 1890

ALBANY

AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE BOOK OF

P S A L M S.

WE have now before us one of the choicest and most excellent parts of all the Old Testament; nay, so much is there in it of CHRIST and his gospel, as well as of God and his law, that it has been called *the abstract, or summary, of both Testaments*. The History of Israel, which we were long upon, led us to camps and council-boards, and there entertained and instructed us in the knowledge of God. The book of Job brought us into the schools, and treated us with profitable disputations concerning God and his providence. But this book brings us into the sanctuary, draws us off from converse with men, with the politicians, philosophers, or disputers of this world, and directs us into communion with God, by solacing and reposing our souls in him, lifting up and letting out our hearts towards him. Thus may we be in the mount with God; and we understand not our interests if we say not, *It is good to be here*. Let us consider,

I. The title of this book. It is called, 1. *The Psalms*; under that title it is referred to, Luke xxiv. 44. The Hebrew calls it *Tehillim*, which properly signifies *Psalms of praise*, because many of them are such; but *Psalms* is a more general word, meaning all metrical compositions fitted to be sung, which may as well be historical, doctrinal, or supplicatory, as laudatory. Though singing be properly the voice of joy, yet the intention of songs is of a much greater latitude, to assist the memory, and both to express and to excite all the other affections as well as this of joy. The priests had a mournful muse as well as joyful ones; and the divine institution of singing psalms is thus largely intended; for we are directed not only to praise God, but to teach and admonish ourselves and one another *in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs*, Col. iii. 16. 2. It is called *the Book of Psalms*; so it is quoted by St. Peter, Acts i. 20. It is a collection of psalms, of all the psalms that were divinely inspired, which, though composed at several times and upon several occasions, are here put together without any reference to or dependence upon one another; thus they were preserved from being scattered and lost, and were in so much greater readiness for the service of the church. See what a good Master we serve, and what pleasantness there is in wisdom's ways, when we are not only commanded to sing at our work, and have cause enough given us to do so, but have words also put in our mouths and songs prepared to our hands.

II. The author of this book. It is, no doubt, derived originally from the blessed Spirit. They are spiritual songs, words which the Holy Ghost taught. The penman of most of them was David the son of Jesse, who is therefore called *the sweet psalmist of Israel*, 2 Sam. xxiii. 1. Some that have not his name in their titles yet are expressly ascribed to him elsewhere, as Ps. ii. (Acts iv. 25) and Ps. xvi. and cv. (1 Chron. xvi.). One psalm is expressly said to be *the prayer of Moses* (Ps. xc.); and that some of the psalms were penned by Asaph is intimated, 2 Chron. xxix. 30, where they are said to *praise the Lord in the words of David and Asaph*, who is there called a *seer* or *prophet*. Some of the psalms seem to have been penned long after, as Ps. cxxxvii., at the time of the captivity in Babylon; but the far greater part of them were certainly penned by David himself, whose genius lay towards poetry and music, and who was raised up, qualified, and animated, for the establishing of the ordinance of singing psalms in the church of God, as Moses and Aaron were, in their day, for the settling of the ordinances of sacrifice; theirs is superseded, but his remains, and will to the end of time, when it shall be swallowed up

in the songs of eternity. Herein David was a type of Christ, who descended from him, not from Moses, because he came to take away sacrifice (the family of Moses was soon lost and extinct), but to establish and perpetuate joy and praise; for of the family of David in Christ there shall be no end.

III. The scope of it. It is manifestly intended, 1. To assist the exercises of natural religion, and to kindle in the souls of men those devout affections which we owe to God as our Creator, owner, ruler, and benefactor. The book of Job helps to prove our first principles of the divine perfections and providence; but this helps to improve them in prayers and praises, and professions of desire towards him, dependence on him, and an entire devotedness and resignation to him. Other parts of scripture show that God is infinitely above man, and his sovereign Lord; but this shows us that he may, notwithstanding, be conversed with by us sinful worms of the earth; and there are ways in which, if it be not our own fault, we may keep up communion with him in all the various conditions of human life. 2. To advance the excellencies of revealed religion, and in the most pleasing powerful manner to recommend it to the world. There is indeed little or nothing of the ceremonial law in all the book of *Psalms*. Though sacrifice and offering were yet to continue many ages, yet they are here represented as things which God did not desire (Ps. xl. 6, li. 16), as things comparatively little, and which in time were to vanish away. But the word and law of God, those parts of it which are moral and of perpetual obligation, are here all along magnified and made honourable, nowhere more. And Christ, the crown and centre of revealed religion, the foundation, corner, and top-stone, of that blessed building, is here clearly spoken of in type and prophecy, his sufferings and the glory that should follow, and the kingdom that he should set up in the world, in which God's covenant with David, concerning his kingdom, was to have its accomplishment. What a high value does this book put upon the word of God, his statutes and judgments, his covenant and the great and precious promises of it; and how does it recommend them to us as our guide and stay, and our heritage for ever!

IV. The use of it. All scripture, being given by inspiration of God, is profitable to convey divine light into our understandings; but this book is of singular use with that to convey divine life and power, and a holy warmth, into our affections. There is no one book of scripture that is more helpful to the devotions of the saints than this, and it has been so in all ages of the church, ever since it was written and the several parts of it were delivered to the chief musician for the service of the church. 1. It is of use to be sung. Further than David's psalms we may go, but we need not, for hymns and spiritual songs. What the rules of the Hebrew metre were even the learned are not certain. But these psalms ought to be rendered according to the metre of every language, at least so as that they may be sung for the edification of the church. And methinks it is a great comfort to us, when we are singing David's psalms, that we are offering the very same praises to God that were offered to him in the days of David and the other godly kings of Judah. So rich, so well made, are these divine poems, that they can never be exhausted, can never be worn thread-bare. 2. It is of use to be read and opened by the ministers of Christ as containing great and excellent truths, and rules concerning good and evil. Our Lord Jesus expounded the psalms to his disciples, the gospel psalms, and opened their understandings (for he had the key of David) to understand them, Luke xxiv. 44. 3. It is of use to be read and meditated upon by all good people. It is a full fountain, out of which we may all be drawing water with joy. (1.) The Psalmist's experiences are of great use for our direction, caution, and encouragement. In telling us, as he often does, what passed between God and his soul, he lets us know what we may expect from God, and what he will expect, and require, and graciously accept, from us. David was a man after God's own heart, and therefore those who find themselves in some measure according to his heart have reason to hope that they are renewed by the grace of God, after the image of God, and may have much comfort in the testimony of their consciences for them that they can heartily say *Amen* to David's prayers and praises. (2.) Even the Psalmist's expressions too are of great use; and by them the Spirit helps our praying infirmities, because we know not what to pray for as we ought. In all our approaches to God, as well as in our first returns to God, we are directed to *take with us words* (Hos. xiv. 2), these words, words which the Holy Ghost teaches. If we make David's psalms familiar to us, as we ought to do, whatever errand we have at the throne of grace, by way of confession, petition, or thanksgiving, we may thence be assisted in the delivery of it; whatever devout affection is working in us, holy desire or hope, sorrow or joy, we may there find apt words wherewith to clothe it, sound speech which cannot be condemned. It will be good to collect the most proper and lively expressions of devotion which we find here, and to methodize them, and reduce them to the several heads of prayer, that they may be the more ready to us. Or we may take sometimes one choice psalm and sometimes another, and pray it over, that is, enlarge upon each verse in our own thoughts, and offer up our meditations to God as they arise from the expressions we find there. The learned Dr

Hammond, in his preface to his paraphrase on the Psalms (sect. 29), says, "That going over a few psalms with these interpositions of mental devotion, suggested, animated, and maintained, by the native life and vigour which is in the psalms, is much to be preferred before the saying over of the whole Psalter, since nothing is more fit to be averted in religious offices than their degenerating into heartless dispirited recitations." If, as St. Austin advises, we form our spirit by the affection of the psalm, we may then be sure of acceptance with God in using the language of it. Nor is it only our devotion, and the affections of our mind, that the book of Psalms assists, teaching us how to offer praise so as to glorify God, but it is also a directory to the actions of our lives, and teaches us how to order our conversation aright, so as that, in the end, we may see the salvation of God, Ps. l. 23. The Psalms were thus serviceable to the Old-Testament church, but to us Christians they may be of more use than they could be to those who lived before the coming of Christ; for, as Moses's sacrifices, so David's songs, are expounded and made more intelligible by the gospel of Christ, which lets us within the veil; so that if to David's prayers and praises we add St. Paul's prayers in his epistles, and the new songs in the Revelation, we shall be thoroughly furnished for this good work; for the scripture, perfected, makes the man of God perfect.

As to the division of this book, we need not be solicitous; there is no connexion (or very seldom) between one psalm and another, nor any reason discernible for the placing of them in the order wherein we here find them; but it seems to be ancient, for that which is now the second psalm was so in the apostles' time, Acts xiii. 33. The vulgar Latin joins the 9th and 10th together; all popish authors quote by that, so that, thenceforward, throughout the book, their number is one short of our's; our xi. is their x. our cxix. their cxviii. But then they divide the 147th into two, and so make up the number of 150. Some have endeavoured to reduce the psalms to proper heads, according to the matter of them, but there is often such a variety of matter in one and the same psalm that this cannot be done with any certainty. But the seven penitential Psalms have been in a particular manner singled out by the devotions of many. They are reckoned to be Ps. vi., xxxii., xxxviii., li., cii., cxxx., and cxlii. The Psalms were divided into five books, each concluding with *Amen*, *Hallelujah*; the first ending with Ps. xli., the second with Ps. lxxii., the third with Ps. lxxxix., the fourth with Ps. cvi., the fifth with Ps. cl. Others divide them into three fifties; others into sixty parts, two for every day of the month, one for the morning, the other for the evening. Let good Christians divide them for themselves, so as may best increase their acquaintance with them, that they may have them at hand upon all occasions and may sing them in the spirit and with the understanding.

PSALM I.

This is a psalm of instruction concerning good and evil, setting before us life and death, the blessing and the curse, that we may take the right way which leads to happiness and avoid that which will certainly end in our misery and ruin. The different character and condition of godly people and wicked people, those that serve God and those that serve him not, is here plainly stated in a few words; so that every man, if he will be faithful to himself, may here see his own face and then read his own doom.

I. That division of the children of men into saints and sinners, righteous and unrighteous, the children of God and the children of the wicked one, as it is ancient, ever since the struggle began between sin and grace, the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, so it is lasting, and will survive all other divisions and subdivisions of men into high and low, rich and poor, bond and free; for by this men's everlasting state will be determined, and the distinction will last as long as heaven and hell. This psalm shows us, I. The holiness and happiness of a godly man, ver. 1—3. II. The sinfulness and misery of a wicked man, ver. 4, 5. III. The ground and reason of both, ver. 6. Whoever collected the psalms of David (probably it was Ezra) with good reason put this psalm first, as a preface to the rest, because it is absolutely necessary to the acceptance of our devotions that we be righteous before God (for it is only the prayer of the upright that is his delight), and therefore that we be right in our notions of blessedness and in our choice of the way that leads to it. Those are not fit to put up good prayers who do not walk in good ways.

BLESSED is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. 2 But his delight is in the

law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

The psalmist begins with the character and condition of a godly man, that those may first take the comfort of that to whom it belongs. Here is,

I. A description given of the godly man's spirit and way, by which we are to try ourselves. The Lord knows those that are his by name, but we must know them by their character; for that is agreeable to a state of probation, that we may study to answer to the character, which is indeed both the command of the law which we are bound in duty to obey and the condition of the promise which we are bound in interest to fulfil. The character of a good man is here given by the

rules he chooses to walk by and to take his measures from. What we take at our setting out, and at every turn, for the guide of our conversation, whether the course of this world or the word of God, is of material consequence. An error in the choice of our standard and leader is original and fatal; but, if we be right here, we are in a fair way to do well.

1. A godly man, that he may avoid the evil, utterly renounces the companionship of evil-doers, and will not be led by them (v. 1): *He walks not in the council of the ungodly, &c.* This part of his character is put first, because those that will keep the commandments of their God must say to evil-doers, *Depart from us* (cxix. 115), and departing from evil is that in which wisdom begins. (1.) He sees evil-doers round about him; the world is full of them; they walk on every side. They are here described by three characters, *ungodly, sinners, and scornful*. See by what steps men arrive at the height of impiety. *Nemo repente fit turpissimus*—None reach the height of vice at once. They are *ungodly* first, casting off the fear of God and living in the neglect of their duty to him: but they rest not there. When the services of religion are laid aside, they come to be *sinners*, that is, they break out into open rebellion against God and engage in the service of sin and Satan. Omissions make way for commissions, and by these the heart is so hardened that at length they come to be *scorners*, that is, they openly defy all that is sacred, scoff at religion, and make a jest of sin. Thus is the way of iniquity down-hill; the bad grow worse, sinners themselves become tempters to others and advocates for Baal. The word which we translate *ungodly* signifies such as are unsettled, aim at no certain end and walk by no certain rule, but are at the command of every lust and at the beck of every temptation. The word for *sinners* signifies such as are determined for the practice of sin and set it up as their trade. The *scornful* are those that set *their mouths against the heavens*. These the good man sees with a sad heart; they are a constant vexation to his righteous soul. But, (2.) He shuns them wherever he sees them. He does not do as they do; and, that he may not, he does not converse familiarly with them. [1.] He does *not walk in the counsel of the ungodly*. He is not present at their councils, nor does he advise with them; though they are ever so witty, and subtle, and learned, if they are ungodly, they shall not be the men of his counsel. He does not consent to them, nor *say as they say*, Luke xxiii. 51. He does not take his measures from their principles, nor act according to the advice which they give and take. The *ungodly* are forward to give their advice against religion, and it is managed so artfully that we have reason to think ourselves happy if we escape being tainted and ensnared by it. [2.] He *stands not in the way of sinners*;

he avoids doing as they do; their way shall not be his way; he will not come into it, much less will he continue in it, as the sinner does, who *sets himself in a way that is not good*, xxxvi. 4. He avoids (as much as may be) being where they are. That he may not imitate them, he will not associate with them, nor choose them for his companions. He does not stand in their way, to be picked up by them (Prov. vii. 8), but keeps as far from them as from a place or person infected with the plague, for fear of the contagion, Prov. iv. 14, 15. He that would be kept from harm must keep out of harm's way. [3.] He *sits not in the seat of the scornful*; he does not repose himself with those that sit down secure in their wickedness and please themselves with the searedness of their own consciences. He does not associate with those that sit in close cabal to find out ways and means for the support and advancement of the devil's kingdom, or that sit in open judgment, magisterially to condemn the generation of the righteous. The seat of the drunkards is the *seat of the scornful*, lxi. 12. Happy is the man that never sits in it, Hos vii. 5.

2. A godly man, that he may do that which is good and cleave to it, submits to the guidance of the word of God and makes that familiar to him, v. 2. This is that which keeps him out of the way of the ungodly and fortifies him against their temptations. *By the words of thy lips I have kept me from the path of the deceiver*, xvii. 4. We need not court the fellowship of sinners, either for pleasure or for improvement, while we have fellowship with the word of God and with God himself in and by his word. *When thou awakest it shall talk with thee* Prov. vi. 22. We may judge of our spiritual state by asking, "What is the law of God to us? What account do we make of it? What place has it in us?" See here, (1.) The entire affection which a good man has for the law of God: *His delight is in it*. He delights in it, though it be a law, a yoke, because it is the law of God, which is holy, just, and good, which he freely consents to, and so delights in, *after the inner man*, Rom. vii. 16, 22. All who are well pleased that there is a God must be well pleased that there is a Bible, a revelation of God, of his will, and of the only way to happiness in him. (2.) The intimate acquaintance which a good man keeps up with the word of God. *In that law doth he meditate day and night*; and by this it appears that his delight is in it, for what we love we love to think of, cxix. 97. To meditate in God's word is to discourse with ourselves concerning the great things contained in it, with a close application of mind, a fixedness of thought, till we be suitably affected with those things and experience the savour and power of them in our hearts. This we must do *day and night*; we must have a constant habitual regard to the word of God as the rule of our actions and the

spring of our comforts, and we must have it in our thoughts, accordingly, upon every occasion that occurs, whether night or day. No time is amiss for meditating on the word of God, nor is any time unseasonable for those visits. We must not only set ourselves to meditate on God's word morning and evening, at the entrance of the day and of the night, but these thoughts should be interwoven with the business and converse of every day and with the repose and slumbers of every night. *When I awake I am still with thee.*

II. An assurance given of the godly man's happiness, with which we should encourage ourselves to answer the character of such. 1. In general, he is *blessed*, v. 1. God blesses him, and that blessing will make him happy. Blessednesses are to him, blessings of all kinds, of the upper and nether springs, enough to make him completely happy; none of the ingredients of happiness shall be wanting to him. When the psalmist undertakes to describe a blessed man, he describes a good man; for, after all, those only are happy, truly happy, that are holy, truly holy; and we are more concerned to know the way to blessedness than to know wherein that blessedness will consist. Nay, goodness and holiness are not only the way to happiness (Rev. xxii. 14) but happiness itself; supposing there were not another life after this, yet that man is a happy man that keeps in the way of his duty. 2. His blessedness is here illustrated by a similitude (v. 3): *He shall be like a tree*, fruitful and flourishing. This is the effect, (1.) Of his pious practice; he meditates in the law of God, turns that *in succum et sanguinem—into juice and blood*, and that makes him like a tree. The more we converse with the word of God the better furnished we are for every good word and work. Or, (2.) Of the promised blessing; he is blessed of the Lord, and therefore *he shall be like a tree*. The divine blessing produces real effects. It is the happiness of a godly man, [1.] That he is planted by the grace of God. These trees were by nature wild olives, and will continue so till they are grafted anew, and so planted by a power from above. Never any good tree grew of itself; it is the *planting of the Lord*, and therefore he must in it be glorified. Isa. lxi. 3, *The trees of the Lord are full of sap*. [2.] That he is placed by the means of grace, here called the *rivers of water*, those rivers which *make glad the city of our God* (xli. 4); from these a good man receives supplies of strength and vigour, but in secret undiscerned ways. [3.] That his practices shall be fruit, abounding to a good account, Phil. iv. 17. To those whom God first blessed he said, *Be fruitful* (Gen. i. 22), and still the comfort and honour of fruitfulness are a recompence for the labour of it. It is expected from those who enjoy the mercies of grace that, both in the temper of their minds and in the tenour

of their lives, they comply with the intentions of that grace, and then they bring forth fruit. And, be it observed to the praise of the great dresser of the vineyard, they bring forth their fruit (that which is required of them) *in due season*, when it is most beautiful and most useful, improving every opportunity of doing good and doing it in its proper time. [4.] That his profession shall be preserved from blemish and decay: *His leaf also shall not wither*. As to those who bring forth only the leaves of profession, without any good fruit, even their leaf will wither and they shall be as much ashamed of their profession as ever they were proud of it; but, if the word of God rule in the heart, that will keep the profession green, both to our comfort and to our credit; the laurels thus won shall never wither. [5.] That prosperity shall attend him wherever he goes, soul-prosperity. *Whatever he does*, in conformity to the law, it *shall prosper* and succeed to his mind, or above his hope.

In singing these verses, being duly affected with the malignant and dangerous nature of sin, the transcendent excellencies of the divine law, and the power and efficacy of God's grace, from which our fruit is found, we must teach and admonish ourselves, and one another, to watch against sin and all approaches towards it, to converse much with the word of God, and abound in the fruit of righteousness; and, in praying over them, we must seek to God for his grace both to fortify us against every evil word and work and to furnish us for every good word and work.

4 The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Here is, I. The description of the ungodly given, v. 4. 1. In general, they are the reverse of the righteous, both in character and condition: *They are not so*. The LXX. emphatically repeat this. *Not so the ungodly: they are not so*; they are led by the counsel of the wicked, in the way of sinners; to the seat of the scornful; they have no delight in the law of God, nor ever think of it; they bring forth no fruit but grapes of Sodom; they cumber the ground. 2. In particular, whereas the righteous are like valuable, useful, fruitful trees, *they are like the chaff which the wind drives away*, the very lightest of the chaff, the dust which the owner of the floor desires to have driven away, as not capable of being put to any use. Would you value them? Would you weigh them? They are like chaff, of no worth at all in God's account, how highly soever they

may value themselves. Would you know the temper of their minds? They are light and vain; they have no substance in them, no solidity; they are easily driven to and fro by every wind and temptation, and have no steadfastness. Would you know their end? The wrath of God will drive them away in their wickedness, as the wind does the chaff, which is never gathered nor looked after more. The chaff may be, for a while, among the wheat; but he is coming *whose fan is in his hand* and who will *thoroughly purge his floor*. Those that by their own sin and folly make themselves as chaff will be found so before the whirlwind and fire of divine wrath (xxxv. 5), so unable to stand before it or to escape it, Isa. xvii. 13.

II. The doom of the ungodly read, v. 5.

1. They will be cast, upon their trial, as traitors convicted: *They shall not stand in the judgment*, that is, they shall be found guilty, shall hang down the head with shame and confusion, and all their pleas and excuses will be overruled as frivolous. There is a judgment to come, in which every man's present character and work, though ever so artfully concealed and disguised, shall be truly and perfectly discovered, and appear in their own colours, and accordingly every man's future state will be, by an irreversible sentence, determined for eternity. The ungodly must appear in that judgment, to receive according to the things done in the body. They may hope to come off, nay, to come off with honour, but their hope will deceive them: *They shall not stand in the judgment*, so plain will the evidence be against them and so just and impartial will the judgment be upon it. 2. They will be for ever shut out from the society of the blessed. *They shall not stand in the congregation of the righteous*, that is, in the judgment (so some), that court wherein the saints, as assessors with Christ, shall judge the world, those holy myriads with which he shall come to execute judgment upon all, Jude 14; 1 Cor. vi. 2. Or in heaven. There will be seen, shortly, a general assembly of the church of the first-born, a congregation of the righteous, of all the saints, and none but saints, and saints made perfect, such a congregation of them as never was in this world, 2 Thess. ii.

1. The wicked shall not have a place in that congregation. Into the new Jerusalem none unclean nor unsanctified shall enter; they shall see the righteous enter into the kingdom, and themselves, to their everlasting vexation, thrust out, Luke xiii. 27. The wicked and profane, in this world, ridiculed the righteous and their congregation, despised them, and cared not for their company; justly therefore will they be for ever separated from them. Hypocrites in this world, under the disguise of a plausible profession, may thrust themselves into the congregation of the righteous and remain undisturbed and undiscovered there; but Christ cannot be

imposed upon, though his ministers may; the day is coming when he will separate *between the sheep and the goats, the tares and the wheat*; see Matt. xiii. 41, 49. That great day (so the Chaldee here calls it) will be a day of discovery, a day of distinction, and a day of final division. Then you shall return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, which here it is sometimes hard to do, Mal. iii. 13.

III. The reason rendered of this different state of the godly and wicked, v. 6. 1. God must have all the glory of the prosperity and happiness of the righteous. They are blessed because *the Lord knows their way*; he chose them into it, inclined them to choose it, leads and guides them in it, and orders all their steps. 2. Sinners must bear all the blame of their own destruction. *Therefore* the ungodly perish, because the very way in which they have chosen and resolved to walk leads directly to destruction; it naturally tends towards ruin and therefore must necessarily end in it. Or we may take it thus, The Lord approves and is well pleased with the way of the righteous, and therefore, under the influence of his gracious smiles, it shall prosper and end well; but he is angry at the way of the wicked, all they do is offensive to him, and therefore it shall perish, and they in it. It is certain that every man's judgment proceeds from the Lord, and it is well or ill with us, and is likely to be so to all eternity, accordingly as we are or are not accepted of God. Let this support the drooping spirits of the righteous, that the Lord knows their way, knows their hearts (Jer. xii. 3), knows their secret devotions (Matt. vi. 6), knows their character, how much soever it is blackened and blemished by the reproaches of men, and will shortly make them and their way manifest before the world, to their immortal joy and honour. Let this cast a damp upon the security and jollity of sinners, that their way, though pleasant now, will perish at last.

In singing these verses, and praying over them, let us possess ourselves with a holy dread of the wicked man's portion, and deprecate it with a firm and lively expectation of the judgment to come, and stir up ourselves to prepare for it, and with a holy care to approve ourselves to God in every thing, entreating his favour with our whole hearts.

PSALM II.

As the foregoing psalm was moral, and showed us our duty, so this is evangelical, and shows us our Saviour. Under the type o. David's kingdom (which was of divine appointment, met with much opposition, but prevailed at last) the kingdom of the Messiah, the Son of David, is prophesied of, which is the primary intention and scope of the psalm; and I think there is less in it of the type, and more of the anti-type, than in any of the gospel psalms, for there is nothing in it but what is applicable to Christ, but some things that are not at all applicable to David (ver. 6, 7): "Thou art my Son" (ver. 8), "I will give thee the uttermost parts of the earth," (ver. 12), "Kiss the Son." It is interpreted of Christ, Acts iv. 27; xiii. 33; Heb. i. 5. The Holy Ghost here foretells, I. The opposition that should be given to the kingdom of the Messiah, ver. 1.—3. II. The baffling and chastising of that opposition, ver. 4, 5. III. The setting up of the kingdom of Christ, notwithstanding that opposition, ver. 6. IV. The confirmation and establishment of it, ver. 7. V. A promise of the enlargement and success of it, ver. 8, 9. VI. A call

and exhortation to kings and princes to yield themselves the willing subjects of this kingdom, ver. 10—12. Or thus: We have here, I. Threatenings denounced against the adversaries of Christ's kingdom, ver. 1—6. II. Promises made to Christ himself, the head of this kingdom, ver. 7—9. III. Counsel given to all to espouse the interests of this kingdom, ver. 10—12. This psalm, as the former, is very fitly prefixed to this book of devotions, because, as it is necessary to our acceptance with God that we should be subject to the precepts of his law, so it is likewise that we should be subject to the grace of his gospel, and come to him in the name of a Mediator.

WHY do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?

2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, *saying*, 3 Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. 4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the LORD shall have them in derision. 5 Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. 6 Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

We have here a very great struggle about the kingdom of Christ, hell and heaven contesting it; the seat of the war is this earth, where Satan has long had a usurped kingdom and exercised dominion to such a degree that he has been called *the prince of the power of the very air we breathe in and the god of the world we live in*. He knows very well that, as the Messiah's kingdom rises and gets ground, his falls and loses ground; and therefore, though it will be set up certainly, it shall not be set up tamely. Observe here,

I. The mighty opposition that would be given to the Messiah and his kingdom, to his holy religion and all the interests of it, v. 1—3. One would have expected that so great a blessing to this world would be universally welcomed and embraced, and that every sheaf would immediately bow to that of the Messiah and all the crowns and sceptres on earth would be laid at his feet; but it proves quite contrary. Never were the notions of any sect of philosophers, though ever so absurd, nor the powers of any prince or state, though ever so tyrannical, opposed with so much violence as the doctrine and government of Christ—a sign that it was from heaven; for the opposition was plainly from hell originally.

1. We are here told who would appear as adversaries to Christ and the devil's instruments in this opposition to his kingdom. Princes and people, court and country, have sometimes separate interests, but here they are united against Christ; not the mighty only, but the mob, the *heathen*, the *people*, numbers of them, communities of them; though usually fond of liberty, yet they were averse to the liberty Christ came to procure and proclaim. Not the mob only, but the mighty (among whom one might have expected more sense and consideration) appear violent against Christ. Though his kingdom is not of this world, nor in the least calcu-

lated to weaken their interests, but very likely, if they pleased, to strengthen them, yet the kings of the earth and rulers are up in arms immediately. See the effects of the old enmity in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman, and how general and malignant the corruption of mankind is. See how formidable the enemies of the church are; they are numerous; they are potent. The unbelieving Jews are here called *heathen*, so wretchedly had they degenerated from the faith and holiness of their ancestors; they stirred up the heathen, the Gentiles, to persecute the Christians. As the Philistines and their lords, Saul and his courtiers, the disaffected party and their ringleaders, opposed David's coming to the crown, so Herod and Pilate, the Gentiles and the Jews, did their utmost against Christ and his interest in men, Acts iv. 27.

2. Who it is that they quarrel with, and muster up all their forces against; it is *against the Lord and against his anointed*, that is, against all religion in general and the Christian religion in particular. It is certain that all who are enemies to Christ, whatever they pretend, are enemies to God himself; they *have hated both me and my Father*, John xv. 24. The great author of our holy religion is here called *the Lord's anointed*, or *Messiah*, or *Christ*, in allusion to the anointing of David to be king. He is both authorized and qualified to be the church's head and king, is duly invested in the office and every way fitted for it; yet there are those that are against him; nay, *therefore* they are against him, because they are impatient of God's authority, envious at Christ's advancement, and have a rooted enmity to the Spirit of holiness.

3. The opposition they give is here described. (1.) It is a most spiteful and malicious opposition. They *rage* and fret; they gnash their teeth for vexation at the setting up of Christ's kingdom; it creates them the utmost uneasiness, and fills them with indignation, so that they have no enjoyment of themselves; see Luke xiii. 14; John xi. 47, Acts v. 17, 33; xix. 28. Idolaters raged at the discovery of their folly, the chief priests and Pharisees at the eclipsing of their glory and the shaking of their usurped dominion. Those that did evil raged at the light. (2.) It is a deliberate and politic opposition. They *imagine* or meditate, that is, they contrive means to suppress the rising interests of Christ's kingdom and are very confident of the success of their contrivances; they promise themselves that they shall run down religion and carry the day. (3.) It is a resolute and obstinate opposition. They *set themselves*, set their faces as a flint and their hearts as an adamant, in defiance of reason, and conscience, and all the terrors of the Lord; they are proud and daring, like the Babel-builders, and will persist in their resolution, come what will. (4.) It is a combined and confederate opposition. They *take coun-*

set together, to assist and animate one another in this opposition; they carry their resolutions *nemine contradicente*—*unanimously*, that they will push on the unholy war against the Messiah with the utmost vigour: and thereupon councils are called, cabals are formed, and all their wits are at work to find out ways and means for the preventing of the establishment of Christ's kingdom, lxxxiii. 5.

4. We are here told what it is they are exasperated at and what they aim at in this opposition (v. 3): *Let us break their bands asunder*. They will not be under any government; they are children of Belial, that cannot endure the yoke, at least the yoke of the Lord and his anointed. They will be content to entertain such notions of the kingdom of God and the Messiah as will serve them to dispute of and to support their own dominion with: if the Lord and his anointed will make them rich and great in the world, they will bid them welcome; but if they will restrain their corrupt appetites and passions, regulate and reform their hearts and lives, and bring them under the government of a pure and heavenly religion, truly then *they will not have this man to reign over them*, Luke xix.

14. Christ has *bands and cords* for us; those that will be saved by him must be ruled by him; but they are *cords of a man*, agreeable to right reason, and *bands of love*, conducive to our true interest: and yet against those the quarrel is. Why do men oppose religion but because they are impatient of its restraints and obligations? They would break asunder the bands of conscience they are under and the cords of God's commandments by which they are called to tie themselves out from all sin and to tie themselves up to all duty; they will not receive them, but cast them away as far from them as they can.

5. They are here reasoned with concerning it, v. 1. Why do they do this? (1.) They can show no good cause for opposing so just, holy, and gracious a government, which will not interfere with the secular powers, nor introduce any dangerous principles hurtful to kings or provinces; but, on the contrary, if universally received, would bring a heaven upon earth. (2.) They can hope for no good success in opposing so powerful a kingdom, with which they are utterly unable to contend. It is a *vain thing*; when they have done their worst Christ will have a church in the world and that church shall be glorious and triumphant. It is *built upon a rock*, and *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*. The moon walks in brightness, though the dogs bark at it.

II. The mighty conquest gained over all this threatening opposition. If heaven and earth be the combatants, it is easy to foretell which will be the conqueror. Those that make this mighty struggle are the people of the earth, and the kings of the earth, who, being of the earth, are earthy; but he whom

they contest with is one that *sits in the heavens*, v. 4. He is in the heaven, a place of such a vast prospect that he can oversee them all and all their projects; and such is his power that he can overcome them all and all their attempts. He sits there, as one easy and at rest, out of the reach of all their impotent menaces and attempts. There he sits as Judge in all the affairs of the children of men, perfectly secure of the full accomplishment of all his own purposes and designs, in spite of all opposition, xxix. 10. The perfect repose of the Eternal Mind may be our comfort under all the disquietments of our mind. We are tossed on earth, and in the sea, but he sits^s in the heavens, where he has prepared his throne for judgment; and therefore,

1. The attempts of Christ's enemies are easily ridiculed. God *laughs* at them as a company of fools. He *has them*, and all their attempts, *in derision*, and therefore *the virgin, the daughter of Zion, has despised them*, Isa. xxxvii. 22. Sinners' follies are the just sport of God's infinite wisdom and power; and those attempts of the kingdom of Satan which in our eyes are formidable in his are despicable. Sometimes God is said to *awake*, and *arise*, and *stir up himself*, for the vanquishing of his enemies; here he is said to *sit still* and vanquish them; for the utmost operations of God's omnipotence create no difficulty at all, nor the least disturbance to his eternal rest.

2. They are justly punished, v. 5. Though God despises them as impotent, yet he does not therefore wink at them, but is justly displeased with them as impudent and impious, and will make the most daring sinners to know that he is so and to tremble before him. (1.) Their sin is a provocation to him. He is wroth; he is sorely displeased. We cannot expect that God should be reconciled to us, or well pleased in us, but in and through the anointed; and therefore, if we affront and reject him, we sin against the remedy and forfeit the benefit of his interposition between us and God. (2.) His anger will be a vexation to them; if he but speak to them in his wrath, even the breath of his mouth will be their confusion, slaughter, and consumption, Isa. xi. 4; 2 Thess. ii. 8. He speaks, and it is done; he speaks in wrath, and sinners are undone. As a word made us, so a word can unmake us again. *Who knows the power of his anger?* The enemies rage, but cannot vex God. God sits still, and yet vexes them, puts them into a consternation (as the word is), and brings them to their wits' end: his setting up this kingdom of his Son, in spite of them, is the greatest vexation to them that can be. They were vexatious to Christ's good subjects; but the day is coming when vexation shall be recompensed to them.

3. They are certainly defeated, and all their counsels turned headlong (v. 6): *Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion*. David was advanced to the throne, and became

master of the strong-hold of Zion, notwithstanding the disturbance given him by the malcontents in his kingdom, and particularly the affronts he received from the garrison of Zion, who taunted him with their blind and their lame, their maimed soldiers, 2 Sam. v. 6. The Lord Jesus is exalted to the right hand of the Father, has all power both in heaven and in earth, and is head over all things to the church, notwithstanding the restless endeavours of his enemies to hinder his advancement. (1.) Jesus Christ is a King, and is invested by him who is the fountain of power with the dignity and authority of a sovereign prince in the kingdom both of providence and grace. (2.) God is pleased to call him *his* King, because he is appointed by him, and entrusted for him with the sole administration of government and judgment. He is his King, for he is dear to the Father, and one in whom he is well pleased. (3.) Christ took not this honour to himself, but was called to it, and he that called him owns him. *I have set him*; his commandment, his commission, he received from the Father. (4.) Being called to this honour, he was confirmed in it; high places (we say) are slippery places, but Christ, being raised, is fixed: "*I have set him, I have settled him.*" (5.) He is set upon *Zion*, the hill of God's holiness, a type of the gospel church, for on that the temple was built, for the sake of which the whole mount was called *holy*. Christ's throne is set up in his church, that is, in the hearts of all believers and in the societies they form. The evangelical law of Christ is said to *go forth from Zion* (Isa. ii. 3, Mic. iv. 2), and therefore that is spoken of as the head-quarters of this general, the royal seat of this prince, in whom the children of men shall be joyful.

We are to sing these verses with a holy exultation, triumphing over all the enemies of Christ's kingdom (not doubting but they will all of them be quickly made his foot-stool), and triumphing in Jesus Christ as the great trustee of power; and we are to pray, in firm belief of the assurance here given, "*Father in heaven, Thy kingdom come; let thy Son's kingdom come.*"

7 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, *Thou art my Son*; this day have I begotten thee. 8 Ask of me, and I shall give *thee* the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. 9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

We have heard what the kings of the earth have to say against Christ's kingdom, and have heard it gainsaid by him that sits in heaven; let us now hear what the Messiah

himself has to say for his kingdom, to make good his claims, and it is what all the powers on earth cannot gainsay

I. The kingdom of the Messiah is founded upon a decree, an eternal decree, of God the Father. It was not a sudden resolve, it was not the trial of an experiment, but the result of the counsels of the divine wisdom and the determinations of the divine will, before all worlds, neither of which can be altered—the *precept* or *statute* (so some read it), the *covenant* or *compact* (so others,) the federal transactions between the Father and the Son concerning man's redemption, represented by the covenant of royalty made with David and his seed, lxxxix. 3. This our Lord Jesus often referred to as that which, all along in his undertaking, he governed himself by; *This is the will of him that sent me*, John vi. 40. *This commandment have I received of my Father*, John x. 18; xiv. 31.

II. There is a declaration of that decree as far as is necessary for the satisfaction of all those who are called and commanded to yield themselves subjects to this king, and to leave those inexcusable who will not have him to reign over them. The decree was secret; it was what the Father said to the Son, when he possessed him in the beginning of his way, before his works of old; but it is declared by a faithful witness, who had lain in the bosom of the Father from eternity, and came into the world as the prophet of the church, to declare him, John i. 18. The fountain of all being is, without doubt, the fountain of all power; and it is ~~by~~ from, and under him, that the Messiah claims. He has his right to rule from what Jehovah said to him, by whose word all things were made and are governed. Christ here makes a two-fold title to his kingdom:—1. A title by inheritance (v. 7): *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*. This scripture the apostle quotes (Heb. i. 5) to prove that Christ has a more excellent name than the angels, but that he *obtained it by inheritance*, v. 4. He is the Son of God, not by adoption, but his begotten Son, the only begotten of the Father, John i. 14. And the Father owns him, and will have this declared to the world as the reason why he is constituted King upon the holy hill of Zion; he is therefore unquestionably entitled to, and perfectly qualified for, that great trust. He is the Son of God, and therefore of the same nature with the Father, has in him all the fulness of the godhead, infinite wisdom, power, and holiness. The supreme government of the church is too high an honour and too hard an undertaking for any mere creature; none can be fit for it but he who is *one with the Father* and was *from eternity by him as one brought up with him*, thoroughly apprized of all his counsels, Prov. viii. 30. He is the Son of God, and therefore dear to him, his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased; and upon this account we are to receive him as a

King; for because *the Father loveth the Son he hath given all things into his hand*, John iii. 35; v. 20. Being a Son, he is heir of all things, and, the Father having made the worlds by him, it is easy to infer thence that by him also he governs them; for he is the eternal Wisdom and the eternal Word. If God hath said unto him, "*Thou art my Son,*" it becomes each of us to say to him, "*Thou art my Lord, my sovereign.*" Further, to satisfy us that his kingdom is well-grounded upon his sonship, we are here told what his sonship is grounded on: *This day have I begotten thee*, which refers both to his eternal generation itself, for it is quoted (Heb. i. 5) to prove that he is the *brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his person* (v. 3), and to the evidence and demonstration given of it by his resurrection from the dead, for to that also it is expressly applied by the apostle, Acts xiii. 33. *He hath raised up Jesus again, as it is written, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.* It was by the resurrection from the dead, that sign of the prophet Jonas, which was to be the most convincing of all, that he was declared to be the Son of God with power, Rom. i. 4. Christ is said to be the *first-begotten and first-born from the dead*, Rev. i. 5; Col. i. 18. Immediately after his resurrection he entered upon the administration of his mediatorial kingdom; it was then that he said, *All power is given unto me*, and to that especially he had an eye when he taught his disciples to pray, *Thy kingdom come.* 2. A title by agreement, v. 8, 9. The agreement is, in short, this: the Son must undertake the office of an intercessor, and, upon that condition, he shall have the honour and power of a universal monarch; see Isa. liii. 12, *Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, because he made intercession for the transgressors.* He shall be a priest upon his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both, Zech. vi. 13. (1.) The Son must ask. This supposes his putting himself voluntarily into a state of inferiority to the Father, by taking upon him the human nature; for, as God, he was equal in power and glory with the Father and had nothing to ask. It supposes the making of a satisfaction by the virtue of which the intercession must be made, and the paying of a price, on which this large demand was to be grounded; see John xvii. 4, 5. The Son, in asking the heathen for his inheritance, aims, not only at his own honour, but at their happiness in him; so that he intercedes for them, ever lives to do so, and is therefore able to save to the uttermost. (2.) The Father will grant more than to the half of the kingdom, even to the kingdom itself. It is here promised him, [1.] That his government shall be universal: he shall have the heathen for his inheritance, not the Jews only, to whose nation the church had been long confined, but the Gentiles also. Those in the uttermost parts of

the earth (as this nation of ours) shall be his possession, and he shall have multitudes of willing loyal subjects among them. Baptized Christians are the possession of the Lord Jesus; they are to him for a name and a praise. God the Father gives them to him when by his Spirit and grace he works upon them to submit their necks to the yoke of the Lord Jesus. This is in part fulfilled; a great part of the Gentile world received the gospel when it was first preached, and Christ's throne was set up there where Satan's seat had long been. But it is to be yet further accomplished when the *kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ*, Rev. xi. 15. *Who shall live when God doeth this?* [2.] That it shall be victorious: *Thou shalt break them* (those of them that oppose thy kingdom) *with a rod of iron.* v. 9. This was in part fulfilled when the nation of the Jews, those that persisted in unbelief and enmity to Christ's gospel, were destroyed by the Roman power, which was represented (Dan. ii. 40) by feet of iron, as here by a rod of iron. It had a further accomplishment in the destruction of the Pagan powers, when the Christian religion came to be established; but it will not be completely fulfilled till all opposing rule, principality and power, shall be finally put down, 1 Cor. xv. 24. See cx. 5, 6. Observe, How powerful Christ is and how weak the enemies of his kingdom are before him; he has a rod of iron wherewith to crush those that will not submit to his golden sceptre; they are but like a potter's vessel before him, suddenly, easily, and irreparably dashed in pieces by him; see Rev. ii. 27. "*Thou shalt do it, that is, thou shalt have leave to do it.*" Nations shall be ruined, rather than the gospel church shall not be built and established *I have loved thee, therefore will I give men for thee*, Isa. xlii. 4. "*Thou shalt have power to do it; none shall be able to stand before thee; and thou shalt do it effectually.*" Those that will not bow shall break.

In singing this, and praying it over, we must give glory to Christ as the eternal Son of God and our rightful Lord, and must take comfort from this promise, and plead it with God, that the kingdom of Christ shall be enlarged and established and shall triumph over all opposition.

10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. 11 Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. 12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

We have here the practical application of this gospel doctrine concerning the kingdom of the Messiah, by way of exhortation to the kings and judges of the earth. They hear

that it is in vain to oppose Christ's government; let them therefore be so wise for themselves as to submit to it. He that has power to destroy them shows that he has no pleasure in their destruction, for he puts them into a way to make themselves happy, v. 10. Those that would be wise must be instructed; and those are truly wise that receive instruction from the word of God. Kings and judges stand upon a level with common persons before God; and it is as necessary for them to be religious as for any others. Those that give law and judgment to others must receive law from Christ, and it will be their wisdom to do so. What is said to them is said to all, and is required of every one of us, only it is directed to kings and judges because of the influence which their example will have upon their inferiors, and because they were men of rank and power that opposed the setting up of Christ's kingdom, v. 2. We are exhorted,

I. To reverence God and to stand in awe of him, v. 11. This is the great duty of natural religion. God is great, and infinitely above us, just and holy, and provoked against us, and therefore we ought to fear him and tremble before him; yet he is our Lord and Master, and we are bound to serve him, our friend and benefactor, and we have reason to rejoice in him; and these are very well consistent with each other, for, 1. We must serve God in all ordinances of worship, and all instances of a godly conversation, but with a holy fear, a jealousy over ourselves, and a reverence of him. Even kings themselves, whom others serve and fear, must serve and fear God; there is the same infinite distance between them and God that there is between the meanest of their subjects and him. 2. We must rejoice in God, and, in subordination to him, we may rejoice in other things, but still with a holy trembling, as those that know what a glorious and jealous God he is, whose eye is always upon us. Our salvation must be wrought out *with fear and trembling*, Phil. ii. 12. We ought to rejoice in the setting up of the kingdom of Christ, but to *rejoice with trembling*, with a holy awe of him, a holy fear for ourselves, lest we come short, and a tender concern for the many precious souls to whom his gospel and kingdom are a savour of death unto death. Whatever we rejoice in, in this world, it must always be with trembling, lest we grow vain in our joy and be puffed up with the things we rejoice in, and because of the uncertainty of them and the damp which by a thousand accidents may soon be cast upon our joy. To *rejoice with trembling is to rejoice as though we rejoiced not*, 1 Cor. vii. 30.

II. To welcome Jesus Christ and to submit to him, v. 12. This is the great duty of the Christian religion; it is that which is required of all, even kings and judges, and it is our wisdom and interest to do it. Observe here,

1. The command given to this purport—*Kiss the Son*. Christ is called the *Son* because so he was declared (v. 7), *Thou art my Son*. He is the Son of God by eternal generation, and, upon that account, he is to be adored by us. He is the *Son of man* (that is, the Mediator, John v. 27), and, upon that account, to be received and submitted to. He is called the *Son*, to include both, as God is often called emphatically the *Father*, because he is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him our Father, and we must have an eye to him under both considerations. Our duty to Christ is here expressed figuratively: *Kiss the Son*, not with a betraying kiss, as Judas kissed him, and as all hypocrites, who pretend to honour him, but really affront him; but with a believing kiss. (1.) With a kiss of agreement and reconciliation. Kiss, and be friends, as Jacob and Esau; let the quarrel between us and God terminate; let the acts of hostility cease, and let us be at peace with God in Christ, who is our peace. (2.) With a kiss of adoration and religious worship. Those that worshipped idols kissed them, 1 Kings xix. 18; Hos. xiii. 2. Let us study how to do honour to the Lord Jesus, and to give unto him the glory due unto his name. *He is thy Lord, and worship thou him*, xlv. 11. We must *worship the Lamb*, as well as him that sits on the throne, Rev. v. 9—13. (3.) With a kiss of affection and sincere love: "*Kiss the Son*; enter into a covenant of friendship with him, and let him be very dear and precious to you; love him above all, love him in sincerity, love him much, as she did to whom much was forgiven, and, in token of it, kissed his feet," Luke vii. 38. (4.) With a kiss of allegiance and loyalty, as Samuel kissed Saul, 1 Sam. x. 1. Swear fealty and homage to him, submit to his government, take his yoke upon you, and give up yourselves to be governed by his laws, disposed of by his providence, and entirely devoted to his interest.

2. The reasons to enforce this command and they are taken from our own interest, which God, in his gospel, shows a concern for. Consider,

(1.) The certain ruin we run upon if we refuse and reject Christ: "*Kiss the Son*; for it is at your peril if you do not." [1.] "It will be a great provocation to him. Do it, *lest he be angry*." The Father is angry already; the Son is the Mediator that undertakes to make peace; if we slight him, the *Father's wrath abides upon us* (John iii. 36), and not only so, but there is an addition of the Son's wrath too, to whom nothing is more displeasing than to have the offers of his grace slighted and the designs of it frustrated. The Son can be angry, though a Lamb; he is the lion of the tribe of Judah, and the wrath of this king, this King of kings, will be as the roaring of a lion, and will drive even mighty men and chief captains to seek in vain for shelter in rocks and mountains,

Rev. vi. 16. If the Son be angry, who shall intercede for us? There remains no more sacrifice, no other name by which we can be saved. Unbelief is a sin against the remedy. [2.] It will be utter destruction to yourselves: *Lest you perish from the way, or in the way* so some, in the way of your sins, and from the way of your vain hopes; *lest your way perish* (as i. 6), lest you prove to have missed the way to happiness. Christ is the way; take heed lest you be cut off from him as your way to God. It intimates that they were, or at least thought themselves, in the way; but, by neglecting Christ, they perished from it, which aggravates their ruin, that they go to hell from the way to heaven, are not far from the kingdom of God and yet never arrive there.

(2.) The happiness we are sure of if we yield ourselves to Christ. When his wrath is kindled, though *but a little*, the least spark of that fire is enough to make the proudest sinner miserable if it fasten upon his conscience; for it will burn to the lowest hell: one would think it should therefore follow, "When his wrath is kindled, woe be to those that despise him;" but the Psalmist startles at the thought, deprecates that dreadful doom and pronounces those blessed that escape it. Those that trust in him, and so kiss him, are truly happy; but they will especially appear to be so when the wrath of Christ is kindled against others. Blessed will those be in the day of wrath, who, by trusting in Christ, have made him their refuge and patron; when the hearts of others fail them for fear they shall lift up their heads with joy; and then those who now despise Christ and his followers will be forced to say, to their own greater confusion, "Now we see that *blessed are all those, and those only, that trust in him.*"

In singing this, and praying it over, we should have our hearts filled with a holy awe of God, but at the same time borne up with a cheerful confidence in Christ, in whose mediation we may comfort and encourage ourselves and one another. *We are the circumcision, that rejoice in Christ Jesus*

PSALM III.

As the foregoing psalm, in the type of David in preferment, showed us the royal dignity of the Redeemer, so this, by the example of David in distress, shows us the peace and holy security of the redeemed, how safe they really are, and think themselves to be, under the divine protection. David, being now driven out from his palace, from the royal city, from the holy city, by his rebellious son Absalom, i. Complains to God of his enemies, ver. 1, 2. II. Confides in God, and encourages himself in him as his God, notwithstanding, ver. 3. III. Recollects the satisfaction he had in the gracious answers God gave to his prayers, and his experience of his goodness to him, ver. 4, 5. IV. Triumphs over his fears (ver. 6) and over his enemies, whom he prays against, ver. 7. V. Gives God the glory and takes to himself the comfort of the divine blessing and salvation which are sure to all the people of God, ver. 8. Those speak best of the truths of God who speak experimentally; so David here speaks of the power and goodness of God, and of the safety and tranquillity of the godly.

A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.

LORD, how are they increased that trouble me? many are they that

rise up against me. 2 Many *there be* which say of my soul, *There is no help for him in God.* Selah. 3 But thou, O LORD, *art* a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.

The title of this psalm and many others is as a key hung ready at the door, to open it, and let us into the entertainments of it; when we know upon what occasion a psalm was penned we know the better how to expound it. This was composed, or at least the substance of it was meditated and digested in David's thoughts, and offered up to God, when he fled from Absalom his son, who formed a conspiracy against him, to take away, not his crown only, but his life; we have the story, 2 Sam. xv., &c. 1. David was now in great grief; when, in his flight, he went up the Mount of Olives, he wept greatly, with his head covered, and marching bare-foot; yet *then* he composed this comfortable psalm. He wept and prayed, wept and sung, wept and believed; this was sowing in tears. Is any afflicted? Let him pray; nay, let him sing psalms, let him sing this psalm. Is any afflicted with undutiful disobedient children? David was; and yet that did not hinder his joy in God, nor put him out of tune for holy songs. 2. He was now in great danger; the plot against him was laid deep, the party that sought his ruin was very formidable, and his own son at the head of them, so that his affairs seemed to be at the last extremity; yet *then* he kept hold of his interest in God and improved that. Perils and frights should drive us to God, not drive us from him. 3. He had now a great deal of provocation given him by those from whom he had reason to expect better things, from his son, whom he had been indulgent of, from his subjects, whom he had been so great a blessing to; this he could not but resent, and it was enough to break in upon any man's temper; yet he was so far from any indecent expressions of passion and indignation that he had calmness enough for those acts of devotion which require the greatest fixedness and freedom of thought. The sedateness of his mind was evinced by the Spirit's coming upon him; for the Spirit chooses to move upon the still waters. Let no unkindness, no, not of a child or a friend, ever be laid so much to heart as to disfit us for communion with God. 4. He was now suffering for his sin in the matter of Uriah; this was the evil which, for that sin, God threatened to *raise up against him out of his own house* (2 Sam. xii. 11), which, no doubt, he observed, and took occasion thence to renew his repentance for it. Yet he did not *therefore* cast away his confidence in the divine power and goodness, nor despair of succour. Even our sorrow for sin must not hinder either our joy in God or our hope in God. 5. He seemed cowardly

in fleeing from Absalom, and quitting his royal city, before he had had one struggle for it; and yet, by this psalm, it appears he was full of true courage arising from his faith in God. True Christian fortitude consists more in a gracious security and serenity of mind, in patiently bearing and patiently waiting, than in daring enterprises with sword in hand.

In these three verses he applies to God. Whither else should we go but to him when any thing grieves us or frightens us? David was now at a distance from his own closet, and from the courts of God's house, where he used to pray; and yet he could find a way open heaven-ward. Wherever we are we may have access to God, and may draw nigh to him whithersoever we are driven. David, in his flight, attends his God,

I. With a representation of his distress, v. 1, 2. He looks round, and as it were takes a view of his enemies' camp, or receives information of their designs against him, which he brings to God, not to his own council-board. Two things he complains of, concerning his enemies:—1. That they were very many: *Lord, how are they increased!* beyond what they were at first, and beyond whatever he thought they would have been. Absalom's faction, like a snow-ball, strangely gathered in its motion. He speaks of it as one amazed, and well he might, that a people he had so many ways obliged should almost generally revolt from him, rebel against him, and choose for their head such a foolish and giddy young man as Absalom was. How slippery and deceitful are the many! And how little fidelity and constancy are to be found among men! David had had the hearts of his subjects as much as ever any king had, and yet now, of a sudden, he had lost them. As people must not trust too much to princes (xclvi. 3), so princes must not build too much upon their interest in the people. Christ, the Son of David, had many enemies. When a great multitude came to seize him, when the crowd cried, *Crucify him, Crucify him*, how were those then increased that troubled him! Even good people must not think it strange if the stream be against them and the powers that threaten them grow more and more formidable. 2. That they were very malicious. They rose up against him; they aimed to trouble him; but that was not all: they said of his soul, *There is no help for him in God*. That is, (1.) They put a spiteful and invidious construction upon his troubles, as Job's friends did upon his, concluding that, because his servants and subjects forsook him thus and did not help him, God had deserted him and abandoned his cause, and he was therefore to be looked on, or rather to be looked off, as a hypocrite and a wicked man. (2.) They blasphemously reflected upon God as unable to relieve him: "His danger is so great that God himself cannot help him." It is strange that so great unbelief should be found in any,

especially in many, in Israel, as to think any party of men too strong for Omnipotence to deal with. (3.) They endeavoured to shake his confidence in God and drive him to despair of relief from him: "They have said it to my soul;" so it may be read; compare xi. 1; xlii. 10. This grieved him worst of all, that they had so bad an opinion of him as to think it possible to take him off from that foundation. The mere temptation was a buffeting to him, *a thorn in his flesh*, nay, *a sword in his bones*. Note, A child of God startles at the very thought of despairing of help in God; you cannot vex him with any thing so much as if you offer to persuade him that *there is no help for him in God*. David comes to God, and tells him what his enemies said of him, as Hezekiah spread Rabshakeh's blasphemous letter before the Lord. "They say, *There is no help for me in thee*; but, Lord, if it be so, I am undone. They say to my soul, *There is no salvation*" (for so the word is) "*for him in God*; but, Lord, do thou say unto my soul, *I am thy salvation* (xxxv. 3) and that shall satisfy me, and in due time silence them." To this complaint he adds *Selah*, which occurs about seventy times in the book of psalms. Some refer it to the music with which, in David's time, the psalms were sung; others to the sense, and that it is a note commanding a solemn pause. *Selah*—*Mark that*, or, "*Stop there, and consider a little*." As here, they say, *There is no help for him in God*, *Selah*. "Take time for such a thought as this. *Get thee behind me, Satan. The Lord rebuke thee*. Away with such a vile suggestion!"

II. With a profession of his dependence upon God, v. 3. An active believer, the more he is beaten off from God, either by the rebukes of Providence or the reproaches of enemies, the faster hold he will take of him and the closer will he cleave to him; so David here, when his enemies said, *There is no help for him in God*, cries out with so much the more assurance, "*But thou, O Lord! art a shield for me*; let them say what they will, I am sure thou wilt never desert me, and I am resolved I will never distrust thee." See what God is to his people, what he will be, what they have found him, what David found in him. 1. Safety. "*Thou art a shield for me, a shield about me*" (so some), "to secure me on all sides, since my enemies surrounded me." Not only *my shield* (Gen. xv. 1), which denotes an interest in the divine protection, but a *shield for me*, which denotes the present benefit and advantage of that protection. 2. Honour: *Thou art my glory*. Those whom God owns for his are not only safe and easy, but really look great, and have true honour put upon them, far above that which the great ones of the earth are proud of. David was now in disgrace; the crown had fallen from his head; but he will not think the worse of himself while he has God for his

glory, Isa. lx. 19. "*Thou art my glory: thy glory I reckon mine*" (so some: "this is what I am at, and am ambitious of, whatever my lot is, and whatever becomes of my honour—that I may be to my God for a name and a praise." 3. Joy and deliverance: *Thou art the lifter up of my head*; thou wilt lift up my head out of my troubles, and restore me to my dignity again, in due time; or, at least, thou wilt lift up my head under my troubles, so that I shall not droop nor be discouraged, nor shall my spirits fail." 4. In the worst of times, God's people can lift up their heads with joy, knowing that all shall work for good to them, they will own it is God that is the lifter up of their head, that gives them both cause to rejoice and hearts to rejoice.

In singing this, and praying it over, we should possess ourselves with an apprehension of the danger we are in from the multitude and malice of our spiritual enemies, who seek the ruin of our souls by driving us from our God, and we should concern ourselves in the distresses and dangers of the church of God, which is every where spoken against, every where fought against; but, in reference to both, we should encourage ourselves in our God, who owns and protects and will in due time crown his own interest both in the world and in the hearts of his people.

4 I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah. 5 I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the LORD sustained me. 6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about. 7 Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly. 8 Salvation belongeth unto the LORD: thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah.

David, having stirred up himself by the irritations of his enemies to take hold on God as his God, and so gained comfort in looking upward when, if he looked round about him, nothing appeared but what was discouraging, here looks back with pleasing reflections upon the benefit he had derived from trusting in God and looks forward with pleasing expectations of a very bright and happy issue to which the dark dispensation he was now under would shortly be brought.

I. See with what comfort he looks back upon the communion he had had with God, and the communications of his favour to him, either in some former troubles he had been in, and through God's goodness got through, or in this hitherto. David had been exercised with many difficulties, often oppressed and brought very low; but still he had found

God all-sufficient. He now remembered with pleasure.

1. That his troubles had always brought him to his knees, and that, in all his difficulties and dangers, he had been enabled to acknowledge God and to lift up his heart to him, and his voice too (this will be a comfortable reflection when we are in trouble). *I cried unto God with my voice*. Care and grief do us good and no hurt when they set us a praying, and engage us, not only to speak to God, but to cry to him, as those that are in earnest. And though God understands the language of the heart, when the voice is not heard (1 Sam. i. 13., and values not the hypocritical prayers of those who cause their voice to be heard on high, Isa. lviii. 4., *vox ei prater ea nihil*—mere sound, yet, when the earnestness of the voice comes from the fervency of the heart, it shall be taken notice of, in the account, that we cried unto God with our voice.

2. That he had always found God ready to answer his prayers: *He heard me out of his holy hill*, from heaven, the high and holy place, from the ark on Mount Zion, whence he used to give answers to those that sought to him. David had ordered Zadok to carry back the ark into the city when he was flying from Absalom (2 Sam. xv. 25., knowing that God was not tied, no, not to the ark of his presence, and that, notwithstanding the distance of place, he could by faith receive answers of peace from the holy hill. No such things can fix a gulf between the communications of God's grace towards us and the operations of his grace in us, between his favour and our faith. The ark of the covenant was in Mount Zion, and all the answers to our prayers come from the promises of that covenant. Christ was set King upon the holy hill of Zion (ii. 6), and it is through him, whom the Father hears always, that our prayers are heard.

3. That he had always been very safe and very easy under the divine protection (r. 5): "*I laid myself down and slept, composed and quiet; and awaked refreshed, for the Lord sustained me.*" (1.) This is applicable to the common mercies of every night, which we ought to give thanks for alone, and with our families, every morning. Many have not where to lay their head (but wander in deserts), or, if they have, dare not lie down for fear of the enemy; but we have laid ourselves down in peace. Many lie down and cannot sleep, but are full of tossings to and fro till the dawning of the day, through pain of body, or anguish of mind, or the continual alarms of fear in the night; but we lie down and sleep in safety, though incapable of doing any thing then for our own preservation. Many lie down and sleep, and never awake again, they sleep the sleep of death, as the first-born of the Egyptians: but we lie down and sleep, and awake again to the light and comfort of another day; and whence is it,

but because the Lord has sustained us with sleep as with food? We have been safe under his protection and easy in the arms of his good providence. (2.) It seems here to be meant of the wonderful quietness and calmness of David's spirit, in the midst of his dangers. Having by prayer committed himself and his cause to God, and being sure of his protection, his heart was fixed, and he was easy. The undutifulness of his son, the disloyalty of his subjects, the treachery of many of his friends, the hazard of his person, the fatigues of his march, and the uncertainty of the event, never deprived him of an hour's sleep, nor gave any disturbance to his repose; for the Lord, by his grace and the consolations of his Spirit, powerfully sustained him and made him easy. It is a great mercy when we are in trouble to have our minds stayed upon God, so as never either to eat or sleep with trembling and astonishment. (3.) Some of the ancients apply it to the resurrection of Christ. In his sufferings he offered up strong cries, and was heard; and therefore, though he laid down and slept the sleep of death, yet he awaked the third day, for the Lord sustained him, that he should not see corruption.

4. That God had often broken the power and restrained the malice of his enemies, had *smitten them upon the cheek-bone* (v. 7), had silenced them and spoiled their speaking, *blemished them* and put them to shame, smitten them on the cheek reproachfully, had disabled them to do the mischief they intended; for he had broken their teeth. Saul and the Philistines, who were sometimes ready to swallow him up, could not effect what they designed. The teeth that are gnashed or sharpened against God's people shall be broken. When, at any time, the power of the church's enemies seems threatening, it is good to remember how often God has broken it; and we are sure that his arm is not shortened. He can stop their mouths and tie their hands.

II. See with what confidence he looks forward to the dangers he had yet in prospect. Having put himself under God's protection and often found the benefit of it, 1. *His fears were all stilled and silenced*, v. 6. With what a holy bravery does he bid defiance to the impotent menaces and attempts of his enemies! "*I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people*, that either in a foreign invasion or an intestine rebellion *set themselves*, or encamp, *against me round about*." No man seemed less safe (his enemies are numerous, *ten thousands*; they are spiteful and resolute, "*They have set themselves against me*; nay, they have prevailed far, and seem to have gained their point; for they are against me round about on every side, thousands against one"), and yet no man was more secure: "*I will not be afraid, for all this*; they cannot hurt me, and therefore they shall not frighten me; whatever prudent methods I take for my

own preservation, I will not disquiet distrust my God, nor doubt of a good i at last." When David, in his flight from Absalom, bade Zadok carry back the ark, he spoke doubtfully of the issue of his present troubles, and concluded, like a humble penitent, *Here I am; let him do to me what seemeth to him good*, 2 Sam. xv. 26. But now, like a strong believer, he speaks confidently, and has no fear concerning the event. Note, A cheerful resignation to God is the way to obtain a cheerful satisfaction and confidence in God. 2. His prayers were quickened and encouraged, v. 7. He believed God was his Saviour, and yet prays; nay, he *therefore prays, Arise, O Lord! save me, O my God!* Promises of salvation do not supersede, but engage, our petitions for it. He will for this be enquired of. 3. His faith became triumphant. He began the psalm with complaints of the strength and malice of his enemies, but concludes it with exultation in the power and grace of his God, and now sees more with him than against him, v. 8. Two great truths he here builds his confidence upon and fetches comfort from. (1.) *That salvation belongeth unto the Lord*; he has power to save, be the danger ever so great; it is his prerogative to save, when all other helps and succours fail; it is his pleasure, it is his property, it is his promise to those that are his, whose salvation is not of themselves, but of the Lord. Therefore all that have the Lord for their God, according to the tenour of the new covenant, are sure of salvation, for he that is their God is the God of salvation. (2.) *That his blessing is upon his people*; he not only has power to save them, but he has assured them of his kind and gracious intentions towards them. He has, in his word, pronounced a blessing upon his people; and we are bound to believe that that blessing does accordingly rest upon them, though there be not the visible effects of it. Hence we may conclude that God's people, though they may lie under the reproaches and censures of men, are surely blessed of him, who blesses indeed, and therefore can command a blessing.

In singing this, and praying it over, we must own the satisfaction we have had in depending upon God and committing ourselves to him, and encourage ourselves, and one another to continue still hoping and quietly waiting for the salvation of the Lord.

PSALM IV

David was a preacher, a royal preacher, as well as Solomon; many of his psalms are doctrinal and practical as well as devotional; the greatest part of this psalm is so, in which Wisdom cries to men, to the sons of men (as Prov. viii. 4, 5), to receive instruction. The title does not tell us, as that of the former did, that it was penned on any particular occasion, nor are we to think that all the psalms were occasional, though some were, but that many of them were designed in general for the instruction of the people of God, who attended in the courts of his house, the assisting of their devotions, and the directing of their conversations: such a one I take this psalm to be. Let us not make the prophecy of scripture to be of more private interpretation than needs must, 2 Pet. i. 20. Here, I. David begins, with a short

prayer (ver. 1) and that prayer preacher. II. He directs his speech to the children of men, and, 1. In God's name reproves them for the dishonour they do to God and the damage they do to their own souls, ver. 2. 2. He sets before them the happiness of godly people, for their encouragement to be religious, ver. 3. 3. He calls upon them to consider their ways, ver. 4. III. He exhorts them to serve God and trust in him, ver. 5. IV. He gives an account of his own experiences of the grace of God working in him, 1. Enabling him to choose God's favour for his felicity, ver. 6. 2. Filling his heart with joy therein, ver. 7. 3. Quietening his spirit in the assurance of the divine protection he was under, night and day, ver. 8.

To the chief musician on Neginoth. A psalm of David.

HEAR me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me *when I was* in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer. 2 O ye sons of men, how long *will ye turn my glory into shame? how long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing?* Selah. 3 But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the LORD will hear when I call unto him. 4 Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah. 5 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD.

The title of the psalm acquaints us that David, having penned it by divine inspiration for the use of the church, delivered it to the chief musician, or master of the song, who (according to the divine appointment of psalmody made in his time, which he was chiefly instrumental in the establishment of) presided in that service. We have a particular account of the constitution, the modelling of the several classes of singers, each with a chief, and the share each bore in the work, 1 Chron. xxv. Some *prophesied according to the order of the king*, v. 2. Others *prophesied with a harp, to give thanks, and to praise the Lord*, v. 3. Of others it is said that they were to *lift up the horn*, v. 5. But of them all, that they were for *song in the house of the Lord* (v. 6) and were *instructed in the songs of the Lord*, v. 7. This psalm was committed to one of the chiefs, to be sung on *neginoth*—*stringed instruments* (Hab. iii. 19), which were played on with the hand; with music of that kind the choristers were to sing this psalm: and it should seem that then they only sung, not the people; but the New-Testament appoints all Christians to sing (Eph. v. 19, Col. iii. 16), from whom it is expected that they do it decently, not artfully; and therefore there is not now so much occasion for musical instruments as there was then: the melody is to be made in the heart. In these verses,

I. David addresses himself to God, v. 1. Whether the *sons of men*, to whom he is about to speak, will hear, or whether they will *forget*, he hopes and prays that God will give

him a gracious audience, and an answer of peace: "*Hear me when I call, and accept my adorations, grant my petitions, and judge upon my appeals; have mercy upon me, and hear me.*" All the notice God is pleased to take of our prayers, and all the returns he is pleased to make to them, must be ascribed, not to our merit, but purely to his mercy. "*Hear me for thy mercy-sake*" is our best plea. Two things David here pleads further:

—1. "*Thou art the God of my righteousness*; not only a righteous God thyself, but the author of my righteous dispositions, who hast by thy grace wrought that good that is in me, hast made me a righteous man; therefore *hear me*, and so attest thy own work in me; thou art also the patron of my righteous cause, the protector of my wronged innocence, to whom I commit my way, and whom I trust to *bring forth my righteousness as the light.*" When men condemn us unjustly, this is our comfort, *It is God that justifies*; he is the God of a believer's righteousness. 2. "*Thou hast formerly enlarged me when I was in distress*, enlarged my heart in holy joy and comfort under my distresses, enlarged my condition by bringing me out of my distresses; therefore *now, Lord, have mercy upon me, and hear me.*" The experience we have had of God's goodness to us in enlarging us when we have been in distress is not only a great encouragement to our faith and hope for the future, but a good plea with God in prayer. "*Thou hast; wilt thou not?*" For thou art God, and changest not; thy work is perfect."

II. He addresses himself to the children of men, for the conviction and conversion of those that are yet strangers to God, and that will not have the Messiah, the Son of David, to reign over them.

1. He endeavours to convince them of the folly of their impiety (v. 2) "*O you sons of men*" (of great men, so some, men of high degree, understanding it of the partisans of Saul or Absalom), "*how long will you oppose me and my government, and continue disaffected to it, under the influence of the false and groundless suggestions of those that wish evil to me?*" Or it may be taken more generally. God, by the psalmist, here reasons with sinners to bring them to repentance. "*You that go on in the neglect of God and his worship, and in contempt of the kingdom of Christ and his government, consider what you do.*" (1.) "*You debase yourselves, for you are sons of men*" (the word signifies man as a noble creature); "*consider the dignity of your nature, and the excellency of those powers of reason with which you are endued, and do not act thus irrationally and unbecoming yourselves.*" Let the *sons of men* consider and show themselves men. (2.) "*You dishonour your Maker, and turn his glory into shame.*" They may well be taken as God's own words, charging sinners with the wrong they do him in his honour: or, if

David's words, the term glory may be understood of God, whom he called *his glory*, iii. 3. Idolaters are charged with *changing the glory of God* into shame, Rom. i. 23. All wilful sinners do so by disobeying the commands of his law, despising the offers of his grace, and giving the affection and service to the creature which are due to God only. Those that profane God's holy name, that ridicule his word and ordinances, and, while they profess to know him, in works deny him, do what in them lies to *turn his glory into shame*.

(3.) "You put a cheat upon yourselves: *You love vanity, and seek after leasing, or lying, or that which is a lie*. You are yourselves vain and lying, and you love to be so." Or, "You set your hearts upon that which will prove, at last, but vanity and a lie." Those that love the world, and seek the things that are beneath, love vanity, and seek lies; as those also do that please themselves with the delights of sense, and portion themselves with the wealth of this world; for these will deceive them, and so ruin them. "How long will you do this? Will you never be wise for yourselves, never consider your duty and interest? *When shall it once be?*" Jer. xiii. 27. The God of heaven thinks the time long that sinners persist in dishonouring him and in deceiving and ruining themselves.

2. He shows them the peculiar favour which God has for good people, the special protection they are under, and the singular privileges to which they are entitled, v. 3. This comes in here, (1.) As a reason why they should not oppose or persecute him that is godly, nor think to run him down. It is at their peril if they *offend one of these little ones*, whom God has *set apart for himself*, Matt. xviii. 6. God reckons that those who touch them touch the apple of his eye; and he will make their persecutors to know it, sooner or later. They have an interest in heaven, God will hear them, and therefore let none dare to do them any injury, for God will hear their cry and plead their cause, Exod. xxii. 23. It is generally supposed that David speaks of his own designation to the throne; he is the *godly man whom the Lord has set apart* for that honour, and who does not usurp it or assume it to himself: "The opposition therefore which you give to him and to his advancement is very criminal, for therein you fight against God, and it will be vain and ineffectual." God has, in like manner, set apart the Lord Jesus for himself, that merciful One; and those that attempt to hinder his advancement will certainly be baffled, for the Father hears him always. Or, (2.) As a reason why they should themselves be good, and walk no longer in the counsel of the ungodly: "You have hitherto sought vanity; be truly religious, and you will be truly happy here and for ever; for," [1.] "God will secure to himself his interest in you." *The Lord has set apart him that is godly, every particular godly man, for himself*, in his eternal choice, in his

effectual calling, in the special disposals of his providence and operations of his grace his people are *purified unto him a peculiar people*. Godly men are God's separated, sealed, ones; he knows those that are his, and has set his image and superscription upon them; he distinguishes them with uncommon favours: *They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels*. *Know this*; let godly people know it, and let them never alienate themselves from him to whom they are thus appropriated; let wicked people know it, and take heed how they hurt those whom God protects [2.] "God will secure to you an interest in himself." This David speaks with application: *The Lord will hear when I call unto him*. We should think ourselves happy if we had the ear of an earthly prince; and is it not worth while upon any terms, especially such easy ones, to gain the ear of the King of kings? Let us know this, and forsake lying vanities for our own mercies.

3. He warns them against sin, and exhorts them both to frighten and to reason themselves out of it (v. 4): "*Stand in awe and sin not*" (*be angry and sin not*, so the LXX., and some think the apostle takes that exhortation from him, Eph. iv. 26); "*Commune with your own hearts*"; be converted, and, in order thereunto, consider and fear." Note, (1.) We must not sin, must not miss our way and so miss our aim. (2.) One good remedy against sin is to stand in awe. *Be moved* (so some), in opposition to carelessness and carnal security. "Always keep up a holy reverence of the glory and majesty of God, and a holy dread of his wrath and curse, and dare not to provoke him." (3.) One good means of preventing sin, and preserving a holy awe, is to be frequent and serious in *communing with our own hearts*: "*Talk with your hearts*"; you have a great deal to say to them; they may be spoken with at any time; let it not be unsaid." A thinking man is in a fair way to be a wise and a good man. "*Commune with your hearts*"; examine them by serious self-reflection, that you may acquaint yourselves with them and amend what is amiss in them; employ them in solemn pious meditations; let your thoughts fasten upon that which is good and keep closely to it. Consider your ways, and observe the directions here given in order to the doing of this work well and to good purpose." [1.] "Choose a solitary time; do it when you lie awake *upon your beds*. Before you turn yourself to go to sleep at night" (as some of the heathen moralists have directed) "examine your consciences with respect to what you have done that day, particularly what you have done amiss, that you may repent of it. When you awake in the night meditate upon God, and the things that belong to your peace." David himself practised what he here counsels others to do (lxiii. 6), *I remember thee on my bed*. Upon a sick-bed, particularly, we should consider our ways and

commune with our own hearts about them. [2.] "Compose yourselves into a serious frame: *Be still*. When you have asked conscience a question be silent, and wait for an answer; even in unquiet times keep your spirits calm and quiet.

4. He counsels them to make conscience of their duty (v. 5): *Offer to God the sacrifice of righteousness*. We must not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well. Those that were disaffected to David and his government would soon come to a better temper, and return to their allegiance, if they would but worship God aright; and those that know the concerns that lie between them and God will be glad of the Mediator, the Son of David. It is required here from every one of us, (1.) That we serve him: "*Offer sacrifices to him*, your own selves first, and your best sacrifices." But they must be *sacrifices of righteousness*, that is, good works, all the fruits of the reigning love of God and our neighbour, and all the instances of a religious conversation, which are better than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices. "Let all your devotions come from an upright heart; let all your alms be sacrifices of righteousness." The sacrifices of the unrighteous God will not accept; they are an abomination, Isa. i. 11, &c. (2.) That we confide in him. "First make conscience of offering the sacrifices of righteousness and then you are welcome to put your trust in the Lord. Serve God without any diffidence of him, or any fear of losing by him. Honour him, by trusting in him only, and not in your wealth nor in an arm of flesh; trust in his providence, and lean not to your own understanding; trust in his grace, and go not about to establish your own righteousness or sufficiency.

In singing these verses we must preach to ourselves the doctrine of the provoking nature of sin, the lying vanity of the world, and the unspeakable happiness of God's people; and we must press upon ourselves the duties of fearing God, conversing with our own hearts, and offering spiritual sacrifices; and in praying over these verses we must beg of God grace thus to think and thus to do.

6 *There be many that say, Who will show us any good? LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.* 7 *Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.* 8 *I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.*

We have here,

I. The foolish wish of worldly people: *There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Who will make us to see good? What good they meant is intimated, v. 7. It was the increase of their corn and wine; all they desired was plenty of the wealth of this world,*

that they might enjoy abundance of the delights of sense. Thus far they are right, that they are desirous of good and solicitous about it; but there are these things amiss in this wish:—1. They enquire, in general, "Who will make us happy?" but do not apply themselves to God who alone can; and so they expose themselves to be ill-advised, and show they would rather be beholden to any than to God, for they would willingly live without him. 2. They enquire for good that may be seen, seeming good, sensible good; and they show no concern for the good things that are out of sight and are the objects of faith only. The source of idolatry was a desire of gods that they might see, therefore they worshipped the sun; but, as we must be taught to worship an unseen God, so to seek an unseen good, 2 Cor. iv. 18. We look with an eye of faith further than we can see with an eye of sense. 3. They enquire for *any* good, not for the chief good; all they want is outward good, present good, partial good, good meat, good drink, a good trade, and a good estate; and what are all these worth without a good God and a good heart? Any good will serve the turn of most men, but a gracious soul will not be put off so. This way, this wish, of carnal worldlings is their folly, yet *many there be* that join in it; and their doom will be accordingly. "*Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivest thy good things, the penny thou didst agree for.*"

II. The wise choice which godly people make. David, and the pious few that adhered to him, dissented from that wish, and joined in this prayer, *Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.* 1. He disagrees from the vote of the many. God had set him apart for himself by distinguishing favours, and therefore he sets himself apart by a distinguishing character. "They are for any good, for worldly good, but so am not I; I will not say as they say; any good will not serve my turn; the wealth of the world will never make a portion for my soul, and therefore I cannot take up with it." 2. He and his friends agree in their choice of God's favour as their felicity; it is this which in their account is better than life and all the comforts of life. (1.) This is what they most earnestly desire and seek after; this is the breathing of their souls, "*Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.* Most are for other things, but we are for this." Good people, as they are distinguished by their practices, so they are by their prayers, not the length and language of them, but the faith and fervency of them; those whom God has set apart have a prayer by themselves, which, though others may speak the words of it, they only offer up in sincerity; and this is a prayer which they all say *Amen* to; "Lord, let us have thy favour, and let us know that we have it, and we desire no more; that is enough to make us happy. Lord, be at peace with us, accept of us, na-

nifest thyself to us, let us be satisfied of thy loving-kindness and we will be satisfied with it." Observe, Though David speaks of himself only in the 7th and 8th verses, he speaks, in this prayer, for others also,—"upon us," as Christ taught us to pray, "*Our Father.*" All the saints come to the throne of grace on the same errand, and in this they are one, they all desire God's favour as their chief good. We should beg it for others as well as for ourselves, for in God's favour there is enough for us all and we shall have never the less for others sharing in what we have.

(2.) This is what, above any thing, they rejoice in (v. 7): "*Thou hast hereby often put gladness into my heart*; not only supported and refreshed me, but filled me with joy unspeakable; and therefore this is what I will still pursue, what I will seek after all the days of my life." When God puts grace in the heart he puts gladness in the heart; nor is any joy comparable to that which gracious souls have in the communications of the divine favour, no, not the joy of harvest, of a plentiful harvest, when the corn and wine increase. This is gladness in the heart, inward, solid, substantial joy. The mirth of worldly people is but a flash, a shadow; *even in laughter their heart is sorrowful*, Prov. xiv. 13. "*Thou hast given gladness in my heart*; so the word is. True joy is God's gift, *not as the world giveth*, John xiv. 27. The saints have no reason to envy carnal worldlings their mirth and joy, but should pity them rather, for they may know better and will not.

(3.) This is what they entirely confide in, and in this confidence they are always easy, v. 8. He had laid himself down and slept (iii. 5), and so he will still: "*I will lay myself down* (having the assurance of thy favour) *in peace*, and with as much pleasure as those whose corn and wine increase, and who lie down as Boaz did in his threshing-floor, at the end of the heap of corn, to sleep there when *his heart was merry* (Ruth iii. 7), *for thou only makest me to dwell in safety*. Though I am alone, yet I am not alone, for God is with me; though I have no guards to attend me, the Lord alone is sufficient to protect me; he can do it himself when all other defences fail." If he have the light of God's countenance, [1.] He can enjoy himself. His soul returns to God, and reposes itself in him as its rest, and so he lays himself down and sleeps in peace. He has what he would have and is sure that nothing can come amiss to him. [2.] He fears no disturbance from his enemies, sleeps quietly, and is very secure, because God himself has undertaken to keep him safe. When he comes to sleep the sleep of death, and to lie down in the grave, to make his bed in the darkness, he will then, with good old Simeon, *depart in peace* (Luke ii. 29), being assured that God will receive his soul, to be safe with himself, and that his body also shall be made to dwell in safety in the grave. [3.] He commits all his affairs to God, and contentedly leaves the

issue of them with him. It is said of the husbandman that, having cast his seed into the ground, *he sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed springs and grows up, he knows not how*, Mark iv. 26, 27. So a good man, having by faith and prayer cast his care upon God, sleeps and rests night and day, and is very easy, leaving it to his God to perform all things for him and prepared to welcome his holy will.

In singing these verses, and praying over them, let us, with a holy contempt of the wealth and pleasure of this world, as insufficient to make us happy, earnestly seek the favour of God and pleasingly solace ourselves in that favour; and, with a holy indifference about the issue of all our worldly concerns, let us commit ourselves and all our affairs to the guidance and custody of the divine Providence, and be satisfied that all shall be made to work for good to us if we keep ourselves in the love of God.

PSALM V.

This psalm is a prayer, a solemn address to God, at a time when the psalmist was brought into distress by the malice of his enemies. Many such times passed over David, nay, there was scarcely any time of his life to which this psalm may not be accommodated, for in this he was a type of Christ, that he was continually beset with enemies, and his powerful and prevalent appeals to God, when he was so beset, pointed at Christ's dependence on his Father and triumphs over the powers of darkness in the midst of his sufferings. In this psalm, I. David settles a correspondence between his soul and God, promising to pray, and promising himself that God would certainly hear him, ver. 1-3. II. He gives to God the glory, and takes to himself the comfort of God's holiness, ver. 4-6. III. He declares his resolution to keep close to the public worship of God, ver. 7. IV. He prays, 1. For himself, that God would guide him, ver. 8. 2. Against his enemies, that God would destroy them, ver. 9, 10. 3. For all the people of God, that God would give them joy, and keep them safe, ver. 11, 12. And this is all of great use to direct us in prayer.

To the chief musician upon Nehiloth. A psalm of David.

GIVE ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation. 2 Harken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray. 3 My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up. 4 For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. 5 The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity. 6 Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.

The title of this psalm has nothing in it peculiar but that it is said to be upon *Nehiloth*, a word nowhere else used. It is conjectured (and it is but a conjecture) that it signifies *wind-instruments*, with which this psalm was sung, as *Neginoth* was supposed to signify the *stringed-instruments*. In these verses David had an eye to God,

I. As a prayer-hearing God; such he has always been ever since men began to call upon the name of the Lord, and yet is still as

ready to hear prayer as ever. Observe how David here styles him: *O Lord* (v. 1, 3), *Jehovah*, a self-existent, self-sufficient, Being, whom we are bound to adore, and, "*my King and my God* (v. 2), whom I have avouched for my God, to whom I have sworn allegiance, and under whose protection I have put myself as my King." We believe that the God we pray to is a King and a God, King of kings and God of gods; but that is not enough: the most commanding encouraging principle of prayer, and the most powerful or prevailing plea in prayer, is to look upon him as *our King and our God*, to whom we lie under peculiar obligations and from whom we have peculiar expectations. Now observe,

1. What David here prays for, which may encourage our faith and hopes in all our addresses to God. If we pray fervently, and in faith, we have reason to hope, (1.) That God will take cognizance of our case, the representation we make of it and the requests we make upon it; for so he prays here: *Give ear to my words, O Lord!* Though God is in heaven, he has an ear open to his people's prayers, and it is not heavy, that he cannot hear. Men perhaps will not or cannot hear us; our enemies are so haughty that they will not, our friends at such a distance that they cannot; but God, though high, though in heaven, can, and will. (2.) That he will take it into his wise and compassionate consideration, and will not slight it, or turn it off with a cursory answer; for so he prays: *Consider my meditation.* David's prayers were not his words only, but his meditations; as meditation is the best preparative for prayer, so prayer is the best issue of meditation. Meditation and prayer should go together, xix. 14. It is when we thus consider our prayers, and then only, that we may expect that God will consider them, and take that to his heart which comes from ours. (3.) That he will, in due time, return a gracious answer of peace; for so he prays (v. 2): *Hearken to the voice of my cry.* His prayer was a cry; it was the voice of his cry, which denotes fervency of affection and importunity of expression; and such effectual fervent prayers of a righteous man avail much and do wonders.

2. What David here promises, as the condition on his part to be performed, fulfilled, and kept, that he might obtain this gracious acceptance; this may guide and govern us in our addresses to God, that we may present them aright, for we ask, and have not, if we ask amiss. Four things David here promises, and so must we:—(1.) That he will pray, that he will make conscience of praying, and make a business of it: *Unto thee will I pray.* "Others live without prayer, but I will pray." Kings on their own thrones (so David was) must be beggars at God's throne. "Others pray to strange gods, and expect relief from them, but to thee, to thee

only, will I pray." The assurances God has given us of his readiness to hear prayer should confirm our resolution to live and die praying. (2.) That he will pray in the morning. His praying voice shall be heard then, and then shall his prayer be directed; that shall be the date of his letters to heaven, not that only ("Morning, and evening, and at noon, will I pray, nay, seven times a day, will I praise thee"), but that certainly. Morning prayer is our duty; we are the fittest for prayer when we are in the most fresh, and lively, and composed frame, got clear of the slumbers of the night, revived by them, and not yet filled with the business of the day. We have then most need of prayer, considering the dangers and temptations of the day to which we are exposed, and against which we are concerned, by faith and prayer, to fetch in fresh supplies of grace. (3.) That he will have his eye single and his heart intent in the duty: *I will direct my prayer*, as a marksman directs his arrow to the white; with such a fixedness and steadiness of mind should we address ourselves to God. Or as we direct a letter to a friend at such a place so must we direct our prayers to God as our Father in heaven; and let us always send them by the Lord Jesus, the great Mediator, and then they will be sure not to miscarry. All our prayers must be directed to God; his honour and glory must be aimed at as our highest end in all our prayers. Let our first petition be, *Hallowed, glorified, be thy name*, and then we may be sure of the same gracious answer to it that was given to Christ himself: *I have glorified it, and I will glorify it yet again.* (4.) That he will patiently wait for an answer of peace; "*I will look up*, will look after my prayers, and *hear what God the Lord will speak* (xxxv. 8; Hab. ii. 1), that, if he grant what I asked, I may be thankful—if he deny, I may be patient—if he defer, I may continue to pray and wait and may not faint." We must look up, or look out, as he that has shot an arrow looks to see how near it has come to the mark. We lose much of the comfort of our prayers for want of observing the returns of them. Thus praying, thus waiting, as the lame man looked steadfastly on Peter and John (Acts iii. 4), we may expect that God will give ear to our words and consider them, and to him we may refer ourselves, as David here, who does not pray, "Lord, do this, or the other, for me;" but, "Hearken to me, consider my case, and do in it as seemeth good unto thee."

II. As a sin-hating God, v. 4—6. David takes notice of this, 1. As a warning to himself, and all other praying people, to remember that, as the God with whom we have to do is gracious and merciful, so he is pure and holy; though he is ready to hear prayer, yet, if we regard iniquity in our heart, he will not hear our prayers, lxvi. 18. 2. As an encouragement to his prayers against his enemies; they were wicked men, and therefore enemies

to God, and such as he had no pleasure in. See here, (1.) The holiness of God's nature. When he says, *Thou art not a God that has pleasure in wickedness*, he means, "Thou art a God that hates it, as directly contrary to thy infinite purity and rectitude, and holy will." Though the workers of iniquity prosper, let none thence infer that God has pleasure in wickedness, no, not in that by which men pretend to honour him, as those do that hate their brethren, and cast them out, and say, *Let the Lord be glorified*. God has no pleasure in wickedness, though covered with a cloak of religion. Let those therefore who delight in sin know that God has no delight in them; nor let any say, when he is tempted, *I am tempted of God*, for God is not the author of sin; neither shall evil dwell with him, that is, it shall not always be countenanced and suffered to prosper. Dr. Hammond

thinks this refers to that law of Moses which would not permit strangers, who persisted in their idolatry, to dwell in the land of Israel. (2.) The justice of his government. The foolish shall not stand in his sight, that is, shall not be smiled upon by him, nor admitted to attend upon him, nor shall they be acquitted in the judgment of the great day. The workers of iniquity are very foolish. Sin is folly, and sinners are the greatest of all fools; not fools of God's making (those are to be pitied), for he hates nothing that he has made, but fools of their own making, and those he hates. Wicked people hate God; justly therefore are they hated of him, and it will be their endless misery and ruin. "Those whom thou hatest thou shalt destroy; particularly two sorts of sinners, who are here marked for destruction:—[1.] Those that are fools, that speak leasing or lying, and that are deceitful. There is a particular emphasis laid on these sinners (Rev. xxi. 8), *All liars*, and (ch. xxii. 15), *Whosoever loves and makes a lie*; nothing is more contrary than this, and therefore nothing more hateful to the God of truth. [2.] Those that are cruel: *Thou wilt abhor the bloody man*; for inhumanity is no less contrary, no less hateful, to the God of mercy, whom mercy pleases. Liars and murderers are in a particular manner said to resemble the devil and to be his children, and therefore it may well be expected that God should abhor them. These were the characters of David's enemies; and such as these are still the enemies of Christ and his church, men perfectly lost to all virtue and honour; and the worse they are the surer we may be of their ruin in due time.

In singing these verses, and praying them over, we must engage and stir up ourselves to the duty of prayer, and encourage ourselves in it, because we shall not seek the Lord in vain; and must express our detestation of sin, and our awful expectation of that day of Christ's appearing which will be the day of the perdition of ungodly men.

7 But as for me, I will come into

thy house in the multitude of thy mercy; and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple. 8 Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face. 9 For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue. 10 Destroy thou them, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions; for they have rebelled against thee. 11 But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee. 12 For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.

In these verses David gives three characters—of himself, of his enemies, and of all the people of God, and subjoins a prayer to each of them.

1. He gives an account of himself and prays for himself, v. 7, 8

1. He is stedfastly resolved to keep closely to God and to his worship. Sinners go away from God, and so make themselves odious to his holiness and obnoxious to his justice: "*But, as for me*, that shall not keep me from thee." God's holiness and justice are so far from being a terror to the upright in heart, to drive them from God, that they are rather by them invited to cleave to him. David resolves, (1.) To worship God, to pay his homage to him, and give unto God the glory due unto his name. (2.) To worship him publicly: "*I will come into thy house*, the courts of thy house, to worship there with other faithful worshippers." David was much in secret worship, prayed often alone (v. 2, 3), and yet was very constant and devout in his attendance on the sanctuary. The duties of the closet are designed to prepare us for, not to excuse us from, public ordinances. (3.) To worship him reverently and with a due sense of the infinite distance there is between God and man: "*In thy fear will I worship*, with a holy awe of God upon my spirit," Heb. xii. 28. God is greatly to be feared by all his worshippers. (4.) To take his encouragement, in worship, from God himself only. [1.] From his infinite mercy. It is in the multitude of God's mercy (the inexhaustible treasures of mercy that are in God and the innumerable proofs and instances of it which we receive from him) that David confides, and not in any merit or righteousness of his own, in his approaches to God. The mercy

of God should ever be both the foundation of our hopes and the fountain of our joy in every thing wherein we have to do with him. [2.] From the instituted medium of worship, which was then the temple, here called *the temple of his holiness*, as a type of Christ, the great and only Mediator, who sanctifies the service as the temple sanctified the gold, and to whom we must have an eye in all our devotions as the worshippers then had to the temple.

2. He earnestly prays that God, by his grace, would guide and preserve him always in the way of his duty (v. 8): *Lead me in thy righteousness, because of my enemies*—Heb. "*Because of those who observe me, who watch for my halting and seek occasion against me.*" See here, (1.) The good use which David made of the malice of his enemies against him. The more curious they were in spying faults in him, that they might have whereof to accuse him, the more cautious he was to avoid sin and all appearances of it, and the more solicitous to be always found in the good way of God and duty. Thus, by wisdom and grace, good may come out of evil. (2.) The right course which David took for the baffling of those who sought occasion against him. He committed himself to a divine guidance, begged of God both by his providence and by his grace to direct him in the right way, and keep him from turning aside out of it, at any time, in any instance whatsoever, that the most critical and captious of his enemies, like Daniel's, might find no occasion against him. The way of our duty is here called *God's way*, and *his righteousness*, because he prescribes to us by his just and holy laws, which if we sincerely set before us as our rule, we may in faith beg of God to direct us in all particular cases. How this prayer of David's was answered to him see 1 Sam. xviii. 14, 15.

II. He gives an account of his enemies, and prays against them, v. 9, 10. 1. If his account of them is true, as no doubt it is, they have a very bad character; and, if they had not been bad men indeed, they could not have been enemies to a man after God's own heart. He had spoken (v. 6) of God's hating the bloody and deceitful man. "Now, Lord," says he, "that is the character of my enemies: they are deceitful; there is no trusting them, for there is no faithfulness in their mouth." They thought it was no sin to tell a deliberate lie if it might but blemish David, and render him odious. "Lord, lead me," says he (v. 8), "for such as these are the men I have to do with, against whose slanders innocence itself is no security. Do they speak fair? Do they talk of peace and friendship? *They flatter with their tongues*; it is designed to cover their malice, and to gain their point the more securely. Whatever they pretend of religion or friendship, two sacred things, they are true to neither: *Their inward part is wickedness* itself; it is very

wickedness. They are likewise bloody; for *their throat is an open sepulchre*, cruel as the grave, gaping to devour and to swallow up, insatiable as the grave, which never says, *It is enough*," Prov. xxx. 15, 16. This is quoted (Rom. iii. 13) to show the general corruption of mankind; for they are all naturally prone to malice, Tit. iii. 3. The grave is opened for them all, and yet they are as open graves to one another. 2. If his prayer against them is heard, as no doubt it is, they are in a bad condition. As men are, and do, so they must expect to fare. He prays to God to destroy them (according to what he had said (v. 6), "Thou shalt destroy men of this character," so *let them fall*; and sinners would soon throw themselves into ruin if they were let alone), to *cast them out* of his protection and favour, out of the heritage of the Lord, out of the land of the living; and woe to those whom God casts out. "They have by their sins deserved destruction; there is enough to justify God in their utter rejection: *Cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions*, by which they have filled up the measure of their iniquity and have become ripe for ruin." Persecuting God's servants fills the measure as soon as any thing, 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16. Nay, they may be easily made *to fall by their own counsels*; that which they do to secure themselves, and do mischief to others, by the over-ruling providence of God may be made a means of their destruction, vii. 15; ix. 15. He pleads, "*They have rebelled against thee*. Had they been only my enemies, I could safely have forgiven them but they are rebels against God, his crown and dignity; they oppose his government, and will not repent, to give him glory, and therefore I plainly foresee their ruin." His prayer for their destruction comes not from a spirit of revenge, but from a spirit of prophecy, by which he foretold that all who rebel against God will certainly be destroyed by their own counsels. If it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to those that trouble his people, as we are told it is (2 Thess. i. 6), we pray that it may be done whenever we pray, *Father, thy will be done*.

III. He gives an account of the people of God, and prays for them, concluding with an assurance of their bliss, which he doubted not of his own interest in. Observe, 1. The description he gives of God's people. They are the righteous (v. 12); for they *put their trust in God*, are well assured of his power and all-sufficiency, venture their all upon his promise, and are confident of his protection in the way of their duty; and they *love his name*, are well pleased with all that by which God has made himself known, and take delight in their acquaintance with him. This is true and pure religion, to live a life of complacency in God and dependence on him. 2. His prayer for them: "*Let them rejoice*; let them have cause to rejoice and hearts to

rejoice; fill them with joy, with great joy and unspeakable; let them shout for joy, with constant joy and perpetual; *let them ever shout for joy*, with holy joy, and that which terminates in God; *let them be joyful in thee*, in thy favour, in thy salvation, not in any creature. Let them rejoice *because thou defendest them*, coverest them, or overshadowest them, dwellst among them." Perhaps here is an allusion to the pillar of cloud and fire, which was to Israel a visible token of God's special presence with them and the special protection they were under. Let us learn of David to pray, not for ourselves only, but for others, for all good people, for all that trust in God and love his name, though not in every thing of our mind nor in our interest. Let all that are entitled to God's promises have a share in our prayers; grace be with all that love Christ in sincerity. This is to concur with God. 3. His comfort concerning them, *v. 12*. He takes them into his prayers because they are God's peculiar people; therefore he doubts not but his prayers shall be heard, and they shall always rejoice; for, (1.) They are happy in the assurance of God's blessing: "*Thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous*, wilt command a blessing upon them. Thou hast in thy word pronounced them blessed, and therefore wilt make them truly so. *Those whom thou blessest are blessed indeed.*" (2.) "They are safe under the protection of thy favour; with that thou wilt crown him" (so some read it); "it is his honour, will be to him a diadem of beauty, and make him truly great: with that thou wilt compass him, wilt surround him, on every side, *as with a shield.*" A shield, in war, guards only one side, but the favour of God is to the saints a defence on every side; like the hedge about Job, round about, so that, while they keep themselves under the divine protection, they are entirely safe and ought to be entirely satisfied.

In singing these verses, and praying them over, we must by faith put ourselves under God's guidance and care, and then please ourselves with his mercy and grace and with the prospect of God's triumphs at last over all his enemies and his people's triumphs in him and in his salvation.

PSALM VI.

David was a weeping prophet as well as Jeremiah, and this psalm is one of his lamentations: either it was penned in a time, or at least calculated for a time, of great trouble, both outward and inward. Is any afflicted? Is any sick? Let him sing this psalm. The method of this psalm is very observable, and what we shall often meet with. He begins with doleful complaints, but ends with joyful praises; like Hannah, who went to prayer with a sorrowful spirit, but, when she had prayed, went her way, and her countenance was no more sad. Three things the psalmist is here complaining of.—1. Sickness of body. 2. Trouble of mind, arising from the sense of sin, the meritorious cause of pain and sickness. 3. The insults of his enemies upon occasion of both. Now here, 1. He pours out his complaints before God, deprecates his wrath, and begs earnestly for the return of his favour, *ver. 1—7*. 2. He assures himself of an answer of peace, shortly, to his full satisfaction, *ver. 8—10*. This psalm is like the book of Job.

To the chief musician on Neginoth upon Sheminith. A psalm of David

O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy

hot displeasure. 2 Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am weak: O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed. 3 My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long? 4 Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies' sake. 5 For in death *there is* no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks? 6 I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears. 7 Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.

These verses speak the language of a heart truly humbled under humbling providences, of a broken and contrite spirit under great afflictions, sent on purpose to awaken conscience and mortify corruption. Those heap up wrath who cry not when God binds them; but those are getting ready for mercy who, under God's rebukes, sow in tears, as David does here. Let us observe here,

I. The representation he makes to God of his grievances. He pours out his complaint before him. Whither else should a child go with his complaints, but to his father? 1. He complains of bodily pain and sickness (*v. 2*). *My bones are vexed*. His bones and his flesh, like Job's, were touched. Though David was a king, yet he was sick and pained; his imperial crown could not keep his head from aching. Great men are men, and subject to the common calamities of human life. Though David was a stout man, a man of war from his youth, yet this could not secure him from distempers, which will soon make even the strong men to bow themselves. Though David was a good man, yet neither could his goodness keep him in health. *Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick*. Let this help to reconcile us to pain and sickness, that it has been the lot of some of the best saints, and that we are directed and encouraged by their example to show before God our trouble in that case, who is *for the body*, and takes cognizance of its ailments. 2. He complains of inward trouble: *My soul is also sorely vexed*; and that is much more grievous than the vexation of the bones. *The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity*, if that be in good plight; but, if that be wounded, the grievance is intolerable. David's sickness brought his sin to his remembrance, and he looked upon it as a token of God's displeasure against him; that was the vexation of his soul; that made him cry, *I am weak, heal me*. It is a sad thing for a man to have his bones and his soul vexed at the same time; but this has been sometimes the lot of God's own people: nay, and this completed his complicated trouble, that it was continued upon him a great while, which is here intimated in that expos-

tulation (v. 3), *Thou, O Lord! how long?* To the living God we must, at such a time, address ourselves, who is the only physician both of body and mind, and not to the Assyrians, not to the god of Ekron.

II. The impression which his troubles made upon him. They lay very heavily; he *groaned till he was weary*, wept till he made his bed to swim, and watered his couch (v. 6), wept till he had almost wept his eyes out (v. 7): *My eye is consumed because of grief*. David had more courage and consideration than to mourn thus for any outward affliction; but, when sin sat heavily upon his conscience and he was made to possess his iniquities, when his soul was wounded with the sense of God's wrath and his withdrawals from him, then he thus grieves and mourns in secret, and even his soul refuses to be comforted. This not only kept his eyes waking, but kept his eyes weeping. Note, 1. It has often been the lot of the best of men to be men of sorrows; our Lord Jesus himself was so. Our way lies through a vale of tears, and we must accommodate ourselves to the temper of the climate. 2. It well becomes the greatest spirits to be tender, and to relent, under the tokens of God's displeasure. David, who could face Goliath himself and many another threatening enemy with an undaunted bravery, yet melts into tears at the remembrance of sin and under the apprehensions of divine wrath; and it was no diminution at all to his character to do so. 3. True penitents weep in their retirements. The Pharisees disguised their faces, that they might *appear unto men to mourn*; but David mourned in the night upon the bed where he lay communing with his own heart, and no eye was a witness to his grief, but the eye of him who is all eye. Peter went out, covered his face, and wept. 4. Sorrow for sin ought to be great sorrow; so David's was; he wept so bitterly, so abundantly, that he watered his couch. 5. The triumphs of wicked men in the sorrows of the saints add very much to their grief. David's eye waxed old because of his enemies, who rejoiced in his afflictions and put bad constructions upon his tears. In this great sorrow David was a type of Christ, who often wept, and who cried out, *My soul is exceedingly sorrowful*, Heb. v. 7.

III. The petitions which he offers up to God in this sorrowful and distressed state.

1. That which he dreads as the greatest evil is the anger of God. This was the wormwood and the gall in the affliction and the misery; it was the infusion of this that made it indeed a bitter cup; and therefore he prays (v. 1), *O Lord! rebuke me not in thy anger, though I have deserved it, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure*. He does not pray, "Lord, rebuke me not; Lord, chasten me not; for, as many as God loves he rebukes and chastens, as a father the son in whom he delights." He can bear the rebuke and chastening well enough if God, at the same time,

lift up the light of his countenance upon him and by his Spirit make him to hear the joy and gladness of his loving-kindness; the affliction of his body will be tolerable if he have but comfort in his soul. No matter though sickness make his bones ache, if God's wrath do not make his heart ache; therefore his prayer is, "*Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath*"; let me not lie under the impressions of that, for that will sink me." Herein David was a type of Christ, whose sorest complaint, in his sufferings, was of the trouble of his soul and of the suspension of his Father's smiles. He never so much as whispered a complaint of the rage of his enemies—"Why do they crucify me?" or the unkindness of his friends—"Why do they desert me?" But he *cried with a loud voice, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Let us thus deprecate the wrath of God more than any outward trouble whatsoever and always beware of treasuring up wrath against a day of affliction. 2. That which he desires as the greatest good, and which would be to him the restoration of all good, is the favour and friendship of God. He prays, (1.) That God would pity him and look upon him with compassion. He thinks himself very miserable, and misery is the proper object of mercy. Hence he prays, "*Have mercy upon me, O Lord! in wrath remember mercy, and deal not with me in strict justice*." (2.) That God would pardon his sins; for that is the proper act of mercy, and is often chiefly intended in that petition, *Have mercy upon me*. (3.) That God would put forth his power for his relief: "*Lord, heal me* (v. 2), *save me* (v. 4), speak the word, and I shall be whole, and all will be well." (4.) That he would be at peace with him: "*Return, O Lord! receive me into thy favour again, and be reconciled to me*. Thou hast seemed to depart from me and neglect me, nay, to set thyself at a distance, as one angry; but now, Lord, return and show thyself nigh to me." (5.) That he would especially preserve the inward man and the interests of that, whatever might become of the body: "*O Lord! deliver my soul from sinning, from sinking, from perishing for ever*." It is an unspeakable privilege that we have a God to go to in our afflictions, and it is our duty to go to him, and thus to wrestle with him, and we shall not seek in vain.

IV. The pleas with which he enforces his petitions, not to move God (he knows our cause and the true merits of it better than we can state them), but to move himself. 1. He pleads his own misery, and that his misery had continued long: "*I am weak, I am troubled, sorely troubled; O Lord! how long shall I be so?*" 2. He pleads God's mercy; and thence we take some of our best encouragements in prayer: *Save me, for thy mercies' sake*. 3. He pleads God's glory (v. 5): "*For in death there is no remembrance of thee* Lord, if thou deliver me and com-

fort me, I will not only give thee thanks for my deliverance, and stir up others to join with me in these thanksgivings, but I will spend the new life thou shalt entrust me with in thy service and to thy glory, and all the remainder of my days I will preserve a grateful remembrance of thy favours to me, and be quickened thereby in all instances of service to thee; but, if I die, I shall be cut short of that opportunity of honouring thee and doing good to others, for *in the grave who will give thee thanks?* Not but that separate souls live and act; and the souls of the faithful joyfully remember God and give thanks to him. But, (1.) In the second death (which perhaps David, being now troubled in soul under the wrath of God, had some dreadful apprehensions of) there is no pleasing remembrance of God; devils and damned spirits blaspheme him and do not praise him. "Lord, let me not lie always under this wrath, for that is *sheol*, it is *hell* itself, and lays me under an everlasting disability to praise thee." Those that sincerely seek God's glory, and desire and delight to praise him, may pray in faith, "Lord, send me not to that dreadful place, where there is no devout remembrance of thee, nor are any thanks given to thee." (2.) Even the death of the body puts an end to our opportunity and capacity of glorifying God in this world, and serving the interests of his kingdom among men by opposing the powers of darkness and bringing many on this earth to know God and devote themselves to him. Some have maintained that the joys of the saints in heaven are more desirable, infinitely more so, than the comforts of saints on earth; yet the services of saints on earth, especially such eminent ones as David was, are more laudable, and redound more to the glory of the divine grace, than the services of the saints in heaven, who are not employed in maintaining the war against sin and Satan, nor in edifying the body of Christ. Courtiers in the royal presence are most happy, but soldiers in the field are more useful; and therefore we may, with good reason, pray that if it be the will of God, and he has any further work for us or our friends to do in this world, he will yet spare us, or them, to serve him. To depart and be with Christ is most happy for the saints themselves; but for them to abide in the flesh is more profitable for the church. This David had an eye to when he pleaded this, *In the grave who shall give thee thanks?* xxx. 9; lxxxviii. 10; cxv. 17; Isa. xxxviii. 18. And this Christ had an eye to when he said, *I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world.*

We should sing these verses with a deep sense of the terrors of God's wrath, which we should therefore dread and deprecate above any thing; and with thankfulness if this be not our condition, and compassion to those who are thus afflicted: if we be thus troubled, let it comfort us that our case is not

without precedent, nor, if we humble ourselves and pray, as David did, shall it be long without redress.

8 Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping. 9 The LORD hath heard my supplication; the LORD will receive my prayer. 10 Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed: let them return and be ashamed suddenly.

What a sudden change is here for the better! He that was groaning, and weeping, and giving up all for gone (v. 6, 7), here looks and speaks very pleasantly. Having made his requests known to God, and lodged his case with him, he is very confident the issue will be good and his sorrow is turned into joy.

I. He distinguishes himself from the wicked and ungodly, and fortifies himself against their insults (v. 8): *Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.* When he was in the depth of his distress, 1. He was afraid that God's wrath against him would give him his portion with the workers of iniquity; but now that this cloud of melancholy had blown over he was assured that his soul would not be gathered with sinners, for they are not his people. He began to suspect himself to be one of them because of the heavy pressures of God's wrath upon him; but now that all his fears were silenced he bade them depart, knowing that his lot was among the chosen. 2. The workers of iniquity had teased him, and taunted him, and asked him, "Where is thy God?" triumphing in his despondency and despair; but now he had wherewith to answer those that reproached him, for God, who was about to return in mercy to him, had now comforted his spirit and would shortly complete his deliverance. 3. Perhaps they had tempted him to do as they did, to quit his religion and betake himself for ease to the pleasures of sin. But now, "*depart from me; I will never lend an ear to your counsel; you would have had me to curse God and die, but I will bless him and live.*" This good use we should make of God's mercies to us, we should thereby have our resolution strengthened never to have any thing more to do with sin and sinners. David was a king, and he takes this occasion to renew his purpose of using his power for the suppression of sin and the reformation of manners, lxxv. 4; ci. 3. When God has done great things for us, this should put us upon studying what we shall do for him. Our Lord Jesus seems to borrow these words from the mouth of his father David, when, having all judgment committed to him, he shall say, *Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity* (Luke xiii. 27), and so teaches us to say so now, cxix. 115.

II. He assures himself that God was, an would be, propitious to him, notwithstanding

the present intimations of wrath which he was under. 1. He is confident of a gracious answer to this prayer which he is now making. While he is yet speaking, he is aware that God hears (as Isa. lxx. 24, Dan. ix. 20), and therefore speaks of it as a thing done, and repeats it with an air of triumph, "*The Lord hath heard*" (v. 8), and again (v. 9), "*The Lord hath heard*." By the workings of God's grace upon his heart he knew his prayer was graciously accepted, and therefore did not doubt but it would in due time be effectually answered. His tears had a voice, a loud voice, in the ears of the God of mercy: *The Lord has heard the voice of my weeping*. Silent tears are not speechless ones. His prayers were cries to God: "*The Lord has heard the voice of my supplication*, has put his *Fiat—Let it be done*, to my petitions, and so it will appear shortly." 2. Thence he infers the like favourable audience of all his other prayers: "*He has heard the voice of my supplication*, and therefore he will receive my prayer; for he gives, and does not upbraid with former grants."

III. He either prays for the conversion or predicts the destruction of his enemies and persecutors, v. 10. 1. It may very well be taken as a prayer for their conversion: "Let them all be ashamed of the opposition they have given me and the censures they have passed upon me. Let them be (as all true penitents are) vexed at themselves for their own folly; let them return to a better temper and disposition of mind, and let them be ashamed of what they have done against me and take shame to themselves." 2. If they be not converted, it is a prediction of their confusion and ruin. *They shall be ashamed and sorely vexed* (so it may be read), and that justly. They rejoiced that David was vexed (v. 2, 3), and therefore, as usually happens, the evil returns upon themselves; they also shall be sorely vexed. Those that will not give glory to God shall have their faces filled with everlasting shame.

In singing this, and praying over it, we must give glory to God, as a God ready to hear prayer, must own his goodness to us in hearing our prayers, and must encourage ourselves to wait upon him and to trust in him in the greatest straits and difficulties.

PSALM VII.

It appears by the title that this psalm was penned with a particular reference to the malicious imputations that David was unjustly laid under by some of his enemies. Being thus wronged, I. He applies to God for favour, ver. 1, 2. II. He appeals to God concerning his innocence as to those things whereof he was accused, ver. 3-5. III. He prays to God to plead his cause and judge for him against his persecutors, ver. 6-9. IV. He expresses his confidence in God that he would do so, and would return the mischief upon the head of those that designed it against him, ver. 10-16. V. He promises to give God the glory of his deliverance, ver. 17. In this David was a type of Christ, who was himself, and still is in his members, thus injured, but will certainly be righted at last.

Shigaion of David, which he sang unto the Lord concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite.

O LORD my God, in thee do I put my trust: save me from all them

that persecute me, and deliver me: 2 Lest he tear my soul like a lion, rending it in pieces, while *there is none* to deliver. 3 O LORD my God, if I have done this; if there be iniquity in my hands; 4 If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me; (yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy:) 5 Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it; yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay mine honour in the dust. Selah. 6 Arise, O LORD, in thine anger, lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies: and awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded. 7 So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about: for their sakes therefore return thou on high. 8 The LORD shall judge the people: judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me. 9 Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.

Shigaion is a song or psalm (the word is used so only here and Hab. iii. 1)—a wandering song (so some), the matter and composition of the several parts being different, but artificially put together—a charming song (so others), very delightful. David not only penned it, but sang it himself in a devout religious manner unto the Lord, concerning the words or affairs of Cush the Benjamite, that is, of Saul himself, whose barbarous usage of David bespoke him rather a Cushite, or Ethiopian, than a true-born Israelite. Or, more likely, it was some kinsman of Saul named Cush, who was an inveterate enemy to David, misrepresented him to Saul as a traitor, and (which was very needless) exasperated Saul against him, one of those children of men, children of Belial indeed, whom David complains of (1 Sam. xxvi. 19), that made mischief between him and Saul. David, thus basely abused, has recourse to the Lord. The injuries men do us should drive us to God, for to him we may commit our cause. Nay, he sings to the Lord; his spirit was not ruffled by it, nor cast down, but so composed and cheerful that he was still in tune for sacred songs and it did not occasion one jarring string in his harp. Thus let the injuries we receive from men, instead of provoking our passions, kindly and excite our devotions. In these verses,

I. He puts himself under God's protection and flies to him for succour and shelter (v. 1). "*Lord, save me, and deliver me from*

the power and malice of *all those that persecute me*, that they may not have their will against me." He pleads, 1. His relation to God: "Thou art *my God*, and therefore whether else should I go but to thee? Thou art my God, and therefore my shield (Gen. xv. 1), my God, and therefore I am one of thy servants, who may expect to be protected." 2. His confidence in God: "Lord, save me, for I depend upon thee: *In thee do I put my trust*, and not in any arm of flesh." Men of honour will not fail those that repose a trust in them, especially if they themselves have encouraged them to do so, which is our case. 3. The rage and malice of his enemies, and the imminent danger he was in of being swallowed up by them: "Lord, save me, or I am gone; he will *tear my soul like a lion* tearing his prey," with so much pride, and pleasure, and power, so easily, so cruelly. St. Paul compares Nero to a lion (2 Tim. iv. 17), as David here compares Saul. 4. The failure of all other helpers: "Lord, be thou pleased to deliver me, for otherwise *there is none to deliver*," v. 2. It is the glory of God to help the helpless.

II. He makes a solemn protestation of his innocency as to those things whereof he was accused, and by a dreadful imprecation appeals to God, the searcher of hearts, concerning it, v. 3—5. Observe, in general, 1. When we are falsely accused by men it is a great comfort if our own consciences acquit us—

Hic murus aeneus esto,
Nil conscire sibi.

Be this thy brazen bulwark of defence,
Still to preserve thy conscious innocence.—

and not only they cannot prove their calumnies (Acts xxiv. 13), but our hearts can disprove them, to our own satisfaction. 2. God is the patron of wronged innocency. David had no court on earth to appeal to. His prince, who should have righted him, was his sworn enemy. But he had the court of heaven to fly to, and a righteous Judge there, whom he could call *his God*. And here see, (1.) What the indictment is which he pleads not guilty to. He was charged with a traitorous design against Saul's crown and life, that he compassed and imagined to depose and murder him, and, in order to that, levied war against him. This he utterly denies. He never did this; there was no iniquity of this kind in his hand (v. 3); he abhorred the thought of it. He never rewarded evil to Saul when he was at *peace with him*, nor to any other, v. 4. Nay, as some think it should be rendered, he never rendered evil for evil, never did those mischief that had injured him. (2.) What evidence he produces of his innocency. It is hard to prove a negative, and yet this was a negative which David could produce very good proof of: *I have delivered him that without cause is my enemy*, v. 4. By this it appeared, beyond contradiction, that David had no design against Saul's life—that, once and again, Providence so ordered

it that Saul lay at his mercy, and there were those about him that would soon have dispatched him, but David generously and conscientiously prevented it, when he cut off his skirt (1 Sam. xxiv. 4) and afterwards when he took away his spear (1 Sam. xxvi. 12), to attest for him what he could have done. Saul himself owned both these to be undeniable proofs of David's integrity and good affection to him. If we render good for evil, and deny ourselves the gratifications of our passion, our so doing may turn to us for a testimony, more than we think of, another day. (3.) What doom he would submit to if he were guilty (v. 5): *Let the enemy persecute my soul to the death, and my good name when I am gone*: let him *lay my honour in the dust*. This intimates, [1.] That, if he had been indeed injurious to others, he had reason to expect that they would repay him in the same coin. He that has his hand against every man must reckon upon it that every man's hand will be against him. [2.] That, in that case, he could not with any confidence go to God and beg of him to deliver him or plead his cause. It is a presumptuous dangerous thing for any that are guilty, and suffer justly, to appeal to God, as if they were innocent and suffered wrongfully; such must humble themselves and accept the punishment of their iniquity, and not expect that the righteous God will patronise their unrighteousness. [3.] That he was abundantly satisfied in himself concerning his innocency. It is natural to us to wish well to ourselves; and therefore a curse to ourselves, if we swear falsely, has been thought as awful a form of swearing as any. With such an oath, or imprecation, David here ratifies the protestation of his innocency, which yet will not justify us in doing the like for every light and trivial cause; for the occasion here was important.

III. Having this testimony of his conscience concerning his innocency, he humbly prays to God to appear for him against his persecutors, and backs every petition with a proper plea, as one that knew how to order his cause before God.

1. He prays that God would manifest his wrath against his enemies, and pleads their wrath against him: "Lord, they are unjustly angry at me, be thou justly angry with them and let them know that thou art so, v. 6. *In thy anger lift up thyself* to the seat of judgment, and make thy power and justice conspicuous, *because of the rage*, the furies, the outrages (the word is plural) *of my enemies*." Those need not fear men's wrath against them who have God's wrath for them. *Who knows the power of his anger?*

2. He prays that God would plead his cause.

(1.) He prays, *Awake for me to judgment* (that is, let my cause have a hearing), *to the judgment which thou hast commanded*; this speaks, [1.] The divine power: as he blesses

effectually, and is therefore said to *command the blessing*, so he judges effectually, and is therefore said to *command the judgment*, which is such as none can countermand; for it certainly carries execution along with it. [2.] The divine purpose and promise: "It is the judgment which thou hast determined to pass upon all the enemies of thy people. Thou hast commanded the princes and judges of the earth to give redress to the injured and vindicate the oppressed; Lord, awaken thyself to that judgment." He that loves righteousness, and requires it in others, will no doubt execute it himself. Though he seem to connive at wrong, as one asleep, he will awake in due time (lxxviii. 65) and will make it to appear that the delays were no neglects.

(2.) He prays (v. 7), "*Return thou on high*, maintain thy own authority, resume thy royal throne of which they have despised the sovereignty, and the judgment-seat of which they have despised the sentence. Return on high, that is, visibly and in the sight of all, that it may be universally acknowledged that heaven itself owns and pleads David's cause." Some make this to point at the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, who, when he returned to heaven (returned on high in his exalted state), had all judgment committed to him. Or it may refer to his second coming, when he shall return on high to this world, to execute judgment upon all. This return his injured people wait for, and pray for, and to it they appeal from the unjust censures of men.

(3.) He prays again (v. 8), "*Judge me*, judge for me, give sentence on my side." To enforce this suit, [1.] He pleads that his cause was now brought into the proper court: *The Lord shall judge the people*, v. 8. It is his place; it is his promise. *God is the Judge*; "Therefore, Lord, judge me." He is the Judge of all the earth, and therefore no doubt he will do right and all will be obliged to acquiesce in his judgment. [2.] He insists upon his integrity as to all the matters in variance between him and Saul, and desires only to be judged, in this matter, according to his righteousness, and the sincerity of his heart in all the steps he had taken towards his pre-ferment. [3.] He foretels that it would be much for the glory of God and the edification and comfort of his people if God would appear for him: "*So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about*"; therefore do it for their sakes, that they may attend thee with their praises and services in the courts of thy house." *First*, They will do it of their own accord. God's appearing on David's behalf, and fulfilling his promise to him, would be such an instance of his righteousness, goodness, and faithfulness, as would greatly enlarge the hearts of all his faithful worshippers and fill their mouths with praise. David was the darling of his country, especially of all the good people in it; and therefore, when they saw him in a fair way to the throne, they

would greatly rejoice and give thanks to God; crowds of them would attend his footstool with their praises for such a blessing to their land. *Secondly*, If David come into power, as God has promised him, he will take care to bring people to church by his influence upon them, and the ark shall not be neglected, as it was in the days of Saul, 1 Chron. xiii. 3.

3. He prays, in general, for the conversion of sinners and the establishment of saints (v. 9): "*O let the wickedness*, not only of my wicked enemies, but of all the wicked, come to an end! but establish the just." Here are two things which every one of us must desire and may hope for:—(1.) The destruction of sin, that it may be brought to an end in ourselves and others. When corruption is mortified, when every wicked way and thought are forsaken, and the stream which ran violently towards the world and the flesh is driven back and runs towards God and heaven, then the wickedness of the wicked comes to an end. When there is a general reformation of manners, when atheists and profane are convinced and converted, when a stop is put to the spreading of the infection of sin, so that evil men proceed no further, their folly being made manifest, when the wicked designs of the church's enemies are baffled, and their power is broken, and the man of sin is destroyed, then the wickedness of the wicked comes to an end. And this is that which all that love God, and for his sake hate evil, desire and pray for. (2.) The perpetuity of righteousness: *But establish the just*. As we pray that the bad may be made good, so we pray that the good may be made better, that they may not be seduced by the wiles of the wicked nor shocked by their malice, that they may be confirmed in their choice of the ways of God and in their resolution to persevere therein, may be firm to the interests of God and religion and zealous in their endeavours to bring the wickedness of the wicked to an end. His plea to enforce this petition is, *For the righteous God trieth the hearts and the reins*, and therefore he knows the secret wickedness of the wicked and knows how to bring it to an end, and the secret sincerity of the just he is witness to and has secret ways of establishing.

As far as we have the testimony of an un-biassed conscience for us that in any instance we are wronged and injuriously reflected on, we may, in singing these verses, lodge our appeal with the righteous God, and be assured that he will own our righteous cause, and will one day, in the last day at furthest, bring forth our integrity as the light.

10 My defence is of God, which saveth the upright in heart. 11 God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day. 12 If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it

ready. 13 He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors. 14 Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. 15 He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made. 16 His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate. 17 I will praise the LORD according to his righteousness; and will sing praise to the name of the LORD most high.

David having lodged his appeal with God by prayer and a solemn profession of his integrity, in the former part of the psalm, in this latter part does, as it were, take out judgment upon the appeal, by faith in the word of God, and the assurance it gives of the happiness and safety of the righteous and the certain destruction of wicked people that continue impenitent.

I. David is confident that he shall find God his powerful protector and Saviour, and the patron of his oppressed innocency (v. 10): "*My defence is of God. Not only, God is my defender, and I shall find him so; but I look for defence and safety in no other; my hope for shelter in a time of danger is placed in God alone; if I have defence, it must be of God.*" *My shield is upon God* (so some read it); there is that in God which gives an assurance of protection to all that are his. His name is a strong tower, Prov. xviii. 10. Two things David builds this confidence upon:—

1. The particular favour God has for all that are sincere: *He saves the upright in heart*, saves them with an everlasting salvation, and therefore will preserve them to his heavenly kingdom; he saves them out of their present troubles, as far as is good for them; their integrity and uprightness will preserve them. The upright in heart are safe, and ought to think themselves so, under the divine protection. 2. The general respect he has for justice and equity: *God judgeth the righteous*; he owns every righteous cause, and will maintain it in every righteous man, and will protect him. *God is a righteous Judge* (so some read it), who not only doeth righteousness himself, but will take care that righteousness be done by the children of men and will avenge and punish all unrighteousness.

II. He is no less confident of the destruction of all his persecutors, even as many of them as would not repent, to give glory to God. He reads their doom here, for their good, if possible, that they might cease from their enmity, or, however, for his own comfort, that he might not be afraid of them nor aggrieved at their prosperity and success for a time. He goes into the sanctuary of God, and there understands,

1. That they are children of wrath. They are not to be envied, for God is angry with them, is *angry with the wicked every day*. They are every day doing that which is provoking to him, and he resents it, and treasures it up against the day of wrath. As his mercies are new every morning towards his people, so his anger is new every morning against the wicked, upon the fresh occasions given for it by their renewed transgressions. God is angry with the wicked even in the merriest and most prosperous of their days, even in the days of their devotion; for, if they be suffered to prosper, it is in wrath; if they pray, their very prayers are an abomination. The wrath of God abides upon them (John iii. 36) and continual additions are made to it.

2. That they are children of death, as all the children of wrath are, sons of perdition, marked out for ruin. See their destruction.

(1.) God will destroy them. The destruction they are reserved for is *destruction from the Almighty*, which ought to be a terror to every one of us, for it comes from the *wrath of God*, v. 13, 14. It is here intimated, [1.] That the destruction of sinners may be prevented by their conversion, for it is threatened with that proviso: *If he turn not from his evil way, if he do not let fall his enmity against the people of God, then let him expect it will be his ruin*; but, if he turn, it is implied that his sin shall be pardoned and all shall be well. Thus even the threatenings of wrath are introduced with a gracious implication of mercy, enough to justify God for ever in the destruction of those that perish; they might have turned and lived, but they chose rather to go on and die and their blood is therefore upon their own heads. [2.] That, if it be not thus prevented by the conversion of the sinner, it will be prepared for him by the justice of God. In general (v. 13), *He has prepared for him the instruments of death*, of all that death which is the wages of sin. If God will slay, he will not want instruments of death for any creature; even the least and weakest may be made so when he pleases. First, Here is variety of instruments, all which breathe threatenings and slaughter. Here is a sword, which wounds and kills at hand, a bow and arrows, which wound and kill at a distance those who think to get out of the reach of God's vindictive justice. *If the sinner flees from the iron weapon, yet the bow of steel shall strike him through*, Job xx. 24. Secondly, These instruments of death are all said to be made ready. God has them not to seek, but always at hand. *Judgments are prepared for scorners. Tophet is prepared of old*. Thirdly, While God is preparing his instruments of death, he gives the sinners timely warning of their danger, and space to repent and prevent it. He is slow to punish, and *long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish*. Fourthly, The longer the destruction is delayed, to give

time for repentance, the sorer will it be and the heavier will it fall and lie for ever if that time be not so improved; while God is waiting the sword is in the whetting and the bow in the drawing. *Fifthly*, The destruction of impenitent sinners, though it come slowly, yet comes surely; for it is *ordained*, they are of old ordained to it. *Sixthly*, Of all sinners persecutors are set up as the fairest marks of divine wrath; against them, more than any other, God has ordained his arrows. They set God at defiance, but cannot set themselves out of the reach of his judgments.

(2.) They will destroy themselves, v. 14—16. The sinner is here described as taking a great deal of pains to ruin himself, more pains to damn his soul than, if directed aright, would save it. His conduct is described, [1.] By the pains of a labouring woman that brings forth a false conception, v. 14. The sinner's head with its politics *conceives mischief*, contrives it with a great deal of art, lays the plot deep, and keeps it close; the sinner's heart with its passions *travails with iniquity*, and is in pain to be delivered of the malicious projects it is hatching against the people of God. But what does it come to when it comes to the birth? It is falsehood; it is a cheat upon himself; it is a lie in his right hand. He cannot compass what he intended, nor, if he gain his point, will he gain the satisfaction he promised himself. He brings forth *wind* (Isa. xxvi. 18), *stubble* (Isa. xxxiii. 11), *death* (James i. 15), that is, *falsehood*. [2.] By the pains of a labouring man that works hard to dig a pit, and then falls into it and perishes in it. *First*, This is true, in a sense, of all sinners. They prepare destruction for themselves by preparing themselves for destruction, loading themselves with guilt and submitting themselves to their corruptions. *Secondly*, It is often remarkably true of those who contrive mischief against the people of God or against their neighbours; by the righteous hand of God it is made to *return upon their own heads*. What they designed for the shame and destruction of others proves to be their own confusion.

—Nec lex est justior ulla
Quam necis artifices arte perire sua—

There is not a juster law than that the author of a murderous contrivance shall perish by it.

Some apply it to Saul, who fell upon his sword.

In singing this psalm we must do as David here does (v. 17), *praise the Lord according to his righteousness*, that is, give him the glory of that gracious protection under which he takes his afflicted people and of that just vengeance with which he will pursue those that afflict them. Thus we must sing to the praise of the Lord most high, who, when his enemies deal proudly, shows that he is above them.

PSALM VIII.

This psalm is a solemn meditation on, and admiration of, the glory and greatness of God, of which we are all concerned to think highly and honourably. It begins and ends with the

same acknowledgment of the transcendent excellency of God's name. It is proposed for proof (ver. 1) that God's name is excellent in all the earth, and then it is repeated as proved (with a "quod erat demonstrandum"—which was to be demonstrated) in the last verse. For the proof of God's glory the psalmist gives instances of his goodness to man; for God's goodness is his glory. God is to be glorified, I. For making known himself and his great name to us, ver. 1. II. For making use of the weakest of the children of men, by them to serve his own purposes, ver. 2. III. For making even the heavenly bodies useful to man, ver. 3, 4. IV. For making him to have dominion over the creatures in this lower world, and thereby placing him but little lower than the angels, ver. 5—8. This psalm is, in the New Testament, applied to Christ and the work of our redemption which he wrought out; the honour given by the children of men to him (ver. 2, compared with Matt. xxi. 16) and the honour put upon the children of men by him, both in his humiliation, when he was made a little lower than the angels, and in his exaltation, when he was crowned with glory and honour. Compare ver. 5, 6, with Heb. ii. 6—8, 1 Cor. xv. 27. When we are observing the glory of God in the kingdom of nature and Providence we should be led by that, and through that, to the contemplation of his glory in the kingdom of grace.

To the chief musician upon Gittith. A psalm of David.

O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens. 2 Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

The psalmist here sets himself to give to God the glory due to his name. Dr. Hammond grounds a conjecture upon the title of this psalm concerning the occasion of penning it. It is said to be upon *Gittith*, which is generally taken for the tune, or musical instrument, with which this psalm was to be sung; but he renders it upon the *Gittite*, that is, *Goliath the Gittite*, whom he vanquished and slew (1 Sam. xvii.); that enemy was stilled by him who was, in comparison, but a babe and a suckling. The conjecture would be probable enough but that we find two other psalms with the same title, lxxxi. and lxxxiv. Two things David here admires:—

I. How plainly God displays his glory himself, v. 1. He addresses himself to God with all humility and reverence, as the Lord and his people's Lord: *O Lord our Lord!* If we believe that God is the Lord, we must avouch and acknowledge him to be ours. He is ours, for he made us, protects us, and takes special care of us. He must be ours, for we are bound to obey him and submit to him; we must own the relation, not only when we come to pray to God, as a plea with him to show us mercy, but when we come to praise him, as an argument with ourselves to give him glory. And we shall never think we can do that with affection enough if we consider, 1. How brightly God's glory shines even in this lower world: *How excellent is his name in all the earth!* The works of creation and Providence evince and proclaim to all the world that there is an infinite Being, the fountain of all being, power, and perfection, the sovereign ruler, powerful protector, and bountiful benefactor of all the creatures. How great, how illustrious, how magnificent, is his name in all the earth! The light of it shines in

men's faces every where (Rom. 1. 20); if they shut their eyes against it, that is their fault. There is no speech or language but the voice of God's name either is heard in it or may be. But this looks further, to the gospel of Christ, by which the name of God, as it is notified by divine revelation, which before was great in Israel only, came to be so in all the earth, the utmost ends of which have thus been made to see *God's great salvation*, Mark xvi. 15, 16. 2. How much more brightly it shines in the upper world: *Thou hast set thy glory above the heavens*. (1.) God is infinitely more glorious and excellent than the noblest of creatures and those that shine most brightly. (2.) Whereas we, on this earth, only hear God's excellent name, and praise that, the angels and blessed spirits above see his glory, and praise that, and yet he is exalted far above even their blessing and praise. (3.) In the exaltation of the Lord Jesus to the right hand of God, who is the brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his person, God set his glory above the heavens, far above all principalities and powers.

II. How powerfully he proclaims it by the weakest of his creatures (v. 2): *Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength*, or perfected praise, the praise of thy strength, Matt. xxi. 16. This intimates the glory of God, 1. In the kingdom of nature. The care God takes of little children (when they first come into the world the most helpless of all animals), the special protection they are under, and the provision nature has made for them, ought to be acknowledged by every one of us, to the glory of God, as a great instance of his power and goodness, and the more sensibly because we have all had the benefit of it, for to this we owe it that we *died not from the womb*, that the knees then prevented us, *and the breasts, that we should suck*. "This is such an instance of thy goodness, as may for ever put to silence the enemies of thy glory, who say, There is no God." 2. In the kingdom of Providence. In the government of this lower world he makes use of the children of men, some that know him and others that do not (Isa. xlv. 4), and these such as have been babes and sucklings; nay, sometimes he is pleased to serve his own purposes by the ministry of such as are still, in wisdom and strength, little better than babes and sucklings. 3. In the kingdom of grace, the kingdom of the Messiah. It is here foretold that by the apostles, who were looked upon but as babes, *unlearned and ignorant men* (Acts iv. 13), mean and despicable, and by the *foolishness of their preaching*, the devil's kingdom should be thrown down, as Jericho's walls were by the sound of rams' horns. The gospel is called *the arm of the Lord and the rod of his strength*; this was ordained to work wonders, not out of the mouth of philosophers or orators, politicians or statesmen, but of a company of poor fishermen, who lay under the greatest external

disadvantages; yea, we hear children crying, *Hosanna to the Son of David*, when the chief priests and Pharisees owned him not, but despised and rejected him; to that therefore our Saviour applied this (Matt. xxi. 16) and by it stilled the enemy. Sometimes the grace of God appears wonderfully in young children, *and he teaches those knowledge, and makes those to understand doctrine, who are but newly weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts*, Isa. xxviii. 9. Sometimes the power of God brings to pass great things in his church by very weak and unlikely instruments, and confounds the noble, wise, and mighty, by the base, and weak, and foolish things of the world, that no flesh may glory in his presence, but the excellency of the power may the more evidently appear to be of God, and not of man, 1 Cor. i. 27, 28. This he does *because of his enemies*, because they are insolent and haughty, that he may still them, may put them to silence, and put them to shame, and so be justly avenged on the avengers; see Acts iv. 14; vi. 10. The devil is the great enemy and avenger, and by the preaching of the gospel he was in a great measure stilled, his oracles were silenced, the advocates of his cause were confounded, and unclean spirits themselves were not suffered to speak.

In singing this let us give God the glory of his great name, and of the great things he has done by the power of his gospel, in the chariot of which the exalted Redeemer rides forth conquering and to conquer, and ought to be attended, not only with our praises, but with our best wishes. Praise is perfected (that is, God is in the highest degree glorified) when strength is ordained out of the mouth of babes and sucklings.

3 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; 4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? 5 For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. 6 Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all *things* under his feet: 7 All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; 8 The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, *and whatsoever* passeth through the paths of the seas. 9 O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!

David here goes on to magnify the honour of God by recounting the honours he has put upon man, especially the man Christ Jesus. The condescensions of the divine grace call for our praises as much as the elevations of the divine glory. How God has condescended in favour to man the psalmist here observes

with wonder and thankfulness, and recommends it to our thoughts. See here,

I. What it is that leads him to admire the condescending favour of God to man; it is his consideration of the lustre and influence of the heavenly bodies, which are within the view of sense (v. 3): *I consider thy heavens, and there, particularly, the moon and the stars.* But why does he not take notice of the sun, which much excels them all? Probably because it was in a night-walk, by moon-light, that he entertained and instructed himself with this meditation, when the sun was not within view, but only the moon and the stars, which, though they are not altogether so serviceable to man as the sun is, yet are no less demonstrations of the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Creator. Observe, 1. It is our duty to consider the heavens. We see them, we cannot but see them. By this, among other things, man is distinguished from the beasts, that, while they are so framed as to look downwards to the earth, man is made erect to look upwards towards heaven. *Os homini sublime dedit, cælumque tueri jussit—To man he gave an erect countenance, and bade him gaze on the heavens,* that thus he may be directed to set his affections on things above; for what we see has not its due influence upon us unless we consider it. 2. We must always consider the heavens as God's heavens, not only as all the world is his, even the earth and the fulness thereof, but in a more peculiar manner. *The heavens, even the heavens, are the Lord's* (cxv. 16); they are the place of the residence of his glory and we are taught to call him *Our Father in heaven.* 3. They are therefore his, because they are the work of his fingers. He made them; he made them easily. The stretching out of the heavens needed not any outstretched arm; it was done with a word; it was but *the work of his fingers.* He made them with very great curiosity and fineness, like a nice piece of work which the artist makes with his fingers. 4. Even the inferior lights, the moon and stars, show the glory and power of the Father of lights, and furnish us with matter for praise. 5. The heavenly bodies are not only the creatures of the divine power, but subject to the divine government. God not only made them, but *ordained* them, and the ordinances of heaven can never be altered. But how does this come in here to magnify God's favour to man? (1.) When we consider how the glory of God shines in the upper world we may well wonder that he should take cognizance of such a mean creature as man, that he who resides in that bright and blessed part of the creation, and governs it, should humble himself to behold the things done upon this earth; see cxiii. 5, 6. (2.) When we consider of what great use the heavens are to men on earth, and how the lights of heavens are *divided unto all nations* (Deut. iv. 19, Gen. i. 15), we may well say, "*Lord, what is man that thou shouldst settle the ordinances of heaven with an eye*

to him and to his benefit, and that his comfort and convenience should be so consulted in the making of the lights of heaven and directing their motions!"

II. How he expresses this admiration (v. 4): "*Lord, what is man (enosh, sinful, weak, miserable man, a creature so forgetful of thee and his duty to thee) that thou art thus mindful of him, that thou takest cognizance of him and of his actions and affairs, that in the making of the world thou hadst a respect to him!* What is the son of man, that thou visitest him, that thou not only feedest him and clothest him, protectest him and providest for him, in common with other creatures, but visitest him as one friend visits another, art pleased to converse with him and concern thyself for him! What is man—(so mean a creature), that he should be thus honoured—(so sinful a creature), that he should be thus countenanced and favoured!" Now this refers,

1. To mankind in general. Though man is a worm, and the son of man is a worm (Job xxv. 6), yet God puts a respect upon him, and shows him abundance of kindness; man is, above all the creatures in this lower world, the favourite and darling of Providence. For, (1.) He is of a very honourable rank of beings. We may be sure he takes precedence of all the inhabitants of this lower world, for he is made but a *little lower than the angels* (v. 5), lower indeed, because by his body he is allied to the earth and to the beasts that perish, and yet by his soul, which is spiritual and immortal, he is so near akin to the holy angels that he may be truly said to be but a *little lower than they*, and is, in order, next to them. He is but for a little while lower than the angels, while his great soul is cooped up in a house of clay, but the children of the resurrection shall be *ἰσόγγητοι—angels' peers* (Luke xx. 36) and no longer lower than they. (2.) He is endued with noble faculties and capacities: *Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour.* He that gave him his being has distinguished him, and qualified him for a dominion over the inferior creatures; for, having made him *wiser than the beasts of the earth and the fowls of heaven* (Job xxxv. 11), he has made him fit to rule them and it is fit that they should be ruled by him. Man's reason is his crown of glory; let him not profane that crown by disturbing the use of it nor forfeit that crown by acting contrary to its dictates. (3.) He is invested with a sovereign dominion over the inferior creatures, under God, and is constituted their lord. He that made them, and knows them, and whose own they are, has made man to have dominion over them, v. 6. His charter, by which he holds this royalty, bears equal date with his creation (Gen. i. 28) and was renewed after the flood, Gen. ix. 2. God has put all things under man's feet, that he might serve himself, not only of the labour, but of the productions and lives of the inferior creatures; they are all delivered into his hand, nay, they are all put

under his feet. He specifies some of the inferior animals (*v.* 7, 8), not only *sheep and oxen*, which man takes care of and provides for, but *the beasts of the field*, as well as those of the flood, *yea*, and those creatures which are most at a distance from man, as *the fowl of the air*, *yea*, and *the fish of the sea*, which live in another element and pass unseen through the paths of the seas. Man has arts to take these; though many of them are much stronger and many of them much swifter than he, yet, one way or other, he is too hard for them, *Jam. iii. 7. Every kind of beasts, and birds, and things in the sea, is tamed, and has been tamed.* He has likewise liberty to use them as he has occasion. *Rise, Peter, kill and eat, Acts x. 13.* Every time we partake of fish or of fowl we realize this dominion which man has over the works of God's hands; and this is a reason for our subjection to God, our chief Lord, and to his dominion over us.

2. But this refers, in a particular manner, to Jesus Christ. Of him we are taught to expound it, *Heb. ii. 6—8*, where the apostle, to prove the sovereign dominion of Christ both in heaven and in earth, shows that he is that man, that son of man, here spoken of, whom *God has crowned with glory and honour and made to have dominion over the works of his hands.* And it is certain that the greatest favour that ever was shown to the human race, and the greatest honour that ever was put upon the human nature, were exemplified in the incarnation and exaltation of the Lord Jesus; these far exceed the favours and honours done us by creation and providence, though they also are great and far more than we deserve. We have reason humbly to value ourselves by it and thankfully to admire the grace of God in it, (1.) That Jesus Christ assumed the nature of man, and, in that nature, humbled himself. He became the *Son of man*, a partaker of flesh and blood; being so, God visited him, which some apply to his sufferings for us, for it is said (*Heb. ii. 9*), *For the suffering of death*, a visitation in wrath, *he was crowned with glory and honour.* God visited him; having laid upon him the iniquity of us all, he reckoned with him for it, visited him with a rod and with stripes, that we by them might be healed. He was, *for a little while* (so the apostle interprets it), made lower than the angels, when he took upon him the form of a servant and made himself of no reputation. (2.) That, in that nature, he is exalted to be Lord of all. God the Father exalted him, because he had humbled himself, *crowned him with glory and honour*, the glory which he had with him before the worlds were, set him at his own right hand, constituted him not only the *head of the church*, but *head over all things to the church*, and gave all things into his hand, entrusted him with the administration of the kingdom of providence in conjunction with and subserviency to the kingdom of grace. All the creatures are put under his feet; and, even in the days of his

flesh, he gave some specimens of his power over them, as when he commanded the winds and the seas, and appointed a fish to pay his tribute: With good reason therefore does the psalmist conclude as he began, *Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth*, which has been honoured with the presence of the Redeemer, and is still enlightened by his gospel and governed by his wisdom and power!

In singing this and praying it over, though we must not forget to acknowledge, with suitable affections, God's common favours to mankind, particularly in the serviceableness of the inferior creatures to us, yet we must especially set ourselves to give glory to our Lord Jesus, by confessing that he is Lord, submitting to him as our Lord, and waiting till we see all things put under him and all his enemies made his footstool.

PSALM IX.

In this psalm, I. David praises God for pleading his cause, and giving him victory over his enemies and the enemies of his country (*ver. 1—6*), and calls upon others to join with him in his songs of praise, *ver. 11, 12*. II. He prays to God that he might have still further occasion to praise him, for his own deliverances and the confusion of his enemies, *ver. 13, 14, 19, 20*. III. He triumphs in the assurance he had of God's judging the world (*ver. 7, 8*), protecting his oppressed people (*ver. 9, 10, 18*), and bringing his and their implacable enemies to ruin, *ver. 15—17*. This is very applicable to the kingdom of the Messiah, the enemies of which have been in part destroyed already, and shall be yet more and more, till they all be made his footstool, which we are to assure ourselves of, that God may have the glory and we may take the comfort.

To the chief musician upon Muth-labben.

A psalm of David.

I WILL praise thee, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will show forth all thy marvellous works. 2 I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High. 3 When mine enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at thy presence. 4 For thou hast maintained my right and my cause; thou satest in the throne judging right. 5 Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked, thou hast put out their name for ever and ever. 6 O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end: and thou hast destroyed cities; their memorial is perished with them. 7 But the LORD shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment. 8 And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness. 9 The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. 10 And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.

The title of this psalm gives a very uncertain sound concerning the occasion of penning it. It is upon *Muth-labben*, which some

make to refer to the death of Goliath, others of Nabal, others of Absalom; but I incline to think it signifies only some tune, or some musical instrument, to which this psalm was intended to be sung; and that the enemies David is here triumphing in the defeat of are the Philistines, and the other neighbouring nations that opposed his settlement in the throne, whom he contested with and subdued in the beginning of his reign, 2 Sam. v. 8. In these verses,

I. David excites and engages himself to praise God for his mercies and the great things he had of late done for him and his government, v. 1, 2. Note, 1. God expects suitable returns of praise from those for whom he has done marvellous works. 2. If we would praise God acceptably, we must praise him in sincerity, with our hearts, and not only with our lips, and be lively and fervent in the duty, with our *whole heart*. 3. When we give thanks for some one particular mercy we should take occasion thence to remember former mercies and so to *show forth all his marvellous works*. 4. Holy joy is the life of thankful praise, as thankful praise is the language of holy joy: *I will be glad and rejoice in thee*. 5. Whatever occurs to make us glad, our joy must pass through it, and terminate in God only: *I will be glad and rejoice in thee*, not in the gift so much as in the giver. 6. Joy and praise are properly expressed by singing psalms. 7. When God has shown himself to be above the proud enemies of the church we must take occasion thence to give glory to him as the *Most High*. 8. The triumphs of the Redeemer ought to be the triumphs of the redeemed; see Rev. xii. 10; xix. 5; xv. 3, 4.

II. He acknowledges the almighty power of God as that which the strongest and stoutest of his enemies were no way able to contest with or stand before, v. 3. But, 1. They are forced to turn back. Their policy and their courage fail them, so that they cannot, they dare not, push forward in their enterprises, but retire with precipitation. 2. When once they turn back, they fall and perish; even their retreat will be their ruin, and they will save themselves no more by flying than by fighting. If Haman begin to fall before Mordecai, he is a lost man, and shall prevail no more; see Esther vi. 13. 3. The presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power, are sufficient for the destruction of his and his people's enemies. That is easily done which a man does with his very presence; with *that* God confounds his enemies, such a presence has he. This was fulfilled when our Lord Jesus, with one word, *I am he*, made his enemies to *fall back at his presence* (John xviii. 6) and he could, at the same time, have made them perish. 4. When the enemies of God's church are put to confusion we must ascribe their discomfiture to the power, not of instruments, but of his presence, and give him all the glory.

III. He gives to God the glory of his righteousness, in his appearing on his behalf (v. 4): "*Thou hast maintained my right and my cause*, that is, my righteous cause; when that came on, *thou satest in the throne, judging right*. Observe, 1. God sits in the throne of judgment. To him it belongs to decide controversies, to determine appeals, to avenge the injured, and to punish the injurious; for he has said, *Vengeance is mine*. 2. We are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth and that with him there is no unrighteousness. Far be it from God that he should pervert justice. If there seem to us to be some irregularity in the present decisions of Providence, yet these, instead of shaking our belief of God's justice, may serve to strengthen our belief of the judgment to come, which will set all to-rights. 3. Whoever disown and desert a just and injured cause, we may be sure that the righteous God will maintain it and plead it with jealousy, and will never suffer it to be run down.

IV. He records, with joy, the triumphs of the God of heaven over all the powers of hell and attends those triumphs with his praises, v. 5. By three steps the power and justice of God had proceeded against the heathen, and wicked people, who were enemies to the king God had lately set up upon his holy hill of Zion. 1. He had checked them: "*Thou hast rebuked the heathen*, hast given them real proofs of thy displeasure against them." This he did before he destroyed them, that they might take warning by the rebukes of Providence and so prevent their own destruction. (2.) He had cut them off: *Thou hast destroyed the wicked*. The wicked are marked for destruction, and some are made monuments of God's vindictive justice and destructive power in this world. (3.) He had buried them in oblivion and perpetual infamy, had put out their name for ever, that they should never be remembered with any respect.

V. He exults over the enemy whom God thus appears against (v. 6): *Thou hast destroyed cities*. Either, "Thou, O enemy! hast destroyed our cities, at least in intention and imagination," or "Thou, O God! hast destroyed their cities by the desolation brought upon their country." It may be taken either way; for the psalmist will have the enemy to know, 1. That their destruction is just and that God was but reckoning with them for all the mischief which they had done and designed against his people. The malicious and vexatious neighbours of Israel, as the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, and Syrians, had made incursions upon them (when there was no king in Israel to fight their battles), had destroyed their cities and done what they could to make their memorial perish with them. But now the wheel was turned upon them. Their destructions of Israel had come to a perpetual end; they shall now cease to spoil

and must themselves be spoiled, Isa. xxxiii. 1. 2. That it is total and final, such a destruction as should make a perpetual end of them, so that the very memorial of their cities should perish with them. So devouring a thing is time, and much more such desolations do the righteous judgments of God make upon sinners, that great and populous cities have been reduced to such ruins that their very memorial has perished, and those who have sought them could not find where they stood; but we look for a city that has stronger foundations.

VI. He comforts himself and others in God, and pleases himself with the thoughts of him. 1. With the thoughts of his eternity. On this earth we see nothing durable, even strong cities are buried in rubbish and forgotten; *but the Lord shall endure for ever, v. 7.* There is no change of his being; his felicity, power, and perfection, are out of the reach of all the combined forces of hell and earth; they may put an end to our liberties, our privileges, our lives, but our God is still the same, and sits even upon the floods, unshaken, undisturbed, xxix. 10; xciii. 2. 2. With the thoughts of his sovereignty both in government and judgment: *He has prepared his throne*, has fixed it by his infinite wisdom, has fixed it by his immutable counsel. It is the great support and comfort of good people, when the power of the church's enemies is threatening and the posture of its affairs melancholy and perplexed, that God now rules the world and will shortly judge the world. 3. With the thoughts of his justice and righteousness in all the administrations of his government. He does all every day, he will do all at the last day, according to the eternal unalterable rules of equity (*v. 8*): *He shall judge the world*, all persons and all controversies, *shall minister judgment to the people* (shall determine their lot both in this and in the future state) in righteousness and *in uprightness*, so that there shall not be the least colour of exception against it. 4. With the thoughts of that peculiar favour which God bears to his own people and the special protection which he takes them under. The Lord, who endures for ever, is their everlasting strength and protection; he that judges the world will be sure to judge for them, when at any time they are injured or distressed (*v. 9*): *He will be a refuge for the oppressed*, a high place, a strong place, for the oppressed, *in times of trouble*. It is the lot of God's people to be oppressed in this world and to have troublous times appointed to them. Perhaps God may not immediately appear for them as their deliverer and avenger; but, in the midst of their distresses, they may by faith flee to him as their refuge and may depend upon his power and promise for their safety, so that no real hurt shall be done them. 5. With the thoughts of that sweet satisfaction and repose of mind which those have that

make God their refuge (*v. 10*): "*Those that know thy name will put their trust in thee, as I have done*" (for the grace of God is the same in all the saints), "*and then they will find, as I have found, that thou dost not forsake those that seek thee;*" for the favour of God is the same towards all the saints. Note, (1.) The better God is known the more he is trusted. Those who know him to be a God of infinite wisdom will trust him *further than they can see him* (Job xxxv. 14); those who know him to be a God of almighty power will trust him when creature-confidences fail and they have nothing else to trust to (2 Chron. xx. 12); and those who know him to be a God of infinite grace and goodness will trust him *though he slay them*, Job xiii. 15. Those who know him to be a God of inviolable truth and faithfulness will rejoice in his word of promise, and rest upon that, though the performance be deferred and intermediate providences seem to contradict it. Those who know him to be the Father of spirits, and an everlasting Father, will trust him with their souls as their main care and trust in him at all times, even to the end. (2.) The more God is trusted the more he is sought unto. If we trust God we shall seek him by faithful and fervent prayer, and by a constant care to approve ourselves to him in the whole course of our conversation. (3.) God never did, nor ever will, disown or desert any that duly seek to him and trust in him. Though he afflict them, he will not leave them comfortless; though he seem to forsake them for a while, yet he will gather them with everlasting mercies.

11 Sing praises to the Lord, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people his doings. 12 When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them: he forgetteth not the cry of the humble. 13 Have mercy upon me, O LORD; consider my trouble *which I suffer* of them that hate me, thou that liftest me up from the gates of death: 14 That I may show forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion: I will rejoice in thy salvation. 15 The heathen are sunk down in the pit *that they made*: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken. 16 The LORD is known *by the judgment which he execute* h: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Higgaion. Selah. 17 The wicked shall be turned into hell, *and all the nations that forget God*. 18 For the needy shall not alway be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall *not* perish for ever. 19 Arise, O

LORD; let not man prevail, let the heathen be judged in thy sight. 20 Put them in fear, O LORD: *that* the nations may know themselves to be but men. Selah.

In these verses,

I. David, having praised God himself, calls upon and invites others to praise him likewise, v. 11. Those who believe God is greatly to be praised not only desire to do that work better themselves, but desire that others also may join with them in it and would gladly be instrumental to bring them to it: *Sing praises to the Lord who dwelleth in Zion.* As the special residence of his glory is in heaven, so the special residence of his grace is in his church, of which Zion was a type. There he meets his people with his promises and graces, and there he expects they should meet him with their praises and services. In all our praises we should have an eye to God as dwelling in Zion, in a special manner present in the assemblies of his people, as their protector and patron. He resolved himself to show forth God's marvellous works (v. 1), and here he calls upon others to *declare among the people his doings.* He commands his own subjects to do it, for the honour of God, of their country, and of their holy religion; he courts his neighbours to do it, to sing praises, not, as hitherto, to their false gods, but to Jehovah who dwelleth in Zion, to the God of Israel, and to own among the heathen that *the Lord has done great things for his people Israel*, cxviii. 3, 4. Let them particularly take notice of the justice of God in avenging the blood of his people Israel on the Philistines and their other wicked neighbours, who had, in making war upon them, used them barbarously and given them no quarter, v. 12. When God comes to *make inquisition for blood* by his judgments on earth, before he comes to do it by the judgment of the great day, *he remembers them*, remembers every drop of the innocent blood which they have shed, and will return it sevenfold upon the head of the blood-thirsty; he will give them blood to drink, for they are worthy. This assurance he might well build upon that word (Deut. xxxii. 43), *He will avenge the blood of his servants.* Note, There is a day coming when God will make inquisition for blood, when he will discover what has been shed secretly, and avenge what has been shed unjustly; see Isa. xxvi. 21; Jer. li. 35. In that day it will appear how precious the blood of God's people is to him (lxxii. 14), when it must all be accounted for. It will then appear that he has not forgotten *the cry of the humble*, neither the cry of their blood nor the cry of their prayers, but that both are sealed up among his treasures.

II. David, having praised God for former mercies and deliverances, earnestly prays that

God would still appear for him; for he sees not yet all things put under him.

1. He prays, (1.) That God would be compassionate to him (v. 13): *"Have mercy upon me, who, having misery only, and no merit, to speak for me, must depend upon mere mercy for relief."* (2.) That he would be concerned for him. He is not particular in his request, lest he should seem to prescribe to God; but submits himself to the wisdom and will of God in this modest request, *"Lord, consider my trouble, and do for me as thou thinkest fit."*

2. He pleads, (1.) The malice of his enemies, the trouble which he suffered from those that hated him, and hatred is a cruel passion. (2.) The experience he had had of divine succours and the expectation he now had of the continuance of them, as the necessity of his case required: *"O thou that liftest me up, that canst do it, that hast done it, that wilt do it, whose prerogative it is to lift up thy people from the gates of death!"* We are never brought so low, so near to death, but God can raise us up. If he has saved us from spiritual and eternal death, we may thence take encouragement to hope that in all our distresses he will be a very present help to us. (3.) His sincere purpose to praise God when his victories should be completed (v. 14): *"Lord, save me, not that I may have the comfort and credit of the deliverance, but that thou mayest have the glory, that I may show forth all thy praise, and that publicly, in the gates of the daughter of Zion;"* there God was said to dwell (v. 11) and there David would attend him, with joy in God's salvation, typical of the great salvation which was to be wrought out by the Son of David.

III. David by faith foresees and foretells the certain ruin of all wicked people, both in this world and in that to come.

1. In this world, v. 15, 16. God executes judgment upon them when the measure of their iniquities is full, and does it, (1.) So as to put shame upon them and make their fall inglorious; for they sink into the pit which they themselves digged (vii. 15), they are taken in the net which they themselves laid for the ensnaring of God's people, and they are snared in the work of their own hands. In all the struggles David had with the Philistines they were the aggressors, 2 Sam. v. 17, 22. And other nations were subdued by those wars in which they embroiled themselves. The overruling providence of God frequently so orders it that persecutors and oppressors are brought to ruin by those very projects which they intended to be destructive to the people of God. Drunkards kill themselves; prodigals beggar themselves; the contentious bring mischief upon themselves. Thus men's sins may be read in their punishment, and it becomes visible to all that the destruction of sinners is not only meritoriously, but efficiently, of themselves which will fill them with the utmost confu-

sion. (2.) So as to get honour to himself: *The Lord is known*, that is, he makes himself known, by these judgments which he executes. It is known that there is a God who judges in the earth, that he is a righteous God, and one that hates sin and will punish it. In these judgments the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. The psalmist therefore adds here a note extraordinary, commanding special regard, *Higgaion*; it is a thing to be carefully observed and meditated upon. What we see of present judgments, and what we believe of the judgment to come, ought to be the subject of our frequent and serious meditations.

2. In the other world (v. 17): *The wicked shall be turned into hell*, as captives into the prison-house, even *all the nations that forget God*. Note, (1.) Forgetfulness of God is the cause of all the wickedness of the wicked. (2.) There are nations of those that forget God, multitudes that live without God in the world, many great and many mighty nations, that never regard him nor desire the knowledge of his ways. (3.) Hell will, at last, be the portion of such, a state of everlasting misery and torment—*Sheol*, a pit of destruction, in which they and all their comforts will be for ever lost and buried. Though there be nations of them, yet they shall be turned into hell, like sheep into the slaughter-house (xlix. 14), and their being so numerous will not be any security or ease to them, nor any loss to God or the least impeachment of his goodness.

IV. David encourages the people of God to wait for his salvation, though it should be long deferred, v. 18. The needy may think themselves, and others may think them, forgotten for a while, and their expectation of help from God may seem to have perished and to have been for ever frustrated. But he that believes does not make haste; the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak. We may build upon it as undoubtedly true that God's people, God's elect, shall not always be forgotten, nor shall they be disappointed of their hopes from the promise. God will not only remember them, at last, but will make it to appear that he never did forget them; it is impossible he should, though a woman may forget her sucking child.

V. He concludes with prayer that God would humble the pride, break the power, and blast the projects, of all the wicked enemies of his church: *Arise, O Lord!* (v. 19), stir up thyself, exert thy power, take thy seat, and deal with all these proud and daring enemies of thy name, and cause, and people."

1. "Lord, restrain them, and set bounds to their malice: *Let not man prevail*; consult thy own honour, and let not weak and mortal men prevail against the kingdom and interest of the almighty and immortal God. *Shall mortal man be too hard for God, too*

strong for his Maker?" 2. "Lord, reckon with them: *Let the heathen be judged in thy sight*, that is, let them be plainly called to an account for all the dishonour done to thee and the mischief done to thy people." Impenitent sinners will be punished in God's sight; and, when their day of grace is over, the bowels even of infinite mercy will not relent towards them, Rev. xiv. 10. 3. "Lord, frighten them: *Put them in fear, O Lord!* (v. 20), strike a terror upon them, make them afraid with thy judgments." God knows how to make the strongest and stoutest of men to tremble and to flee when none pursues, and thereby he makes them know and own that they are but men; they are but weak men, unable to stand before the holy God—sinful men, the guilt of whose consciences makes them subject to alarms. Note, It is a very desirable thing, much for the glory of God and the peace and welfare of the universe, that men should know and consider themselves to be but men, depending creatures, mutable, mortal, and accountable.

In singing this psalm we must give to God the glory of his justice in pleading his people's cause against his and their enemies, and encourage ourselves to wait for the year of the redeemed and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion, even the final destruction of all anti-christian powers and factions, to which many of the ancients apply this psalm.

PSALM X.

The Septuagint translation joins this psalm with the ninth, and makes them but one; but the Hebrew makes it a distinct psalm, and the scope and style are certainly different. In this psalm, I. David complains of the wickedness of the wicked, describes the dreadful pitch of impiety at which they had arrived (to the great dishonour of God and the prejudice of his church and people), and notices the delay of God's appearing against them, ver. 1-11. II. He prays to God to appear against them for the relief of his people and comforts himself with hopes that he would do so in due time, ver. 12-18.

WHY standest thou afar off, O LORD? *why hidest thou thyself* in times of trouble? 2 The wicked in *his* pride doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined. 3 For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, *whom* the LORD abhorreth. 4 The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek *after God*: God is not in all his thoughts. 5 His ways are always grievous; thy judgments *are* far above out of his sight: *as for* all his enemies, he puffeth at them. 6 He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for *I shall* never be in adversity. 7 His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud: under his tongue *is* mischief and vanity. 8 He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages: in

the secret places doth he murder the innocent: his eyes are privily set against the poor. 9 He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor: he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net. 10 He croucheth, and humbleth himself, that the poor may fall by his strong ones. 11 He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see it.

David, in these verses, discovers,

I. A very great affection to God and his favour; for, in the time of trouble, that which he complains of most feelingly is God's withdrawing his gracious presence (v. 1): *Why standest thou afar off*, as one unconcerned in the indignities done to thy name and the injuries done to the people?" Note, God's withdrawals are very grievous to his people at any time, but especially in times of trouble. Outward deliverance is afar off and is hidden from us, and then we think God is afar off and we therefore want inward comfort; but that is our own fault; it is because we judge by outward appearance; we stand afar off from God by our unbelief, and then we complain that God stands afar off from us.

II. A very great indignation against sin, the sins that made the times perilous, 2 Tim. iii. 1. He beholds the transgressors and is grieved, is amazed, and brings to his heavenly Father their evil report, not in a way of vain-glory, boasting before God that he was not as *these publicans* (Luke xviii. 11), much less venting any personal resentments, piques, or passions, of his own; but as one that laid to heart that which is offensive to God and all good men, and earnestly desired a reformation of manners. Passionate and satirical invectives against bad men do more hurt than good; if we will speak of their badness, let it be to God in prayer, for he alone can make them better. This long representation of the wickedness of the wicked is here summed up in the first words of it (v. 2), *The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor*, where two things are laid to their charge, pride and persecution, the former the cause of the latter. Proud men will have all about them to be of their mind, of their religion, to say as they say, to submit to their dominion, and acquiesce in their dictates; and those that either eclipse them or will not yield to them they malign and hate with an inveterate hatred. Tyranny, both in state and church, owes its origin to pride. The psalmist, having begun this description, presently inserts a short prayer, a prayer in a parenthesis, which is an advantage and no prejudice to the sense: *Let them be taken*, as proud people often are, *in the devices that they have imagined*, v. 2. Let their counsels be turned headlong, and let them fall

headlong by them. These two heads of the charge are here enlarged upon.

1. They are proud, very proud, and extremely conceited of themselves; justly therefore did he wonder that God did not speedily appear against them, for he hates pride, and resists the proud. (1.) The sinner proudly glories in his power and success. *He boasts of his heart's desire*, boasts that he can do what he pleases (as if God himself could not control him) and that he has all he wished for and has carried his point. Ephraim said, *I have become rich, I have found me out substance*, Hos. xii. 8. "Now, Lord, is it for thy glory to suffer a sinful man thus to pretend to the sovereignty and felicity of a God?" (2.) He proudly contradicts the judgment of God, which, we are sure, is according to truth; for he *blesses the covetous, whom the Lord abhors*. See how God and men differ in their sentiments of persons: God abhors covetous worldlings, who make money their God and idolize it; he looks upon them as his enemies, and will have no communion with them. *The friendship of the world is enmity to God*. But proud persecutors bless them, and approve their sayings, xlix. 13. They applaud those as wise whom God pronounces foolish (Luke xii. 20); they justify those as innocent whom God condemns as deeply guilty before him; and they admire those as happy, in having their portion in this life, whom God declares, upon that account, truly miserable. *Thou, in thy lifetime, receivest thy good things*. (3.) He proudly casts off the thoughts of God, and all dependence upon him and devotion to him (v. 4): *The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, that pride of his heart which appears in his very countenance* (Prov. vi. 17), *will not seek after God, nor entertain the thoughts of him. God is not in all his thoughts*, not in any of them. *All his thoughts are that there is no God*. See here, [1.] The nature of impiety and irreligion; it is not seeking after God and not having him in our thoughts. There is no enquiry made after him (Job xxxv. 10, Jer. ii. 6), no desire towards him, no communion with him, but a secret wish to have no dependence upon him and not to be beholden to him. Wicked people will not seek after God (that is, will not call upon him); they live without prayer, and that is living without God. They have many thoughts, many projects and devices, but no eye to God in any of them, no submission to his will nor aim at his glory. [2.] The cause of this impiety and irreligion; and that is pride. Men will not seek after God because they think they have no need of him, their own hands are sufficient for them; they think it a thing below them to be religious, because religious people are few, and mean, and despised, and the restraints of religion will be a disparagement to them. (4.) He proudly makes light of God's commandments and judgments (v. 5). *His ways*

are always grievous; he is very daring and resolute in his sinful courses; he will have his way, though ever so tiresome to himself and vexatious to others; he travails with pain in his wicked courses, and yet his pride makes him wilful and obstinate in them. God's judgments (what he commands and what he threatens for the breach of his commands) are *far above out of his sight*; he is not sensible of his duty by the law of God nor of his danger by the wrath and curse of God. Tell him of God's authority over him, he turns it off with this, that he never saw God and therefore does not know that there is a God, he is *in the height of heaven*, and *quæ supra nos nihil ad nos*—we have nothing to do with things above us. Tell him of God's judgments which will be executed upon those that go on still in their trespasses, and he will not be convinced that there is any reality in them; they are *far above out of his sight*, and therefore he thinks they are mere bugbears. (5.) He proudly despises all his enemies, and looks upon them with the utmost disdain; he puffs at those whom God is preparing to be a scourge and ruin to him, as if he could baffle them all, and was able to make his part good with them. But, as it is impolitic to despise an enemy, so it is impious to despise any instrument of God's wrath. (6.) He proudly sets trouble at defiance and is confident of the continuance of his own prosperity (v. 6): *He hath said in his heart*, and pleased himself with the thought, *I shall not be moved*, my goods are laid up for many years, and *I shall never be in adversity*: like Babylon, that said, *I shall be a lady for ever*, Isa. xlvii. 7; Rev. xviii. 7. Those are nearest ruin who thus set it furthest from them.

2. They are persecutors, cruel persecutors. For the gratifying of their pride and covetousness, and in opposition to God and religion, they are very oppressive to all within their reach. Observe, concerning these persecutors, (1.) That they are very bitter and malicious (v. 7): *His mouth is full of cursing*. Those he cannot do a real mischief to, yet he will spit his venom at, and breathe out the slaughter which he cannot execute. Thus have God's faithful worshippers been anathematized and cursed, with bell, book, and candle. Where there is a heart full of malice there is commonly a mouth full of curses. (2.) They are very false and treacherous. There is mischief designed, but it is hidden under the tongue, not to be discerned, for *his mouth is full of deceit* and vanity. He has learned of the devil to deceive, and so to destroy; with this his hatred is covered, Prov. xxvi. 26. He cares not what lies he tells, nor what oaths he breaks, nor what arts of dissimulation he uses, to compass his ends. (3.) That they are very cunning and crafty in carrying on their designs. They have ways and means to concert what they intend, that they may the more effectually

accomplish it. Like Esau, that cunning hunter, *he sits in the lurking places, in the secret places, and his eyes are privily set to do mischief* (v. 8), not because he is ashamed of what he does (if he blushed, there were some hopes he would repent), nor because he is afraid of the wrath of God, for he imagines God will never call him to an account (v. 11), but because he is afraid lest the discovery of his designs should be the breaking of them. Perhaps it refers particularly to robbers and highwaymen, who lie in wait for honest travellers, to make a prey of them and what they have. (4.) That they are very cruel and barbarous. Their malice is against the innocent, who never provoked them—against the poor, who cannot resist them and over whom it will be no glory to triumph. Those are perfectly lost to all honesty and honour, against whose mischievous designs neither innocence nor poverty will be any man's security. Those that have power ought to protect the innocent and provide for the poor; yet these will be the destroyers of those whose guardians they ought to be. And what do they aim at? It is to *catch the poor*, and *draw them into their net*, that is, get them into their power, not to strip them only, but to *murder them*. They hunt for the precious life. It is God's poor people that they are persecuting, against whom they bear a mortal hatred for his sake whose they are and whose image they bear, and therefore they lie in wait to murder them: *He lies in wait as a lion* that thirsts after blood, and feeds with pleasure upon the prey. The devil, whose agent he is, is compared to a roaring lion that seeks not what, but whom, he may devour. (5.) That they are base and hypocritical (v. 10): *He crouches and humbles himself*, as beasts of prey do, that they may get their prey within their reach. This intimates that the sordid spirits of persecutors and oppressors will stoop to any thing, though ever so mean, for the compassing of their wicked designs; witness the scandalous practices of Saul when he hunted David. It intimates, likewise, that they cover their malicious designs with the pretence of meekness and humility, and kindness to those they design the greatest mischief to; they seem to humble themselves to take cognizance of the poor, and concern themselves in their concerns, when it is in order to make them fall, to make a prey of them. (6.) That they are very impious and atheistical, v. 11. They could not thus break through all the laws of justice and goodness towards man if they had not first shaken off all sense of religion, and risen up in rebellion against the light of its most sacred and self-evident principles: *He hath said in his heart, God has forgotten*. When his own conscience rebuked him for his wickedness, and threatened him with the consequences of it, and asked how he would answer it to the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, he turned it off with this, *God has*

forsaken the earth, Ezek. viii. 12; ix. 9. This is a blasphemous reproach, [1.] Upon God's omniscience and providence, as if he could not, or did not, see what men do in this lower world. [2.] Upon his holiness and the rectitude of his nature, as if, though he did see, yet he did not dislike, but was willing to connive at, the most unnatural and inhuman villanies. [3.] Upon his justice and the equity of his government, as if, though he did see and dislike the wickedness of the wicked, yet he would never reckon with them, nor punish them for it, either because he could not or durst not, or because he was not inclined to do so. Let those that suffer by proud oppressors hope that God will, in due time, appear for them; for those that are abusive to them are abusive to God Almighty too.

In singing this psalm and praying it over, we should have our hearts much affected with a holy indignation at the wickedness of the oppressors, a tender compassion of the miseries of the oppressed, and a pious zeal for the glory and honour of God, with a firm belief that he will, in due time, give redress to the injured and reckon with the injurious.

12 Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up thine hand: forget not the humble. 13 Wherefore doth the wicked condemn God? he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it. 14 Thou hast seen it; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand: the poor committeth himself unto thee; thou art the helper of the fatherless. 15 Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil man: seek out his wickedness till thou find none. 16 The LORD is King for ever and ever: the heathen are perished out of his land. 17 LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear: 18 To judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress.

David here, upon the foregoing representation of the inhumanity and impiety of the oppressors, grounds an address to God, wherein observe,

I. What he prays for. 1. That God would himself appear (v. 12): "*Arise, O Lord! O God! lift up thy hand, manifest thy presence and providence in the affairs of this lower world. Arise, O Lord!* to the confusion of those who say that thou hidest thy face. Manifest thy power, exert it for the maintaining of thy own cause, lift up thy hand to give a fatal blow to these oppressors; let thy everlasting arm be made bare" 2. That he would

appear for his people: "*Forget not the humble, the afflicted, that are poor, that are made poorer, and are poor in spirit. Their oppressors, in their presumption, say that thou hast forgotten them; and they, in their despair, are ready to say the same. Lord, make it to appear that they are both mistaken.*" 3. That he would appear against their persecutors, v. 15. (1.) That he would disable them from doing any mischief: "*Break thou the arm of the wicked, take away his power, that the hypocrite reign not, lest the people be ensnared,* Job xxxiv. 30. We read of oppressors whose dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged (Dan. vii. 12), that they might have time to repent. (2.) That he would deal with them for the mischief they had done: "*Seek out his wickedness; let that be all brought to light which he thought should for ever lie undiscovered; let that be all brought to account which he thought should for ever go unpunished; bring it out till thou find none, that is, till none of his evil deeds remain unreckoned for, none of his evil designs undefeated, and none of his partisans undestroyed.*"

II. What he pleads for the encouraging of his own faith in these petitions.

1. He pleads the great affronts which these proud oppressors put upon God himself: "Lord, it is thy own cause that we beg thou wouldst appear in; the enemies have made it so, and therefore it is not for thy glory to let them go unpunished" (v. 13): "*Wherefore do the wicked condemn God?* He does so; for he says, "*Thou wilt not require it; thou wilt never call us to an account for what we do,*" than which they could not put a greater indignity upon the righteous God. The psalmist here speaks with astonishment, (1.) At the wickedness of the wicked: "Why do they speak so impiously, why so absurdly?" It is a great trouble to good men to think what contempt is cast upon the holy God by the sin of sinners, upon his precepts, his promises, his threatenings, his favours, his judgments; all are despised and made light of. "*Wherefore do the wicked thus condemn God?* It is because they do not know him. (2.) At the patience and forbearance of God towards them: "Why are they suffered thus to condemn God? Why does he not immediately vindicate himself and take vengeance on them?" It is because the day of reckoning is yet to come, when the measure of their iniquity is full.

2. He pleads the notice God took of the impiety and iniquity of these oppressors (v. 14): "Do the persecutors encourage themselves with a groundless fancy that thou wilt never see it? Let the persecuted encourage themselves with a well-grounded faith, not only that thou hast seen it, but that thou dost behold it, even all the mischief that is done by the hands, and all the spite and malice that lurk in the hearts, of these oppressors; it is all known to thee, and observed by thee; nay, not only thou hast seen it and dost behold it, but thou wilt requite it, wilt recompense it

into their bosoms, by thy just and avenging hand."

3. He pleads the dependence which the oppressed had upon him: "*The poor commits himself unto thee, each of them does so, I among the rest. They rely on thee as their patron and protector, they refer themselves to thee as their Judge, in whose determination they acquiesce and at whose disposal they are willing to be. They leave themselves with thee*" (so some read it), "not prescribing, but subscribing, to thy wisdom and will. They thus give thee honour as much as their oppressors dishonour thee. They are thy willing subjects, and put themselves under thy protection; therefore protect them."

4. He pleads the relation in which God is pleased to stand to us, (1.) As a great God. He is *King for ever and ever*, v. 16. And it is the office of a king to administer justice for the restraint and terror of evil-doers and the protection and praise of those that do well. To whom should the injured subjects appeal but to the sovereign? *Help, my Lord, O King! Avenge me of my adversary.* "Lord, let all that pay homage and tribute to thee as their King have the benefit of thy government and find thee their refuge. Thou art an everlasting King, which no earthly prince is, and therefore canst and wilt, by an eternal judgment, dispense rewards and punishments in an everlasting state, when time shall be no more; and to that judgment the poor refer themselves." (2.) As a good God. He is the helper of the fatherless (v. 14), of those who have no one else to help them and have many to injure them. He has appointed kings to defend the poor and fatherless (lxxxii. 3), and therefore much more will he do so himself; for he has taken it among the titles of his honour to be a Father to the fatherless (lxviii. 5), a helper of the helpless.

5. He pleads the experience which God's church and people had had of God's readiness to appear for them. (1.) He had dispersed and extirpated their enemies (v. 16): "*The heathen have perished out of his land; the remainders of the Canaanites, the seven devoted nations, which have long been as thorns in the eyes and goads in the sides of Israel, are now, at length, utterly rooted out; and this is an encouragement to us to hope that God will, in like manner, break the arm of the oppressive Israelites, who were, in some respects, worse than heathens.*" (2.) He had heard and answered their prayers (v. 17): "*Lord, thou hast many a time heard the desire of the humble, and never saidst to a distressed suppliant, Seek in vain.* Why may not we hope for the continuance and repetition of the wonders, the favours, which our father told us of?"

6. He pleads their expectations from God pursuant to their experience of him: "*Thou hast heard, therefore thou wilt cause thy ear to hear*, as, vi. 9. Thou art the same, and thy power, and promise, and relation to thy

people are the same, and the work and workings of grace are the same in them; why therefore may we not hope that he who has been will still be, will ever be, a God hearing prayer?" But observe, (1.) In what method God hears prayer. He first prepares the heart of his people and then gives them an answer of peace; nor may we expect his gracious answer, but in this way; so that God's working upon us is the best earnest of his working for us. He prepares the heart for prayer by kindling holy desires, and strengthening our most holy faith, fixing the thoughts and raising the affections, and then he graciously accepts the prayer; he prepares the heart for the mercy itself that is wanting and prayed for, makes us fit to receive it and use it well, and then gives it in to us. The preparation of the heart is from the Lord, and we must seek unto him for it (Prov. xvi. 1) and take that as a leading favour. (2.) What he will do in answer to prayer, v. 18. [1.] He will plead the cause of the persecuted, will judge the fatherless and oppressed, will judge for them; clear up their innocency, restore their comforts, and recompense them for all the loss and damage they have sustained. [2.] He will put an end to the fury of the persecutors. Hitherto they shall come, but no further; here shall the proud waves of their malice be stayed; an effectual course shall be taken that *the man of the earth may no more oppress*. See how light the psalmist now makes of the power of that proud persecutor whom he had been describing in this psalm, and how slightly he speaks of him now that he had been considering God's sovereignty. *First*, He is but a man of the earth, a man out of the earth (so the word is), sprung out of the earth, and therefore mean, and weak, and hastening to the earth again. Why then should we be afraid of the fury of the oppressor when he is but *man that shall die, a son of man that shall be as grass?* Isa. li. 12. He that protects us is the Lord of heaven; he that persecutes us is but a man of the earth. *Secondly*, God has him in a chain, and can easily restrain the remainder of his wrath, so that he cannot do what he would. When God speaks the word Satan shall by his instruments no more deceive (Rev. xx. 3), no more oppress.

In singing these verses we must commit religion's just but injured cause to God, as those that are heartily concerned for its honour and interests, believing that he will, in due time, plead it with jealousy.

PSALM XI.

In this psalm we have David's struggle with and triumph over a strong temptation to distrust God and betake himself to indirect means for his own safety in a time of danger. It is supposed to have been penned when he began to feel the resentments of Saul's envy, and had had the javelin thrown at him once and again. He was then advised to run his country. "No," says he, "I trust in God, and therefore will keep my ground." Observe, I. How he represents the temptation, and perhaps parleys with it, ver. 1-3. II. How he answers it, and puts it to silence with the consideration of God's dominion and providence (ver. 4), his favour to the righteous, and the wrath which the wicked are reserved for, ver. 5-7. In times of public fear, when the insults of the church's enemies are daring and threatening, it will be profitable to meditate on this psalm.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

IN the LORD put I my trust : how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain? 2 For, lo, the wicked bend *their* bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart. 3 If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?

Here is, I. David's fixed resolution to make God his confidence: *In the Lord put I my trust*, v. 1. Those that truly fear God and serve him are welcome to put their trust in him, and shall not be made ashamed of their doing so. And it is the character of the saints, who have taken God for their God, that they make him their hope. Even when they have other things to stay themselves upon, yet they do not, they dare not, stay upon them, but on God only. Gold is not their hope, nor are horses and chariots their confidence, but God only; and therefore, when second causes frown, yet their hopes do not fail them, because the first cause is still the same, is ever so. The psalmist, before he gives an account of the temptation he was in to distrust God, records his resolution to trust in him, as that which he was resolved to live and die by.

II. His resentment of a temptation to the contrary: "*How say you to my soul*, which has thus returned to God as its rest and reposes in him, *Flee as a bird to your mountain*, to be safe there out of the reach of the fowler?" This may be taken either,

1. As the serious advice of his timorous friends; so many understand it, and with great probability. Some that were hearty well-wishers to David, when they saw how much Saul was exasperated against him and how maliciously he sought his life, pressed him by all means to flee for the same to some place of shelter, and not to depend too much upon the anointing he had received, which, they thought, was more likely to occasion the loss of his head than to save it. That which grieved him in this motion was not that to flee now would savour of cowardice, and ill become a soldier, but that it would savour of unbelief and would ill become a saint who had so often said, *In the Lord put I my trust*. Taking it thus, the two following verses contain the reason with which these faint-hearted friends of David backed this advice. They would have him flee, (1.) Because he could not be safe where he was, v. 2. "Observe," say they, "*how the wicked bend their bow*; Saul and his instruments aim at thy life, and the uprightness of thy heart will not be thy security." See what an enmity there is in the wicked against the upright, in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman; what pains they take, what preparations they make, to do them a mischief: *They privily shoot at them, or, in darkness*, that they may not see the evil designed, to avoid it, nor others, to prevent it, no, nor God himself, to punish

it. (2.) Because he could be no longer useful where he was. "For," say they, "*if the foundations be destroyed*" (as they were by Saul's mal-administration), "if the civil state and government be unhinged and all out of course" (lxxv. 3, lxxii. 5), "what canst thou do with thy righteousness to redress the grievances? Alas! it is to no purpose to attempt the saving of a kingdom so wretchedly shattered; whatever the righteous can do signifies nothing." *Abi in cellam, et dic, Miserere mei, Domine—Away to thy cell, and there cry, Pity me, O Lord!* Many are hindered from doing the service they might do to the public, in difficult times, by a despair of success.

2. It may be taken as a taunt wherewith his enemies bantered him, upbraiding him with the professions he used to make of confidence in God, and scornfully bidding him try what stead that would stand him in now. "You say, God is your mountain; flee to him now, and see what the better you will be." Thus they endeavoured to shame the counsel of the poor, saying, *There is no help for them in God*, xiv. 6; iii. 2. The confidence and comfort which the saints have in God, when all the hopes and joys in the creature fail them, are a riddle to a carnal world and are ridiculed accordingly. Taking it thus, the two following verses are David's answer to this sarcasm, in which, (1.) He complains of the malice of those who did thus abuse him (v. 2): *They bend their bow and make ready their arrows*; and we are told (lxiv. 3) what their arrows are, even bitter words, such words as these, by which they endeavour to discourage hope in God, which David felt as a sword in his bones. (2.) He resists the temptation with a gracious abhorrence, v. 3. He looks upon this suggestion as striking at the foundations which every Israelite builds upon: "If you destroy the foundations, if you take good people off from their hope in God, if you can persuade them that their religion is a cheat and a jest and can banter them out of that, you ruin them, and break their hearts indeed, and make them of all men the most miserable." The principles of religion are the foundations on which the faith and hope of the righteous are built. These we are concerned, in interest as well as duty, to hold fast against all temptations to infidelity; for, if these be destroyed, if we let these go, *What can the righteous do?* Good people would be undone if they had not a God to go to, a God to trust to, and a future bliss to hope for.

4 The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD's throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men. 5 The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth. 6 Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a hor-

rible tempest: *this shall be the portion of their cup.* 7 For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.

The shaking of a tree (they say) makes it take the deeper and faster root. The attempt of David's enemies to discourage his confidence in God engages him to cleave so much the more closely to his first principles, and to review them, which he here does, abundantly to his own satisfaction and the silencing of all temptations to infidelity. That which was shocking to his faith, and has been so to the faith of many, was the prosperity of wicked people in their wicked ways, and the straits and distresses which the best men are sometimes reduced to: hence such an evil thought as this was apt to arise, *Surely it is vain to serve God*, and we may call the proud happy. But, in order to stifle and shame all such thoughts, we are here called to consider,

I. That there is a God in heaven: *The Lord is in his holy temple* above, where, though he is out of our sight, we are not out of his. Let not the enemies of the saints insult over them, as if they were at a loss and at their wits' end: no, they have a God, and they know where to find him and how to direct their prayer unto him, as their Father in heaven. Or, He is in his holy temple, that is, in his church; he is a God in covenant and communion with his people, through a Mediator, of whom the temple was a type. We need not say, "Who shall go up to heaven, to fetch us thence a God to trust to?" No, the word is nigh us, and God in the word; his Spirit is in his saints, those living temples, and the Lord is that Spirit.

II. That this God governs the world. The Lord has not only his residence, but his throne, in heaven, and he has *set the dominion thereof in the earth* (Job xxxviii. 33); for, *having prepared his throne in the heavens, his kingdom ruleth over all*, ciii. 19. Hence the heavens are said to *rule*, Dan. iv. 26. Let us by faith see God on his throne, on his throne of glory, infinitely transcending the splendour and majesty of earthly princes—on his throne of government, giving law, giving motion, and giving aim, to all the creatures—on his throne of judgment, rendering to every man according to his works—and on his throne of grace, to which his people may come boldly for mercy and grace; we shall then see no reason to be discouraged by the pride and power of oppressors, or any of the afflictions that attend the righteous.

III. That this God perfectly knows every man's true character: *His eyes behold, his eye-lids try, the children of men*; he not only sees them, but he sees through them, not only knows all they say and do, but knows what they think, what they design, and how they really stand affected, whatever they pretend. We may know what men seem to be, but he knows what they are, as the refiner knows

what the value of the gold is when he has tried it. God is said to try *with his eyes*, and *his eye-lids*, because he knows men, not as earthly princes know men, by report and representation, but by his own strict inspection, which cannot err nor be imposed upon. This may comfort us when we are deceived in men, even in men that we think we have tried, that God's judgment of men, we are sure, is according to truth.

IV. That, if he afflict good people, it is for their trial and therefore for their good, v. 5. The Lord tries all the children of men that he may do *them good in their latter end*, Deut. viii. 16. Let not that therefore shake our foundations nor discourage our hope and trust in God.

V. That, however persecutors and oppressors may prosper and prevail awhile, they now lie under, and will for ever perish under, the wrath of God. 1. He is a holy God, and therefore hates them, and cannot endure to look upon them: *The wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth*; for nothing is more contrary to the rectitude and goodness of his nature. Their prosperity is so far from being an evidence of God's love that their abuse of it does certainly make them the objects of his hatred. He that hates nothing that he has made, yet hates those who have thus ill-made themselves. Dr. Hammond offers another reading of this verse: *The Lord trieth the righteous and the wicked* (distinguishes infallibly between them, which is more than we can do), and *he that loveth violence hateth his own soul*, that is, persecutors bring certain ruin upon themselves (Prov. viii. 36), as follows here. 2. He is a righteous Judge, and therefore he will punish them, v. 6. Their punishment will be, (1.) Inevitable: *Upon the wicked he shall rain snares*. Here is a double metaphor, to denote the unavoidableness of the punishment of wicked men. It shall be rained upon them from heaven (Job xx. 23), against which there is no fence and from which there is no escape; see Josh x. 11; 1 Sam. ii. 10. It shall surprise them as a sudden shower sometimes surprises the traveller in a summer's day. It shall be as snares upon them, to hold them fast, and keep them prisoners, till the day of reckoning comes. (2.) Very terrible. It is *fire, and brimstone, and a horrible tempest*, which plainly alludes to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and very fitly, for that destruction was intended for a figure of *the vengeance of eternal fire*, Jude 7. The fire of God's wrath, fastening upon the brimstone of their own guilt, will burn certainly and furiously, will burn to the lowest hell and the utmost line of eternity. What a horrible tempest are the wicked hurried away in at death! What a lake of fire and brimstone must they make their bed in for ever, in the congregation of the dead and damned! It is this that is here meant; it is this that shall be the portion of their cup, the heritage ap-

pointed them by the Almighty and allotted to them, Job xx. 29. This is the cup of trembling which shall be put into their hands, which they must *drink the dregs of*, lxxv. 8. Every man has the portion of his cup assigned him. Those who choose the Lord for the portion of their cup shall have what they choose, and be for ever happy in their choice (xvi. 5); but those who reject his grace shall be made to drink the cup of his fury, Jer. xxv. 15; Isa. li. 17; Hab. ii. 16.

VI. That, though honest good people may be run down and trampled upon, yet God does and will own them, and favour them, and smile upon them, and that is the reason why God will severely reckon with persecutors and oppressors, because those whom they oppress and persecute are dear to him; so that *whosoever toucheth them, toucheth the apple of his eye*, v. 7. 1. He loves them and the work of his own grace in them. He is himself a righteous God, and therefore loves righteousness wherever he finds it and pleads the cause of the righteous that are injured and oppressed; he delights to execute judgment for them, ciii. 6. We must herein be followers of God, must love righteousness as he does, that we may keep ourselves always in his love. He looks graciously upon them: *His countenance doth behold the upright*; he is not only at peace with them, but well pleased in them, and he comforts them, and puts gladness into their hearts, by letting them know that he is so. He, like a tender father, looks upon them with pleasure, and they, like dutiful children, are pleased and abundantly satisfied with his smiles. They walk in the light of the Lord.

In singing this psalm we must encourage and engage ourselves to trust in God at all times, must depend upon him to protect our innocence and make us happy, must dread his frowns as worse than death and desire his favour as better than life.

PSALM XII.

It is supposed that David penned this psalm in Saul's reign, when there was a general decay of honesty and piety both in court and country, which he here complains of to God, and very feelingly, for he himself suffered by the treachery of his false friends and the insolence of his sworn enemies. I. He begs help of God, because there were none among men whom he durst trust, ver. 2. II. He foretells the destruction of his proud and threatening enemies, ver. 3, 4. III. He assures himself and others that, how ill soever things went now (ver. 8), God would preserve and secure to himself his own people (ver. 5, 7), and would certainly make good his promises to them, ver. 6. Whether this psalm was penned in Saul's reign or no, it is certainly calculated for a bad reign; and perhaps David, in spirit, foresaw that some of his successors would bring things to as bad a pass as is here described, and treasured up this psalm for the use of the church then. "O tempora, O mores!—Oh the times! Oh the manners!"

To the chief musician upon Sheminith. A psalm of David.

HELP, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men. 2 They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: *with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak*. 3

The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things: 4 Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us? 5 For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him. 6 The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. 7 Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever. 8 The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted.

This psalm furnishes us with good thoughts for bad times, in which, though the prudent will keep silent (Amos v. 13) because a man may then be made an offender for a word, yet we may comfort ourselves with such suitable meditations and prayers as are here got ready to our hand.

I. Let us see here what it is that makes the times bad, and when they may be said to be so. Ask the children of this world what it is in their account that makes the times bad, and they will tell you, Scarcity of money, decay of trade, and the desolations of war, make the times bad. But the scripture lays the badness of the times upon causes of another nature. 2 Tim. iii. 1, *Perilous times shall come, for iniquity shall abound; and that is the thing David here complains of*.

1. When there is a general decay of piety and honesty among men the times are then truly bad (v. 1): *When the godly man ceases and the faithful fail*. Observe how these two characters are here put together, the godly and the faithful. As there is no true policy, so there is no true piety, without honesty. Godly men are faithful men, fast men, so they have sometimes been called; their word is as confirming as their oath, as binding as their bond; they make conscience of being true both to God and man. They are here said to cease and fail, either by death or by desertion, or by both. Those that were godly and faithful were taken away, and those that were left had sadly degenerated and were not what they had been; so that there were few or no good people that were Israelites indeed to be met with. Perhaps he meant that there were no godly faithful men among Saul's courtiers; if he meant there were few or none in Israel, we hope he was under the same mistake that Elijah was, who thought he only was left alone, when God had 7000 who kept their integrity (Rom. xi. 3); or he meant that there were few in comparison; there was a general decay of religion and virtue (and the times are bad, very bad, when

it is so), not a man to be found that executes judgment, Jer. v. 1.

2. When dissimulation and flattery have corrupted and debauched all conversation, then the times are very bad (v. 2), when men are generally so profligate that they make no conscience of a lie, are so spiteful as to design against their neighbours the worst of mischiefs, and yet so base as to cover the design with the most specious and plausible pretences and professions of friendship. Thus *they speak vanity* (that is, falsehood and a lie) *every one to his neighbour, with flattering lips and a double heart.* They will kiss and kill (as Joab did Abner and Amasa in David's own time), will smile in your face and cut your throat. This is the devil's image complete, a complication of malice and falsehood. The times are bad indeed when there is no such thing as sincerity to be met with, when an honest man knows not whom to believe nor whom to trust, nor dares put confidence in a friend, in a guide, Mic. vii. 5, 6; Jer. ix. 4, 5. Woe to those who help to make the times thus perilous.

3. When the enemies of God, and religion, and religious people, are impudent and daring, and threaten to run down all that is just and sacred, then the times are very bad, when proud sinners have arrived at such a pitch of impiety as to say, "*With our tongue will we prevail* against the cause of virtue; *our lips are our own* and we may say what we will; *who is lord over us*, either to restrain us or to call us to an account?" v. 4. This bespeaks, (1.) A proud conceit of themselves and confidence in themselves, as if the point were indeed gained by eating forbidden fruit, and they were as gods, independent and self-sufficient, infallible in their knowledge of good and evil and therefore fit to be oracles, irresistible in their power and therefore fit to be lawgivers, that could prevail with their tongues, and, like God himself, speak and it is done. (2.) An insolent contempt of God's dominion as if he had no propriety in them—*Our lips are our own* (an unjust pretension, for who made man's mouth, in whose hand is his breath, and whose is the air he breathes in?) and as if he had no authority either to command them or to judge them: *Who is Lord over us?* Like Pharaoh, Exod. v. 2. This is as absurd and unreasonable as the former; for he in whom we live, and move, and have our being, must needs be, by an indisputable title, Lord over us.

4. When the poor and needy are oppressed, and abused, and puffed at, then the times are very bad. This is implied (v. 5) where God himself takes notice of the *oppression of the poor and the sighing of the needy*; they are oppressed because they are poor, have all manner of wrong done them merely because they are not in a capacity to right themselves. Being thus oppressed, they dare not speak for themselves, lest their defence should be made their offence; but they sigh, secretly

bermoeing their calamities, and pouring out their souls in sighs before God. If their oppressors be spoken to on their behalf, they puff at them, make light of their own sin and the misery of the poor, and lay neither to heart; see x. 5.

5. When wickedness abounds, and goes barefaced, under the protection and countenance of those in authority, then the times are very bad, v. 8. *When the vilest men are exalted* to places of trust and power (who, instead of putting the laws in execution against vice and injustice and punishing the wicked according to their merits, patronise and protect them, give them countenance, and support their reputation by their own example), *then the wicked walk on every side*, they swarm in all places, and go up and down seeking to deceive, debauch, and destroy others; they are neither afraid nor ashamed to discover themselves; they declare their sin as Sodom and there is none to check or control them. Bad men are base men, the vilest of men, and they are so though they are ever so highly exalted in this world. Antiochus the illustrious the scripture calls *a vile person*, Dan. xi. 21. But it is bad with a kingdom when such are preferred; no marvel if wickedness then grows impudent and insolent. *When the wicked bear rule the people mourn.*

II. Let us now see what good thoughts we are here furnished with for such bad times; and what times we may yet be reserved for we cannot tell. When times are thus bad it is comfortable to think,

1. That we have a God to go to, from whom we may ask and expect the redress of all our grievances. This he begins with (v. 1): "*Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth.*" All other helps and helpers fail; even the godly and faithful, who should lend a helping hand to support the dying cause of religion, are gone, and therefore whither shall we seek but to thee?" Note, When godly faithful people cease and fail it is time to cry, *Help, Lord!* The abounding of iniquity threatens a deluge. "*Help, Lord, help the virtuous; few seek to hold fast their integrity, and to stand in the gap; help to save thy own interest in the world from sinking. It is time for thee, Lord, to work.*"

2. That God will certainly reckon with false and proud men, and will punish and restrain their insolence. They are above the control of men and set them at defiance. Men cannot discover the falsehood of flatterers, nor humble the haughtiness of those that speak proud things; but the righteous God will cut off all *flattering lips*, that give the traitor's kiss and speak words softer than oil when war is in the heart; he will pluck out the tongue that speaks proud things against God and religion, v. 3. Some translate it as a prayer, "*May God cut off those false and spiteful lips.*" *Let lying lips be put to silence.*

3. That God will, in due time, work de-

liverance for his oppressed people, and shelter them from the malicious designs of their persecutors (v. 5): *Now, will I arise, saith the Lord.* This promise of God, which David here delivered by the spirit of prophecy, is an answer to that petition which he put up to God by the spirit of prayer. "Help, Lord," says he; "I will," says God; "here I am, with seasonable and effectual help." (1.) It is seasonable, in the fittest time. [1.] When the oppressors are in the height of their pride and insolence—when they say, *Who is lord over us?*—then is God's time to let them know, to their cost, that he is above them. [2.] When the oppressed are in the depth of their distress and despondency, when they are sighing like Israel in Egypt by reason of the cruel bondage, then is God's time to appear for them, as for Israel when they were most dejected and Pharaoh was most elevated. *Now will I arise.* Note, There is a time fixed for the rescue of oppressed innocency; that time will come, and we may be sure it is the fittest time, cii. 13. (2.) It is effectual: *I will set him in safety*, or in salvation, not only protect him, but restore him to his former prosperity, *will bring him out into a wealthy place* (lxvi. 12), so that, upon the whole, he shall lose nothing by his sufferings.

4. That, though men are false, God is faithful; though they are not to be trusted, God is. They speak vanity and flattery, but *the words of the Lord are pure words* (v. 6), not only all true, but all pure, like silver tried in a furnace of earth or a crucible. It denotes, (1.) The sincerity of God's word, every thing is really as it is there represented and not otherwise; it does not jest with us, nor impose upon us, nor has it any other design towards us than our own good. (2.) The preciousness of God's word; it is of great and intrinsic value, like silver refined to the highest degree; it has nothing in it to depreciate it. (3.) The many proofs that have been given of its power and truth; it has been often tried, all the saints in all ages have trusted it and so tried it, and it never deceived them nor frustrated their expectation, but they have all set to their seal that God's word is true, with an *Experto crede*—*Trust one that has made trial*; they have found it so. Probably this refers especially to these promises of succouring and relieving the poor and oppressed. Their friends put them in hopes that they will do something for them, and yet prove a broken reed; but the words of God are what we may rely upon; and the less confidence is to be put in men's words let us with the more assurance trust in God's word.

5. That God will secure his chosen remnant to himself, how bad soever the times are (v. 7): *Thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.* This intimates that, as long as the world stands, there will be a generation of proud and wicked men in it, more or less, who will threaten by their wretched

arts to ruin religion, by wearing out the saints of the Most High, Dan. vii. 25. But let God alone to maintain his own interest and to preserve his own people. He will keep them from this generation, (1.) From being debauched by them and drawn away from God, from mingling with them and learning their works. In times of general apostasy the Lord knows those that are his, and they shall be enabled to keep their integrity. (2.) From being destroyed and rooted out by them. The church is built upon a rock, and so well fortified that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. In the worst of times God has his remnant, and in every age will reserve to himself a holy seed and preserve that to his heavenly kingdom.

In singing this psalm, and praying it over, we must bewail the general corruption of manners, thank God that things are not worse than they are, but pray and hope that they will be better in God's due time.

PSALM XIII.

This psalm is the deserted soul's case and cure. Whether it was penned upon any particular occasion does not appear, but in general, 1. David sadly complains that God had long withdrawn from him and delayed to relieve him, ver. 1, 2. 11. He earnestly prays to God to consider his case and comfort him, ver. 3, 4. III. He assures himself of an answer of peace, and therefore concludes the psalm with joy and triumph, because he concludes his deliverance to be as good as wrought, ver. 5, 6.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

HOW long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? 2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul, *having sorrow in my heart daily?* how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me? 3 Consider *and* hear me, O LORD my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the *sleep of death*; 4 Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; *and* those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved. 5 But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation. 6 I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.

David, in affliction, is here pouring out his soul before God; his address is short, but the method is very observable, and of use for direction and encouragement.

I. His troubles extort complaints (v. 1, 2); and the afflicted have liberty to *pour out their complaint before the Lord*, cii. title. It is some ease to a troubled spirit to give vent to its griefs, especially to give vent to them at the throne of grace, where we are sure to find one who is afflicted in the afflictions of his people and is troubled with the feeling of their infirmities; thither we have boldness of access by faith, and there we have *παρρησία*—*freedom of speech*. Observe here,

1. What David complains of. (1.) God's unkindness; so he construed it, and it was his infirmity. He thought God had forgot-

ten him, had forgotten his promises to him, his covenant with him, his former loving-kindness which he had shown him and which he took to be an earnest of further mercy, had forgotten that there was such a man in the world, who needed and expected relief and succour from him. Thus Zion said, *My God has forgotten me* (Isa xli. 14), Israel said, *My way is hidden from the Lord*, Isa. xl. 27. Not that any good man can doubt the omniscience, goodness, and faithfulness of God; but it is a peevish expression of prevailing fear, which yet, when it arises from a high esteem and earnest desire of God's favour, though it be indecent and culpable, shall be passed by and pardoned, for the second thought will retract it and repent of it. God hid his face from him, so that he wanted that inward comfort in God which he used to have, and herein was a type of Christ upon the cross, crying out, *My God, why hast thou forsaken me?* God sometimes hides his face from his own children, and leaves them in the dark concerning their interest in him; and this they lay to heart more than any outward trouble whatsoever. (2.) His own uneasiness. [1.] He was racked with care, which filled his head: *I take counsel in my soul*; "I am at a loss, and am *inops consilii*—without a friend to advise with that I can put any confidence in, and therefore am myself continually projecting what to do to help myself; but none of my projects are likely to take effect, so that I am at my wits' end, and in a continual agitation." Anxious cares are heavy burdens with which good people often load themselves more than they need. [2.] He was overwhelmed with sorrow, which filled his heart: *I have sorrow in my heart daily*. He had a constant disposition to sorrow and it preyed upon his spirits, not only in the night, when he was silent and solitary, but by day too, when lighter griefs are diverted and dissipated by conversation and business; nay, every day brought with it fresh occasions of grief; *the clouds returned after the rain*. The bread of sorrow is sometimes the saint's daily bread. Our Master himself was a man of sorrows. (3.) His enemies' insolence, which added to his grief. Saul his great enemy, and others under him, were exalted over him, triumphed in his distress, pleased themselves with his grief, and promised themselves a complete victory over him. This he complained of as reflecting dishonour upon God, and his power and promise.

2. How he expostulates with God hereupon: "*How long shall it be thus?*" And, "*Shall it be thus for ever?*" Long afflictions try our patience and often tire it. It is a common temptation, when trouble lasts long, to think it will last always; despondency then turns into despair, and those that have long been without joy begin, at last, to be without hope. "Lord, tell me how long thou wilt hide thy face, and assure me that it shall not be for ever, but

that thou wilt return at length in mercy to me, and then I shall the more easily bear my present troubles."

II. His complaints stir up his prayers, v. 3, 4. We should never allow ourselves to make any complaints but what are fit to be offered up to God and what drive us to our knees. Observe here,

1. What his petitions are: *Consider my case, hear my complaints, and enlighten my eyes*, that is, (1.) "Strengthen my faith;" for faith is the eye of the soul, with which it sees above, and sees through, the things of sense. "Lord, enable me to look beyond my present troubles and to foresee a happy issue of them." (2.) "Guide my way; enable me to look about me, that I may avoid the snares which are laid for me." (3.) "Refresh my soul with the joy of thy salvation." That which revives the drooping spirits is said to *enlighten the eyes*, 1 Sam. xiv. 27; Ezra ix. 8. "Lord, scatter the cloud of melancholy which darkens my eyes, and let my countenance be made pleasant."

2. What his pleas are. He mentions his relation to God and interest in him (*O Lord my God!*) and insists upon the greatness of the peril, which called for speedy relief and succour. If his eyes were not enlightened quickly, (1) He concludes that he must perish: "*I shall sleep the sleep of death*; I cannot live under the weight of all this care and grief." Nothing is more killing to a soul than the want of God's favour, nothing more reviving than the return of it. (2.) That then his enemies would triumph: "*Lest my enemy say*, So would I have it; lest Saul, lest Satan, be gratified in my fall." It would gratify the pride of his enemy: He will say, "*I have prevailed*, I have gotten the day, and been too hard for him and his God." It would gratify the malice of his enemies: They will *rejoice when I am moved*. And will it be for God's honour to suffer them thus to trample upon all that is sacred both in heaven and earth?

III. His prayers are soon turned into praises (v. 5, 6): *But my heart shall rejoice and I will sing to the Lord*. What a surprising change is here in a few lines! In the beginning of the psalm we have him drooping, trembling, and ready to sink into melancholy and despair; but, in the close of it, rejoicing in God, and elevated and enlarged in his praises. See the power of faith, the power of prayer, and how good it is to draw near to God. If we bring our cares and griefs to the throne of grace, and leave them there, we may go away like Hannah, and our countenance will be no more sad, 1 Sam. i. 18. And here observe the method of his comfort. 1. God's mercy is the support of his faith. "My case is bad enough, and I am ready to think it deplorable, till I consider the infinite goodness of God; but, finding I have that to trust to, I am comforted, though I have no merit of my own.

In former distresses *I have trusted in the mercy of God*, and I never found that it failed me; his mercy has in due time relieved me and my confidence in it has in the mean time supported me. Even in the depth of this distress, when God hid his face from me, when without were fightings and within were fears, yet *I trusted in the mercy of God* and that was as an anchor in a storm, by the help of which, though I was tossed, I was not overset." And still *I do trust in thy mercy*; so some read it. "I refer myself to that, with an assurance that it will do well for me at last." This he pleads with God, knowing what pleasure he takes in those that *hope in his mercy*, cxlvii. 11. 2. His faith in God's mercy filled his heart with joy in his salvation; for joy and peace come by believing, Rom. xv. 13. *Believing, you rejoice*, 1 Pet. i. 8. Having put his trust in the mercy of God, he is fully assured of salvation, and that his heart, which was now daily grieving, should rejoice in that salvation. Though weeping endure long, joy will return. 3. His joy in God's salvation would fill his mouth with songs of praise (v. 6): "*I will sing unto the Lord*, sing in remembrance of what he has done formerly; though I should never recover the peace I have had, I will die blessing God that ever I had it. He has dealt bountifully with me formerly, and he shall have the glory of that, however he is pleased to deal with me now. I will sing in hope of what he will do for me at last, being confident that all will end well, will end everlastingly well. But he speaks of it as a thing past (*He has dealt bountifully with me*), because by faith he had received the earnest of the salvation and he was as confident of it as if it had been done already.

In singing this psalm and praying it over, if we have not the same complaints to make that David had, we must thank God that we have not, dread and deprecate his withdrawals, sympathize with those that are troubled in mind, and encourage ourselves in our most holy faith and joy.

PSALM XIV.

It does not appear upon what occasion this psalm was penned nor whether upon any particular occasion. Some say David penned it when Saul persecuted him; others, when Absalom rebelled against him. But they are mere conjectures, which have not certainty enough to warrant us to expound the psalm by them. The apostle, in quoting part of this psalm (Rom. iii. 10, &c.) to prove that Jews and Gentiles are all under sin (ver. 9) and that all the world is guilty before God (ver. 19), leads us to understand it, in general, as a description of the depravity of human nature, the sinfulness of the sin we are conceived and born in, and the deplorable corruption of a great part of mankind, even of the world that lies in wickedness, 1 John v. 19. But as in those psalms which are designed to discover our remedy in Christ there is commonly an allusion to David himself, yea, and some passages that are to be understood primarily of him (as in psalm ii., xvi., xxii., and others), so in this psalm, which is designed to discover our wound by sin, there is an allusion to David's enemies and persecutors, and other oppressors of good men at that time, to whom some passages have an immediate reference. In all the psalms from the 3d to this (except the 8th) David had been complaining of those that hated and persecuted him, insulted him and abused him; now here he traces all those bitter streams to the fountain, the general corruption of nature, and sees that not his enemies only, but all the children of men, were thus corrupted. Here is, I. A charge exhibited against a wicked world, ver. 1. II. The proof of the charge, ver. 2, 3. III. A serious expostulation with sinners, especially with persecutors, upon it, ver. 4-6. IV. A believing prayer for the salvation of Israel and a joyful expectation of it, ver. 7.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

THE fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God*. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, *there is none that doeth good*. 2 The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. 3 They are all gone aside, they are *all* together become filthy: *there is none that doeth good*, no, not one.

If we apply our hearts as Solomon did (Eccl. vii. 25) to search out the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness, these verses will assist us in the search and will show us that sin is exceedingly sinful. Sin is the disease of mankind, and it appears here to be malignant and epidemic.

1. See how malignant it is (v. 1) in two things:—

(1.) The contempt it puts upon the honour of God: for there is something of practical atheism at the bottom of all sin. *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God*. We are sometimes tempted to think, "Surely there never was so much atheism and profaneness as there is in our days;" but we see the former days were no better; even in David's time there were those who had arrived at such a height of impiety as to deny the very being of a God and the first and self-evident principles of religion. Observe, [1.] The sinner here described. He is one that *saith in his heart, There is no God*; he is an atheist. "There is no Elohim, no Judge or governor of the world, no providence presiding over the affairs of men." They cannot doubt of the being of God, but will question his dominion. He says *this in his heart*; it is not his judgment, but his imagination. He cannot satisfy himself that there is none, but he wishes there were none, and pleases himself with the fancy that it is possible there may be none. He cannot be sure there is one, and therefore he is willing to think there is none. He dares not speak it out, lest he be confuted, and so undecieved, but he whispers it secretly *in his heart*, for the silencing of the clamours of his conscience and the emboldening of himself in his evil ways. [2.] The character of this sinner. He is a fool; he is simple and unwise, and this is an evidence of it; he is wicked and profane, and this is the cause of it. Note, Atheistical thoughts are very foolish wicked thoughts, and they are at the bottom of a great deal of the wickedness that is in this world. The word of God is a *discerner of these thoughts*, and puts a just brand on him that harbours them. *Nabal is his name, and folly is with him*; for he thinks against the clearest light, against his own knowledge and convictions, and the common sentiments of all the wise and sober part

of mankind. No man will say, *There is no God* till he is so hardened in sin that it has become his interest that there should be none to call him to an account.

(2.) The disgrace and debasement it puts upon the nature of man. Sinners are corrupt, quite degenerated from what man was in his innocent estate : *They have become filthy* (v. 3), putrid. All their faculties are so disordered that they have become odious to their Maker and utterly incapable of answering the ends of their creation. *They are corrupt* indeed ; for, [1.] They do no good, but are the unprofitable burdens of the earth ; they do God no service, bring him no honour, nor do themselves any real kindness. [2.] They do a great deal of hurt. *They have done abominable works*, for such all sinful works are. Sin is an abomination to God ; it is that *abominable thing which he hates* (Jer. xlv. 4), and, sooner or later, it will be so to the sinner ; it will be *found to be hateful* (xxxvi. 2), an *abomination of desolation*, that is, making desolate, Matt. xxiv. 15. This follows upon their saying, *There is no God* ; for those that *profess they know God, but in works deny him, are abominable, and to every good work reprobate*, Tit. i. 16.

2. See how epidemic this disease is ; it has infected the whole race of mankind. To prove this, God himself is here brought in for a witness, and he is an eye-witness, v. 2, 3. Observe, (1.) His enquiry : *The Lord looked down from heaven*, a place of prospect, which commands this lower world ; thence, with an all-seeing eye, he took a view of all the *children of men*, and the question was, *Whether there were any among them that did understand themselves aright, their duty and interests, and did seek God and set him before them*. He that made this search was not only one that could find out a good man if he was to be found, though ever so obscure, but one that would be glad to find out one, and would be sure to take notice of him, as of Noah in the old world. (2.) The result of this enquiry, v. 3. Upon search, upon his search, it appeared, *They have all gone aside, the apostasy is universal, there is none that doeth good, no, not one*, till the free and mighty grace of God has wrought a change. Whatever good is in any of the children of men, or is done by them, it is not of themselves ; it is God's work in them. When God had made the world he looked upon his own work, and *all was very good* (Gen. i. 31) ; but, some time after, he looked upon man's work, and, behold, all was very bad (Gen. vi. 5), every operation of the thought of man's heart was evil, only evil, and that continually. They have gone aside from the right way of their duty, the way that leads to happiness, and have turned into the paths of the destroyer.

In singing this let us lament the corruption of our own nature, and see what need we have of the grace of God ; and, since that which is born of the flesh is flesh, let us not marvel that we are told we must be born again.

4 Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge ? who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD. 5 There were they in great fear : for God is in the generation of the righteous. 6 Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the LORD is his refuge. 7 Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion ! when the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.

In these verses the psalmist endeavours, I To convince sinners of the evil and danger of the way they are in, how secure soever they are in that way. Three things he shows them, which, it may be, they are not very willing to see—their wickedness, their folly, and their danger, while they are apt to believe themselves very wise, and good, and safe. See here,

1. Their wickedness. This is described in four instances :—(1.) They are themselves *workers of iniquity* ; they design it, they practise it, and take as much pleasure in it as ever any man did in his business. (2.) *They eat up God's people* with as much greediness as they eat bread, such an innate and inveterate enmity they have to them, and so heartily do they desire their ruin, because they really hate God, whose people they are. It is meat and drink to persecutors to be doing mischief ; it is as agreeable to them as their necessary food. They eat up God's people easily, daily, securely, without either check of conscience when they do it or remorse of conscience when they have done it ; as Joseph's brethren cast him into a pit and then sat down to eat bread, Gen. xxxvii. 24, 25. See Mic. iii. 2, 3. (3.) *They call not upon the Lord*. Note, Those that care not for God's people, for God's poor, care not for God himself, but live in contempt of him. The reason why people run into all manner of wickedness, even the worst, is because they do not call upon God for his grace. What good can be expected from those that live without prayer ? (4.) *They shame the counsel of the poor*, and upbraid them with making God their refuge, as David's enemies upbraided him, xi. 1. Note, Those are very wicked indeed, and have a great deal to answer for, who not only shake off religion, and live without it themselves, but say and do what they can to put others out of conceit with it that are well-inclined—with the duties of it, as if they were mean, melancholy, and unprofitable, and with the privileges of it, as if they were insufficient to make a man safe and happy. Those that banter religion and religious people will find, to their cost, it is ill jesting with edged-tools and dangerous persecuting those that make God their refuge. *Be you not mockers, lest your hands be made strong*. He shows them,

2. Their folly: *They have no knowledge*; this is obvious, for if they had any knowledge of God, if they did rightly understand themselves, and would but consider things as men, they would not be so abusive and barbarous as they are to the people of God.

3. Their danger (v. 5): *There were they in great fear*. There, where they ate up God's people, their own consciences condemned what they did, and filled them with secret terrors; they sweetly sucked the blood of the saints, but in their bowels it is turned, and become the gall of asps. Many instances there have been of proud and cruel persecutors who have been made like Pashur, *Magor-missabibbs—terrors to themselves* and all about them. Those that will not fear God perhaps may be made to fear at the shaking of a leaf.

II. He endeavours to comfort the people of God, 1. With what they have. They have God's presence (v. 5): *He is in the generation of the righteous*. They have his protection (v. 6): *The Lord is their refuge*. This is as much their security as it is the terror of their enemies, who may jeer them for their confidence in God, but cannot jeer them out of it. In the judgment-day it will add to the terror and confusion of sinners to see God own the generation of the righteous, which they have hated and bantered. 2. With what they hope for; and that is the *salvation of Israel*, v. 7. When David was driven out by Absalom and his rebellious accomplices, he comforted himself with an assurance that God would in due time *turn again his captivity*, to the joy of all his good subjects. But surely this pleasing prospect looks further. He had, in the beginning of the psalm, lamented the general corruption of mankind; and, in the melancholy view of that, wishes for the salvation which in the fulness of time was to come out of Zion—salvation from sin, that great salvation which should be wrought out by the Redeemer, who was expected to *come to Zion*, to *turn away ungodliness from Jacob*, Rom. xi. 26. The world is bad; O that the Messiah would come and change its character! There is a universal corruption; O for the times of reformation! Those will be as joyful times as these are melancholy ones. Then shall God *turn again the captivity of his people*; for the Redeemer shall *ascend on high*, and *lead captivity captive*, and Jacob shall then rejoice. The triumphs of Zion's King will be the joys of Zion's children. The second coming of Christ, finally to extinguish the dominion of sin and Satan, will be the completing of this salvation, which is the hope, and will be the joy, of every Israelite indeed. With the assurance of that we should, in singing this, comfort ourselves and one another, with reference to the present sins of sinners and sufferings of saints.

PSALM XV.

The scope of this short but excellent psalm is to show us the way to heaven, and to convince us that, if we would be happy, we must be holy and honest. Christ, who is himself the way, and in whom we must walk as our way, has also shown us the same

way that is here prescribed, Matt. xix. 17. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." In this psalm, I. By the question (ver. 1) we are directed and excited to enquire for the way. II. By the answer to that question, in the rest of the psalm, we are directed to walk in that way, ver. 2-5. III. By the assurance given in the close of the psalm of the safety and happiness of those who answer these characters we are encouraged to walk in that way, ver. 6.

A psalm of David.

LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? 2 He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. 3 *He that* backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. 4 In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. *He that* sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. 5 *He that* putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.

Here is, I. A very serious and weighty question concerning the characters of a citizen of Zion (v. 1): "*Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle?*" Let me know who shall go to heaven." Not, who by name (in this way the Lord only knows those that are his), but who by description: "What kind of people are those whom thou wilt own and crown with distinguishing and everlasting favours?" This supposes that it is a great privilege to be a citizen of Zion, an unspeakable honour and advantage,—that all are not thus privileged, but a remnant only,—and that men are not entitled to this privilege by their birth and blood: all shall not *abide in God's tabernacle* that have Abraham to their father, but, according as men's hearts and lives are, so will their lot be. It concerns us all to put this question to ourselves, *Lord, what shall I be, and do, that I may abide in thy tabernacle?* Luke xviii. 18; Acts xvi. 30. 1. Observe to whom this enquiry is addressed—to God himself. Note, Those that would find the way to heaven must look up to God, must take direction from his word and beg direction from his Spirit. It is fit he himself should give laws to his servants, and appoint the conditions of his favours, and tell who are his and who not. 2. How it is expressed in Old-Testament language. (1.) By the *tabernacle* we may understand the church militant, typified by Moses's tabernacle, fitted to a wilderness-state, mean and movable. There God manifests himself, and there he meets his people, as of old in the tabernacle of the testimony, the tabernacle of meeting. Who shall dwell in this tabernacle? Who shall be accounted a true living member of God's church, admitted among the spiritual priests to lodge in the courts of this tabernacle? We

are concerned to enquire this, because many pretend to a place in this tabernacle who really have no part nor lot in the matter. (2.) By the *holy hill* we may understand the church triumphant, alluding to Mount Zion, on which the temple was to be built by Solomon. It is the happiness of glorified saints that they dwell in that holy hill; they are at home there: they shall be for ever there. It concerns us to know who shall dwell there, that we may make it sure to ourselves that we shall have a place among them, and may then take the comfort of it, and rejoice in prospect of that holy hill.

II. A very plain and particular answer to this question. Those that desire to know their duty, with a resolution to do it, will find the scripture a very faithful director and conscience a faithful monitor. Let us see then the particular characters of a citizen of Zion.

1. He is one that is sincere and entire in his religion: He *walketh uprightly*, according to the condition of the covenant (Gen. xvii. 1), "*Walk before me, and be thou perfect*" (it is the same word that is here used) "and then thou shalt find me a God all-sufficient." He is really what he professes to be, is sound at heart, and can approve himself to God, in his integrity, in all he does; his conversation is uniform, and he is of a piece with himself, and endeavours to stand complete in all the will of God. His eye perhaps is weak, but it is single; he has his spots indeed, but he does not paint; he is an *Israelite indeed in whom is no guile*, John i. 47; 2 Cor. i. 12. I know no religion but sincerity.

2. He is one that is conscientiously honest and just in all his dealings, faithful and fair to all with whom he has to do: He *worketh righteousness*; he walks in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord, and takes care to give all their due, is just both to God and man; and, in speaking to both, he speaks that which is *the truth in his heart*; his prayers, professions, and promises, to God, come not out of feigned lips, nor dares he tell a lie, or so much as equivocate, in his converse or commerce with men. He walks by the rules of righteousness and truth, and scorns and abhors the gains of injustice and fraud. He reckons that that cannot be a good bargain, nor a saving one, which is made with a lie, and that he who wrongs his neighbour, though ever so plausibly, will prove, in the end, to have done the greatest injury to himself.

3. He is one that contrives to do all the good he can to his neighbours, but is very careful to do hurt to no man, and is, in a particular manner, tender of his neighbour's reputation, v. 3. He *does no evil at all to his neighbour* willingly or designedly, nothing to offend or grieve his spirit, nothing to prejudice the health or ease of his body, nothing to injure him in his estate or secular interests, in his family or relations; but walks by that

golden rule of equity, To do as he would be done by. He is especially careful not to injure his neighbour in his good name, though many, who would not otherwise wrong their neighbours, make nothing of that. If any man, in this matter, bridles not his tongue, his religion is vain. He knows the worth of a good name, and therefore *he backbites not*, defames no man, speaks evil of no man, makes not others' faults the subject of his common talk, much less of his sport and ridicule, nor speaks of them with pleasure, nor at all but for edification. He makes the best of every body, and the worst of nobody. He does not *take up a reproach*, that is, he neither raises it nor receives it; he gives no credit nor countenance to a calumny, but frowns upon a backbiting tongue, and so silences it, Prov. xxv. 23. If an ill-natured character of his neighbour be given him, or an ill-natured story be told him, he will disprove it if he can; if not, it shall die with him and go no further. His *charity will cover a multitude of sins*.

4. He is one that values men by their virtue and piety, and not by the figure they make in the world, v. 5. (1.) He thinks the better of no man's wickedness for his pomp and grandeur: *In his eyes a vile person is contemned*. Wicked people are vile people, worthless and good for nothing (so the word signifies), as dross, as chaff, and as salt that has lost its savour. They are vile in their choices (Jer. ii. 13), in their practices, Isa. xxxii. 6. For this wise and good men condemn them, not denying them civil honour and respect as men, as men in authority and power perhaps (1 Pet. ii. 17, Rom. xiii. 7), but, in their judgment of them, agreeing with the word of God. They are so far from envying them that they pity them, despising their gains (Isa. xxxiii. 15), as turning to no account, their dainties (cxli. 4), their pleasures (Heb. xi. 24, 25) as sapless and insipid. They despise their society (cxix. 115; 2 Kings iii. 14); they despise their taunts and threats, and are not moved by them, nor disturbed at them; they despise the feeble efforts of their impotent malice (ii. 1, 4), and will shortly triumph in their fall, lii. 6, 7. God despises them, and they are of his mind. (2.) He thinks the worse of no man's piety for his poverty and meanness, *but he knows those that fear the Lord*. He reckons that serious piety, wherever it is found, puts an honour upon a man, and makes his face to shine, more than wealth, or wit, or a great name among men, does or can. He honours such, esteems them very highly in love, desires their friendship and conversation and an interest in their prayers, is glad of an opportunity to show them respect or do them a good office, pleads their cause and speaks of them with veneration, rejoices when they prosper, grieves when they are removed, and their memory, when they are gone, is precious with him. By this we may judge of

ourselves in some measure. What rules do we go by in judging of others?

5. He is one that always prefers a good conscience before any secular interest or advantage whatsoever; for, if he has promised upon oath to do any thing, though afterwards it appear much to his damage and prejudice in his worldly estate, yet he adheres to it and *changes not*, v. 4. See how weak-sighted and short-sighted even wise and good men may be; they may *swear to their own hurt*, which they were not aware of when they took the oath. But see how strong the obligation of an oath is, that a man must rather suffer loss to himself and his family than wrong his neighbour by breaking his oath. An oath is a sacred thing, which we must not think to play fast and loose with.

6. He is one that will not increase his estate by any unjust practices, v. 5. (1.) Not by extortion: *He putteth not out his money to usury*, that he may live at ease upon the labours of others, while he is in a capacity for improving it by his own industry. Not that it is any breach of the law of justice or charity for the lender to share in the profit which the borrower makes of his money, any more than for the owner of the land to demand rent from the occupant, money being, by art and labour, as improvable as land. But a citizen of Zion will freely lend to the poor, according to his ability, and not be rigorous and severe in recovering his right from those that are reduced by Providence. (2.) Not by bribery: He will not *take a reward against the innocent*; if he be any way employed in the administration of public justice, he will not, for any gain, or hope of it, to himself, do any thing to the prejudice of a righteous cause.

III. The psalm concludes with a ratification of this character of the citizen of Zion. He is like Zion-hill itself, which cannot be moved, but abides for ever, cxxv. 1. Every true living member of the church, like the church itself, is built upon a rock, which the gates of hell cannot prevail against: *He that doeth these things shall never be moved*; shall not be moved for ever, so the word is. The grace of God shall always be sufficient for him, to preserve him safe and blameless to the heavenly kingdom. Temptations shall not overcome him, troubles shall not overwhelm him, nothing shall rob him of his present peace nor his future bliss.

In singing this psalm we must teach and admonish ourselves, and one another, to answer the characters here given of the citizen of Zion, that we may never be moved from God's tabernacle on earth, and may arrive, at last, at that holy hill where we shall be for ever out of the reach of temptation and danger.

PSALM XVI.

This psalm has something of David in it, but much more of Christ. It begins with such expressions of devotion as may be applied to Christ; but concludes with such confidence of a resurrection (and so timely a one as to prevent corruption) as must be applied

to Christ, to him only, and cannot be understood of David, as both St. Peter and St. Paul have observed, Acts ii. 24; xiii. 36. For David died, and was buried, and saw corruption. 1. David speaks of himself as a member of Christ, and so he speaks the language of all good Christians, professing his confidence in God (ver. 1), his consent to him (ver. 2), his affection to the people of God (ver. 3), his adherence to the true worship of God (ver. 4), and his entire complacency and satisfaction in God and the interest he had in him, ver. 5-7. 11. He speaks of himself as a type of Christ, and so he speaks the language of Christ himself, to whom all the rest of the psalm is expressly and at large applied, Acts ii. 25, &c. David speaks concerning him (now concerning himself), "I foresaw the Lord always before my face," &c. And this he spoke, being a prophet, ver. 30, 31. He spoke, 1. Of the special presence of God with the Redeemer in his services and sufferings, ver. 8. 2. Of the prospect which the Redeemer had of his own resurrection and the glory that should follow, which carried him cheerfully through his undertaking, ver. 9-11.

Michtam of David.

PRESERVE me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust. 2 *O my soul*, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee; 3 *But* to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight. 4 Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips. 5 The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. 6 The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage. 7 I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons.

This psalm is entitled *Michtam*, which some translate a *golden psalm*, a very precious one, more to be valued by us than gold, yea, than much fine gold, because it speaks so plainly of Christ and his resurrection, who is the true treasure hidden in the field of the Old Testament.

I. David here flies to God's protection with a cheerful believing confidence in it (v. 1): "Preserve me, O God! from the deaths, and especially from the sins, to which I am continually exposed; for in thee, and in thee only, do I put my trust." Those that by faith commit themselves to the divine care, and submit themselves to the divine guidance, have reason to hope for the benefit of both. This is applicable to Christ, who prayed, *Father, save me from this hour*, and trusted in God that he would deliver him.

II. He recognises his solemn dedication of himself to God as his God (v. 2): "O my soul! thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord, and therefore thou mayest venture to trust him." Note, 1. It is the duty and interest of every one of us to acknowledge the Lord for our Lord, to subject ourselves to him, and then to stay ourselves upon him. *Adonai* signifies *My stayer*, the strength of my heart. 2. This must be done with our souls: "O my soul! thou hast said it." Co-

venanting with God must be heart-work ; all that is within us must be employed therein and engaged thereby. 3. Those who have avouched the Lord for their Lord should be often putting themselves in mind of what they have done. "Hast thou said unto the Lord, *Thou art my Lord* ? Say it again then, stand to it, abide by it, and never unsay it. Hast thou said it ? Take the comfort of it, and live up to it. He is thy Lord, and worship thou him, and let thy eye be ever towards him."

III. He devotes himself to the honour of God in the service of the saints. (v. 2, 3): *My goodness extends not to thee, but to the saints.* Observe, 1. Those that have taken the Lord for their Lord must, like him, be good and do good ; we do not expect happiness without goodness. 2. Whatever good there is in us, or is done by us, we must humbly acknowledge that it extends not to God ; so that we cannot pretend to merit any thing by it. God has no need of our services ; he is not benefited by them, nor can they add any thing to his infinite perfection and blessedness. The wisest, and best, and most useful, men in the world cannot be profitable to God, Job xxii. 2 ; xxxv. 7. God is infinitely above us, and happy without us, and whatever good we do it is all from him ; so that we are indebted to him, not he to us : David owns it (1 Chron. xxix. 14), *Of thy own have we given thee.* 3. If God be ours, we must, for his sake, extend our goodness to those that are his, to the saints in the earth ; for what is done to them he is pleased to take as done to himself, having constituted them his receivers. Note, (1.) There are saints in the earth ; and saints on earth we must all be, or we shall never be saints in heaven. 'Those that are renewed by the grace of God, and devoted to the glory of God, are saints on earth. (2.) The saints in the earth are excellent ones, great, mighty, magnificent ones, and yet some of them so poor in the world that they need to have David's goodness extended to them. God makes them excellent by the grace he gives them. *The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour*, and then he accounts them excellent. They are precious in his sight and honourable ; they are his jewels, his peculiar treasure. Their God is their glory, and a diadem of beauty to them. (3.) All that have taken the Lord for their God delight in his saints as excellent ones, because they bear his image, and because he loves them. David, though a king, was a *companion of all that feared God* (cxix. 63), even the meanest, which was a sign that his delight was in them. (4.) It is not enough for us to delight in the saints, but, as there is occasion, our goodness must extend to them ; we must be ready to show them the kindness they need, distribute to their necessities, and abound in the labour of love to them. This is applicable to Christ. The salvation he wrought out for us was no gain to God, for

our ruin would have been no loss to him ; but the goodness and benefit of it extend to us men, in whom he delighteth, Prov. viii. 31. *For their sakes*, says he, *I sanctify myself*, John xvii. 19. Christ delights even in the saints on earth, notwithstanding their weaknesses and manifold infirmities, which is a good reason why we should.

IV. He disclaims the worship of all false gods and all communion with their worshippers, v. 4. Here, 1. He reads the doom of idolaters, who hasten after another God, being mad upon their idols, and pursuing them as eagerly as if they were afraid they would escape from them : *Their sorrows shall be multiplied*, both by the judgments they bring upon themselves from the true God whom they forsake and by the disappointment they will meet with in the false gods they embrace. Those that multiply gods multiply griefs to themselves ; for, whoever thinks one God too little, will find two too many, and yet hundreds not enough. 2. He declares his resolution to have no fellowship with them nor with their unfruitful works of darkness : *"Their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer*, not only because the gods they are offered to are a lie, but because the offerings themselves are barbarous." At God's altar, because the blood made atonement, the drinking of it was most strictly prohibited, and the drink-offerings were of wine ; but the devil prescribed to his worshippers to drink of the blood of the sacrifices, to teach them cruelty. "I will have nothing to do" (says David) "with those bloody deities, nor so much as take their names into my lips with any delight in them or respect to them." Thus must we hate idols and idolatry with a perfect hatred. Some make this also applicable to Christ and his undertaking, showing the nature of the sacrifice he offered (it was not the blood of bulls and goats, which was offered according to the law ; that was never named, nor did he ever make any mention of it, but his own blood), showing also the multiplied sorrows of the unbelieving Jews, who hastened after another king, Cæsar, and are still hastening after another Messiah, whom they in vain look for.

V. He repeats the solemn choice he had made of God for his portion and happiness (v. 5), takes to himself the comfort of the choice (v. 6), and gives God the glory of it, v. 7. This is very much the language of a devout and pious soul in its gracious exercises.

1. Choosing the Lord for its portion and happiness. "Most men take the world for their chief good, and place their felicity in the enjoyments of it ; but this I say, *The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup*, the portion I make choice of, and will gladly take up with, how poor soever my condition is in this world. Let me have the love and favour of God, and be accepted of him ; let me have the comfort of communion with God, and satisfaction in the communications of his

graces and comforts; let me have an interest in his promises, and a title by promise to everlasting life and happiness in the future state; and I have enough, I need no more, I desire no more, to complete my felicity." Would we do well and wisely for ourselves, we must take God, in Christ, to be, (1.) The portion of our inheritance in the other world. Heaven is an inheritance. God himself is the inheritance of the saints there, whose everlasting bliss is to enjoy him. We must take that for our inheritance, our home, our rest, our lasting, everlasting, good, and look upon this world to be no more ours than the country through which our road lies when we are on a journey. (2.) The portion of our cup in this world, with which we are nourished, and refreshed, and kept from fainting. Those have not God for theirs who do not reckon his comforts the most reviving cordials, acquaint themselves with them, and make use of them as sufficient to counterbalance all the grievances of this present time and to sweeten the most bitter cup of affliction.

2. Confiding in him for the securing of this portion: "*Thou maintainest my lot.* Thou that hast by promise made over thyself to me, to be mine, wilt graciously make good what thou hast promised, and never leave me to myself to forfeit this happiness, nor leave it in the power of my enemies to rob me of it. Nothing shall pluck me out of thy hands, nor separate me from thy love, and the sure mercies of David." The saints and their bliss are kept by the power of God.

3. Rejoicing in this portion, and taking a complacency in it (v. 6): *The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places.* Those have reason to say so that have God for their portion; they have a worthy portion, a goodly heritage. What can they have better? What can they desire more? *Return unto thy rest, O my soul!* and look no further. Note, Gracious persons, though they still covet more of God, never covet more than God; but, being satisfied of his loving-kindness, they are abundantly satisfied with it, and envy not any their carnal mirth and sensual pleasures and delights, but account themselves truly happy in what they have, and doubt not but to be completely happy in what they hope for. Those whose lot is cast, as David's was, in a land of light, in a valley of vision, where God is known and worshipped, have, upon that account, reason to say, *The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places*; much more those who have not only the means, but the end, not only Immanuel's land, but Immanuel's love.

4. Giving thanks to God for it, and for grace to make this wise and happy choice (v. 7): "*I will bless the Lord who has given me counsel,* this counsel, to take him for my portion and happiness." So ignorant and foolish are we that, if we be left to ourselves, our hearts will follow our eyes, and we shall choose our own delusions, and forsake our own mercies for lying vanities; and therefore,

if we have indeed taken God for our portion and preferred spiritual and eternal blessings before those that are sensible and temporal, we must thankfully acknowledge the power and goodness of divine grace directing and enabling us to make that choice. If we have the pleasure of it, let God have the praise of it.

5. Making a good use of it. God having given him counsel by his word and Spirit, his own *reins* also (his own thoughts) instructed him in the night-season; when he was silent and solitary, and retired from the world, then his own conscience (which is called the *reins*, Jer. xvii. 10) not only reflected with comfort upon the choice he had made, but instructed or admonished him concerning the duties arising out of this choice, catechized him, and engaged and quickened him to live as one that had God for his portion, by faith to live upon him and to live to him. Those who have God for their portion, and who will be faithful to him, must give their own consciences leave to deal thus faithfully and plainly with them.

All this may be applied to Christ, who made the Lord his portion and was pleased with that portion, made his Father's glory his highest end and made it his meat and drink to seek that and to do his will, and delighted to prosecute his undertaking, pursuant to his Father's counsel, depending upon him to maintain his lot and to carry him through his undertaking. We may also apply it to ourselves, in singing it, renewing our choice of God as ours, with a holy complacency and satisfaction.

8 I have set the LORD always before me: because *he is* at my right hand, I shall not be moved. 9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. 10 For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. 11 Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence *is* fulness of joy; at thy right hand *there are* pleasures for evermore.

All these verses are quoted by St. Peter in his first sermon, after the pouring out of the Spirit on the day of pentecost (Acts ii. 25—28); and he tells us expressly that David in them speaks concerning Christ and particularly of his resurrection. Something we may allow here of the workings of David's own pious and devout affections towards God, depending upon his grace to perfect every thing that concerned him, and looking for the blessed hope, and a happy state on the other side death, in the enjoyment of God; but in these holy elevations towards God and heaven he was carried by the spirit of prophecy quite beyond the consideration of himself and his own case, to foretel the glory of the Messiah, in such expressions as were peculiar to that,

and could not be understood of himself. The New Testament furnishes us with a key to let us into the mystery of these lines.

I. These verses must certainly be applied to Christ; of him speaks the prophet this, as did many of the Old-Testament prophets, who testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow (1 Pet. i. 11), and that is the subject of this prophecy here. It is foretold (as he himself showed concerning this, no doubt, among other prophecies in this psalm, Luke xxiv. 44, 46) that *Christ should suffer, and rise from the dead*, 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4.

1. That he should suffer and die. This is implied here when he says (v. 8), *I shall not be moved*; he supposed that he should be struck at, and have a dreadful shock given him, as he had in his agony, when his soul was exceedingly sorrowful, and he prayed that the cup might pass from him. When he says, "*My flesh shall rest*," it is implied that he must put off the body, and therefore must go through the pains of death. It is likewise plainly intimated that his soul must go into a state of separation from the body, and that his body, so deserted, would be in imminent danger of seeing corruption—that he should not only die, but be buried, and abide for some time under the power of death.

2. That he should be wonderfully borne up by the divine power in suffering and dying. (1.) That he should not be moved, should not be driven off from his undertaking nor sink under the weight of it, that he should not fail nor be discouraged (Isa. xlii. 4), but should proceed and persevere in it, till he could say, *It is finished*. Though the service was hard and the encounter hot, and he trod the wine-press alone, yet he was not moved, did not give up the cause, but set his face as a flint, Isa. i. 7—9. *Here am I, let these go their way*. Nay, (2.) That his heart should rejoice and his glory be glad, that he should go on with his undertaking, not only resolutely, but cheerfully, and with unspeakable pleasure and satisfaction, witness that saying (John xvii. 11), *Now I am no more in the world, but I come to thee*, and that (John xviii. 11), *The cup that my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?* and many the like. By his glory is meant his tongue, as appears, Acts ii. 26. For our tongue is our glory, and never more so than when it is employed in glorifying God. Now there were three things which bore him up and carried him on thus cheerfully:—[1.] The respect he had to his Father's will and glory in what he did: *I have set the Lord always before me*. He still had an eye to his Father's commandment (John x. 18, xiv. 31), the will of him that sent him. He aimed at his Father's honour and the restoring of the interests of his kingdom among men, and this kept him from being moved by the difficulties he met with; for he always did those things that pleased his Father. [2.] The

assurance he had of his Father's presence with him in his sufferings: *He is at my right hand*, a present help to me, nigh at hand in the time of need. *He is near that justifieth me* (Isa. i. 8); he is at my right hand, to direct and strengthen it, and hold it up, lxxix. 21. When he was in his agony an angel was sent from heaven to strengthen him, Luke xxii. 43. To this the victories and triumphs of the cross were all owing; it was the Lord at his right hand that *struck through kings*, ex. 5; Isa. xlii. 1, 2. [3.] The prospect he had of a glorious issue of his sufferings. It was for *the joy set before him that he endured the cross*, Heb. xii. 2. He rested in hope, and that made his rest glorious, Isa. xi. 10. He knew he should be justified in the Spirit by his resurrection, and straightway glorified. See John xiii. 31, 32.

3. That he should be brought through his sufferings, and brought from under the power of death by a glorious resurrection. (1.) That his soul should not be left in hell, that is, his human spirit should not be long left, as other men's spirits are, in a state of separation from the body, but should, in a little time, return and be re-united to it, never to part again. (2.) That being God's holy One in a peculiar manner, sanctified to the work of redemption and perfectly free from sin, he should not see corruption nor feel it. This implies that he should not only be raised from the grave, but raised so soon that his dead body should not so much as begin to corrupt, which, in the course of nature, it would have done if it had not been raised the third day. We, who have so much corruption in our souls, must expect that our bodies also will corrupt (Job xxiv. 19); but that holy One of God who knew no sin saw no corruption. Under the law it was strictly ordered that those parts of the sacrifices which were not burnt upon the altar should by no means be kept till the third day, lest they should putrefy (Lev. vii. 15, 18), which perhaps pointed at Christ's rising the third day, that he might not see corruption—neither was a bone of him broken.

4. That he should be abundantly recompensed for his sufferings, with the joy set before him, v. 11. He was well assured, (1.) That he should not miss of his glory: "*Thou wilt show me the path of life*, and lead me to that life through this darksome valley." In confidence of this, when he gave up the ghost, he said, *Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit*; and, a little before, *Father, glorify me with thy own self*. (2.) That he should be received into the presence of God, to sit at his right hand. His being admitted into God's presence would be the acceptance of his service and his being set at his right hand the recompense of it. (3.) Thus, as a reward for the sorrows he underwent for our redemption, he should have a *fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore*; not only the glory he had with God, as God, before all worlds, but the joy and pleasure of a Mediator, in seeing his

seed, and the success and prosperity of his undertaking, Isa. liii. 10, 11.

II. Christ being the Head of the body, the church, these verses may, for the most part, be applied to all good Christians, who are guided and animated by the Spirit of Christ; and, in singing them, when we have first given glory to Christ, in whom, to our everlasting comfort, they have had their accomplishment, we may then encourage and edify ourselves and one another with them, and may hence learn, 1. That it is our wisdom and duty to set the Lord always before us, and to see him continually at our right hand, wherever we are, to eye him as our chief good and highest end, our owner, ruler, and judge, our gracious benefactor, our sure guide and strict observer; and, while we do thus, we shall not be moved either from our duty or from our comfort. Blessed Paul set the Lord before him, when, though bonds and afflictions did await him, he could bravely say, *None of these things move me*, Acts xx. 24. 2. That, if our eyes be ever towards God, our hearts and tongues may ever rejoice in him; it is our own fault if they do not. If the heart rejoice in God, out of the abundance of that let the mouth speak, to his glory, and the edification of others. 3. That dying Christians, as well as a dying Christ, may cheerfully put off the body, in a believing expectation of a joyful resurrection: *My flesh also shall rest in hope*. Our bodies have little rest in this world, but in the grave they shall rest as in their beds, Isa. lvii. 2. We have little to hope for from this life, but we shall rest in hope of a better life; we may put off the body in that hope. Death destroys the hope of man (Job xiv. 19), but not the hope of a good Christian, Prov. xiv. 32. He has hope in his death, living hopes in dying moments, hopes that the body shall not be left for ever in the grave, but, though it see corruption for a time, it shall, at the end of the time, be raised to immortality; Christ's resurrection is an earnest of ours if we be his. 4. That those who live piously with God in their eye may die comfortably with heaven in their eye. In this world sorrow is our lot, but in heaven there is joy. All our joys here are empty and defective, but in heaven there is a fulness of joy. Our pleasures here are transient and momentary, and such is the nature of them that it is not fit they should last long; but those at God's right hand are pleasures for evermore; for they are the pleasures of immortal souls in the immediate vision and fruition of an eternal God.

PSALM XVII.

David, being in great distress and danger by the malice of his enemies, does, in this psalm, by prayer address himself to God, his tried refuge, and seeks shelter in him. I. He appeals to God concerning his integrity, ver. 1-4. II. He prays to God still to be upheld in his integrity and preserved from the malice of his enemies, ver. 5-8, 13. III. He gives a character of his enemies, using that as a plea with God for his preservation, ver. 9-12, 14. IV. He comforts himself with the hopes of his future happiness, ver. 15. Some make him, in this, a type of Christ, who was perfectly innocent, and yet was hated and persecuted, but, like David, committed himself and his cause to him that judgeth righteously.

A prayer of David.

HEAR the right, O LORD, attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer, *that goeth not out of feigned lips*. 2 Let my sentence come forth from thy presence; let thine eyes behold the things that are equal. 3 Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited *me* in the night; thou hast tried me, *and shalt find nothing*; I am purposed *that* my mouth shall not transgress. 4 Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept *me from the paths of the destroyer*. 5 Hold up my goings in thy paths, *that* my footsteps slip not. 6 I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God: incline thine ear unto me, *and hear my speech*. 7 Show thy marvellous lovingkindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee from those that rise up *against them*.

This psalm is a prayer. As there is a time to weep and a time to rejoice, so there is a time for praise and a time for prayer. David was now persecuted, probably by Saul, who hunted him like a partridge on the mountains; without were fightings, within were fears, and both urged him as a suppliant to the throne of mercy. He addresses himself to God in these verses both by way of appeal (*Hear the right, O Lord!* let my righteous cause have a hearing before thy tribunal, and give judgment upon it) and by way of petition (*Give ear unto my prayer* v. 1, and again v. 6, *Incline thy ear unto me and hear my speech*); not that God needs to be thus pressed with our importunity, but he gives us leave thus to express our earnest desire of his gracious answers to our prayers. These things he pleads with God for audience, 1. That he was sincere, and did not dissemble with God in his prayer: *It goeth not out of feigned lips*. He meant as he spoke, and the feelings of his mind agreed with the expressions of his mouth. Feigned prayers are fruitless; but, if our hearts lead our prayers, God will meet them with his favour. 2. That he had been used to pray at other times, and it was not his distress and danger that now first brought him to his duty: *"I have called upon thee formerly (v. 6); therefore, Lord, hear me now."* It will be a great comfort to us if trouble, when it comes, find the wheels of prayer a-going, for then we may come with the more boldness to the throne of grace. Tradesmen are willing to oblige those that have been long their customers. 3. That he was encouraged by his faith to expect God would take notice of his prayers: *"I know thou wilt hear me, and therefore, O God, incline thy ear to*

me." Our believing dependence upon God is a good plea to enforce our desires towards him. Let us now see,

I. What his appeal is; and here observe,

1. What the court is to the cognizance and determination of which he makes his appeal; it is the court of heaven. "Lord, do thou hear the right, for Saul is so passionate, so prejudiced, that he will not hear it. Lord, let my sentence come forth from thy presence, v. 2. Men sentence me to be pursued and cut off as an evil-doer. Lord, I appeal from them to thee." This he did in a public remonstrance before Saul's face (1 Sam. xxiv. 12, *The Lord judge between me and thee*), and he repeats it here in his private devotions. Note, (1.) The equity and extent of God's government and judgment are a very great support to injured innocence. If we are blackened, and abused, and misrepresented, by unrighteous men, it is a comfort that we have a righteous God to go to, who will take our part, who is the patron of the oppressed, whose judgment is according to truth, by the discoveries of which every person and every cause will appear in a true light, stripped of all false colours, and by the decisions of which all unrighteous dooms will be reversed, and to every man will be rendered according to his work. (2.) Sincerity dreads no scrutiny, no, not that of God himself, according to the tenour of the covenant of grace: *Let thy eyes behold the things that are equal*. God's omniscience is as much the joy of the upright as it is the terror of hypocrites, and is particularly comfortable to those who are falsely accused and in any wise have wrong done them.

2. What the evidence is by which he hopes to make good his appeal; it is the trial God had made of him (v. 3): *Thou hast proved my heart*. God's sentence is therefore right, because he always proceeds upon his knowledge, which is more certain and infallible than that which men attain to by the closest views and the strictest investigations.

(1.) He knew God had tried him, [1.] By his own conscience, which is God's deputy in the soul. *The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord*, with this God had searched him, and visited him in the night, when he communed with his own heart upon his bed. He had submitted to the search, and had seriously reviewed the actions of his life, to discover what was amiss, but could find nothing of that which his enemies charged him with. [2.] By providence. God had tried him by the fair opportunity he had, once and again, to kill Saul; he had tried him by the malice of Saul, the treachery of his friends, and the many provocations that were given him; so that, if he had been the man he was represented to be, it would have appeared; but, upon all these trials, there was nothing found against him, no proof at all of the things whereof they accused him.

(2.) God tried his heart, and could witness to the integrity of that; but, for the further proof

of his integrity, he himself takes notice of two things concerning which his conscience bore him record:—[1.] That he had a fixed resolution against all sins of the tongue: "*I have purposed and fully determined, in the strength of God's grace, that my mouth shall not transgress*." He does not say, "I hope that it will not," or, "I wish that it may not," but, "*I have fully purposed that it shall not*;" with this bridle he kept his mouth, xxxix. 1. Note, Constant resolution and watchfulness against sins of the tongue will be a good evidence of our integrity. *If any offend not in word, the same is a perfect man*, Jam. iii. 2. He does not say, "*My mouth never shall transgress*" (for in many things we all offend), but, "*I have purposed that it shall not*;" and he that searches the heart knows whether the purpose be sincere. [2.] That he had been as careful to refrain from sinful actions as from sinful words (v. 4): "*Concerning the common works of men, the actions and affairs of human life, I have, by the direction of thy word, kept myself from the paths of the destroyer*." Some understand it particularly, that he had not been himself a destroyer of Saul, when it lay in his power, nor had he permitted others to be so, but said to Abishai, *Destroy him not*, 1 Sam. xxvi. 9. But it may be taken more generally; he kept himself from all evil works, and endeavoured, according to the duty of his place, to keep others from them too. Note, *First*, The ways of sin are paths of the destroyer, of the devil, whose name is *Abaddon* and *Apollyon*, a destroyer, who ruins souls by decoying them into the paths of sin. *Secondly*, It concerns us all to keep out of the paths of the destroyer; for, if we walk in those ways that lead to destruction, we must thank ourselves if destruction and misery be our portion at last. *Thirdly*, It is by the word of God, as our guide and rule, that we must keep out of the paths of the destroyer, by observing its directions and admonitions, cxix. 9. *Fourthly*, If we carefully avoid all the paths of sin, it will be very comfortable in the reflection, when we are in trouble. If we keep ourselves, that the wicked one touch us not with his temptations (1 John v. 18), we may hope he will not be able to touch us with his terrors.

II. What his petition is; it is, in short, this. That he might experience the good work of God in him, as an evidence of and qualification for the good will of God towards him: this is grace and peace from God the Father. 1. He prays for the work of God's grace in him (v. 5): "*Hold up my goings in thy paths*. Lord, I have, by thy grace, kept myself from the paths of the destroyer; by the same grace let me be kept in thy paths; let me not only be restrained from doing that which is evil, but quickened to abound always in that which is good. Let my goings be held in thy paths, that I may not turn back from them nor turn aside out of them; let them be held up in thy paths, that I may not stumble and fall into sin, that I may not trifle and neglect my

duty. Lord, as thou hast kept me hitherto, so keep me still." Those that are, through grace, going in God's paths, have need to pray, and do pray, that their goings may be held up in those paths; for we stand no longer than he is pleased to hold us, we go no further than he is pleased to lead us, bear us up, and carry us. David had been kept in the way of his duty hitherto, and yet he does not think that this would be his security for the future, and therefore prays, "Lord, still hold me up." Those that would proceed and persevere in the way of God must, by faith and prayer, fetch in daily fresh supplies of grace and strength from him. David was sensible that his way was slippery, that he himself was weak, and not so well fixed and furnished as he should be, that there were those who watched for his halting and would improve the least slip against him, and therefore he prays, "Lord, hold me up, that my foot slip not, that I may never say nor do any thing that looks either dishonest or distrustful of thee and thy providence and promise." 2. He prays for the tokens of God's favour to him, *v. 7*. Observe here, (1.) How he eyes God as the protector and Saviour of his people, so he calls him, and thence he takes his encouragement in prayer: *O thou that savest by thy right hand* (by thy own power, and needest not the agency of any other) *those who put their trust in thee from those that rise up against them*. It is the character of God's people that they trust in him; he is pleased to make them confidants, for his secret is with the righteous; and they make him their trust, for to him they commit themselves. Those that trust in God have many enemies, many that rise up against them and seek their ruin; but they have one friend that is able to deal with them all, and, if he be for them, no matter who is against them. He reckons it his honour to be their Saviour. His almighty power is engaged for them, and they have all found him ready to save them. The margin reads it, *O thou that savest those who trust in thee from those that rise up against thy right hand*. Those that are enemies to the saints are rebels against God and his right hand, and therefore, no doubt, he will, in due time, appear against them. (2.) What he expects and desires from God: *Show thy marvellous loving-kindness*. The word signifies, [1.] Distinguishing favours. "Set apart thy loving-kindnesses for me; put me not off with common mercies, but be gracious to me, as thou usest to do to those who love thy name." [2.] Wonderful favours. "O make thy loving-kindness admirable! Lord, testify thy favour to me in such a way that I and others may wonder at it." God's loving-kindness is marvellous for the freeness and the fulness of it; in some instances it appears, in a special manner, marvellous (cxviii. 23), and it will certainly appear so in the salvation of the saints, when Christ shall come to be glorified in the saints and to be admired in all those that believe.

8 Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings, 9 From the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about. 10 They are inclosed in their own fat: with their mouth they speak proudly. 11 They have now compassed us in our steps: they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth; 12 Like as a lion that is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places. 13 Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword: 14 From men which are thy hand, O LORD, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes. 15 As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.

We may observe, in these verses,

I. What David prays for. Being compassed about with enemies that sought his life, he prays to God to preserve him safely through all their attempts against him, to the crown to which he was anointed. This prayer is both a prediction of the preservation of Christ through all the hardships and difficulties of his humiliation, to the glories and joys of his exalted state, and a pattern to Christians to commit the keeping of their souls to God, trusting him to preserve them to his heavenly kingdom. He prays,

1. That he himself might be protected (*v. 8*): "Keep me safe, hide me close, where I may not be found, where I may not be come at. Deliver my soul, not only my mortal life from death, but my immortal spirit from sin." Those who put themselves under God's protection may in faith implore the benefit of it.

(1.) He prays that God would keep him, [1.] With as much care as a man keeps the apple of his eye with, which nature has wonderfully fenced and teaches us to guard. If we keep God's law as the apple of our eye (Prov. vii. 2), we may expect that God will so keep us; for it is said concerning his people that whose touches them touches the apple of his eye, Zech. ii. 8. [2.] With as much tenderness as the hen gathers her young ones under her wings with; Christ uses the similitude, Matt. xxiii. 37 "Hide me under the shadow of thy wings, where I may be both safe and warm." Or, perhaps, it rather alludes to the wings of the cherubim shadowing the mercy-seat: "Let me be taken under the protection of that glo-

rious grace which is peculiar to God's Israel." What David here prays for was performed to the Son of David, our Lord Jesus, of whom it is said (Isa. xlix. 2) that God hid him *in the shadow of his hand*, hid him *as a polished shaft in his quiver*.

(2.) David further prays, "Lord, keep me from the wicked, from men of the world," [1.] "From being, and doing, like them, from walking in their counsel, and standing in their way, and eating of their dainties." [2.] "From being destroyed and run down by them. Let them not have their will against me; let them not triumph over me."

2. That all the designs of his enemies to bring him either into sin or into trouble might be defeated (v. 13): "*Arise, O Lord! appear for me, disappoint him, and cast him down in his own eyes by the disappointment.*" While Saul persecuted David, how often did he miss his prey, when he thought he had him sure! And how were Christ's enemies disappointed by his resurrection, who thought they had gained their point when they had put him to death!

II. What he pleads for the encouraging of his own faith in these petitions, and his hope of speeding. He pleads,

1. The malice and wickedness of his enemies: "They are such as are not fit to be countenanced, such as, if I be not delivered from them by the special care of God himself, will be my ruin. Lord, see what wicked men those are that oppress me, and waste me, and run me down." (1.) "They are very spiteful and malicious; they are *my deadly enemies*, that thirst after my blood, my heart's blood—*enemies against the soul*, so the word is. David's enemies did what they could to drive him to sin and drive him away from God; they bade him *go serve other gods* (1 Sam. xxvi. 19), and therefore he had reason to pray against them. Note, Those are our worst enemies, and we ought so to account them, that are enemies to our souls. (2.) "They are very secure and sensual, insolent and haughty (v. 10): *They are enclosed in their own fat*, wrap themselves, hug themselves, in their own honour, and power, and plenty, and then make light of God, and set his judgments at defiance, lxxiii. 7; Job xv. 27. They wallow in pleasure, and promise themselves that to-morrow shall be as this day. And therefore with their mouth they speak proudly, glorying in themselves, blaspheming God, trampling upon his people, and insulting them." See Rev. xiii. 5, 6. "Lord, are not such men as these fit to be mortified and humbled, and made to know themselves? Will it not be for thy glory to look upon these proud men and abase them?" (3.) "They are restless and unwearied in their attempts against me: *They compass me about*, v. 9. They have now in a manner gained their point; they have surrounded us, they have compassed us in our steps, they track us wherever we go, follow us as close as the

hound does the hare, and take all advantages against us, being both too many and too quick for us. And yet they pretend to look another way, and set their eyes bowing down to the earth, as if they were meditating, retired into themselves, and thinking of something else;" or (as some think), "They are watchful and intent upon it, to do us a mischief; they are down-looked, and never let slip any opportunity of compassing their design." (4.) "The ringleader of them (that was Saul) is in a special manner bloody and barbarous, politic and projecting (v. 12), *like a lion* that lives by prey and is therefore greedy of it." It is as much the meat and drink of a wicked man to do mischief as it is of a good man to do good. He is *like a young lion lurking in secret places*, disguising his cruel designs. This is fitly applied to Saul, who sought David *on the rocks of the wild goats* (1 Sam. xxiv. 2) and *in the wilderness of Ziph* (ch. xxvi. 2), where lions used to lurk for their prey.

2. The power God had over them, to control and restrain them. He pleads, (1.) "Lord, they are *thy sword*; and will any father suffer his sword to be drawn against his own children?" As this is a reason why we should patiently bear the injuries of men, that they are but the instruments of the trouble (it comes originally from God, to whose will we are bound to submit), so it is an encouragement to us to hope both that their wrath shall praise him and that the remainder thereof he will restrain, that they are God's sword, which he can manage as he pleases, which cannot move without him, and which he will sheathe when he has done his work with it. (2.) "They are *thy hand*, by which thou dost chastise thy people and make them feel thy displeasure." He therefore expects deliverance from God's hand because from God's hand the trouble came. *Una eademque manus vulnus opemque tulit—The same hand wounds and heals.* There is no flying from God's hand but by flying to it. It is very comfortable, when we are in fear of the power of man, to see it dependent upon and in subjection to the power of God; see Isa. x. 6, 7, 15.

3. Their outward prosperity (v. 14): "Lord, appear against them, for, (1.) "They are entirely devoted to the world, and care not for thee and thy favour. They are *men of the world*, actuated by the spirit of the world, walking according to the course of this world, in love with the wealth and pleasure of this world, eager in the pursuits of it (making them their business) and at ease in the enjoyments of it—making them their bliss. They *have their portion in this life*; they look upon the good things of this world as the best things, and sufficient to make them happy, and they choose them accordingly, place their felicity in them, and aim at them as their chief good; they rest satisfied with them, their souls take their ease in them, and they look no further, nor are in any care to pro-

vide for another life. These things are their consolation (Luke vi. 24), *their good things* (Luke xvi. 25), *their reward* (Matt. vi. 5), the penny they agreed for, Matt. xx. 13. Now, Lord, shall men of this character be supported and countenanced against those who honour thee by preferring thy favour before all the wealth in this world, and taking thee for their portion?" xvi. 5. (2) They have abundance of the world. [1.] They have enlarged appetites, and a great deal wherewith to satisfy them: *Their bellies thou fillest with thy hidden treasures.* The things of this world are called *treasures*, because they are so accounted; otherwise, to a soul, and in comparison with eternal blessings, they are but trash. They are hidden in the several parts of the creation, and hidden in the sovereign disposals of Providence. They are God's hidden treasures, for the earth is his and the fulness thereof, though the men of the world think it is their own and forget God's property in it. Those that fare deliciously every day have their *bellies filled with these hidden treasures*; and they will but *fill the belly* (1 Cor. vi. 13); they will not fill the soul; they are not bread for that, nor can they satisfy, Isa. lv. 2. They are husks, and ashes, and wind; and yet most men, having no care for their souls, but all for their bellies, take up with them. [2.] They have numerous families, and a great deal to leave to them: *They are full of children*, and yet their pasture is not overstocked; they have enough for them all, and *leave the rest of their substance to their babes*, to their grand-children; and this is their heaven, it is their bliss, it is their all. "Lord," said David, "*deliver me from them*; let me not have my portion with them. Deliver me from their designs against me; for, they having so much wealth and power, I am not able to deal with them unless the Lord be on my side."

4. He pleads his own dependence upon God as his portion and happiness. "They have their portion in this life, but as for me (v. 15) I am none of them, I have but little of the world. *Nec habeo, nec careo, nec curo*—*I neither have, nor need, nor care for it.* It is the vision and fruition of God that I place my happiness in; that is it I hope for, and comfort myself with the hopes of, and thereby distinguish myself from those who have their portion in this life." Beholding God's face with satisfaction may be considered, (1.) As our duty and comfort in this world. We must in righteousness (clothed with Christ's righteousness, having a good heart and a good life) by faith behold God's face and set him always before us, must entertain ourselves from day to day with the contemplation of the beauty of the Lord; and, when we awake every morning, we must be satisfied with his likeness set before us in his word, and with his likeness stamped upon us by his renewing grace. Our experience of God's favour to us, and our con-

formity to him, should yield us more satisfaction than those have whose belly is filled with the delights of sense. 2. As our recompence and happiness in the other world. With the prospect of that he concluded the foregoing psalm, and so this. That happiness is prepared and designed only for the righteous that are justified and sanctified. They shall be put in possession of it when they awake, when the soul awakes, at death, out of its slumber in the body, and when the body awakes, at the resurrection, out of its slumber in the grave. That blessedness will consist in three things.—[1.] The immediate vision of God and his glory: *I shall behold thy face*, not, as in this world, through a glass darkly. The knowledge of God will there be perfected and the enlarged intellect filled with it. [2.] The participation of his likeness. Our holiness will there be perfect. This results from the former (1 John iii. 2): *When he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.* [3.] A complete and full satisfaction resulting from all this: *I shall be satisfied*, abundantly satisfied with it. There is no satisfaction for a soul but in God, and in his face and likeness, his good-will towards us and his good work in us; and even that satisfaction will not be perfect till we come to heaven.

PSALM XVIII.

This psalm we met with before, in the history of David's life, 2 Sam. xxii. That was the first edition of it; here we have it revised, altered a little, and fitted for the service of the church. It is David's thanksgiving for the many deliverances God had wrought for him; these he desired always to preserve fresh in his own memory and to diffuse and entail the knowledge of them. It is an admirable composition. The poetry a very fine, the images are bold, the expressions lofty, and every word is proper and significant; but the piety far exceeds the poetry. Holy faith, and love, and joy, and praise, and hope, are here lively, active, and upon the wing. I. He triumphs in God, ver. 1—3. II. He magnifies the deliverances God had wrought for him, ver. 4—19. III. He takes the comfort of his integrity, which God had thereby cleared up, ver. 20—28. IV. He gives to God the glory of all his achievements, ver. 29—42. V. He encourages himself with the expectation of what God would further do for him and his, ver. 43—50.

To the chief musician, *A psalm of David, the servant of the LORD*, who spoke unto the LORD the words of this song, in the day that the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul: and he said,

I WILL love thee, O LORD, my strength. 2 The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. 3 I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies. 4 The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. 5 The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me. 6 In my distress I called upon

the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, *even* into his ears. 7 Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth. 8 There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it. 9 He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness *was* under his feet. 10 And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind. 11 He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him *were* dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. 12 At the brightness *that was* before him his thick clouds passed, hail stones and coals of fire. 13 The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hail stones and coals of fire. 14 Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them. 15 Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils. 16 He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters. 17 He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me. 18 They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay. 19 He brought me forth also into a large place; he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

The title gives us the occasion of penning this psalm; we had it before (2 Sam. xxii. 1), only here we are told that the psalm was delivered to the *chief musician*, or precentor, in the temple-songs. Note, The private compositions of good men, designed by them for their own use, may be serviceable to the public, that others may not only borrow light from their candle, but heat from their fire. Examples sometimes teach better than rules. And David is here called the *servant of the Lord*, as Moses was, not only as every good man is God's servant, but because, with his sceptre, with his sword, and with his pen, he greatly promoted the interests of God's kingdom in Israel. It was more his honour that he was a servant of the Lord than that he was king of a great kingdom; and so he

himself accounted it (cxvi. 16): *O Lord! truly I am thy servant.* In these verses,

I. He triumphs in God and his relation to him. The first words of the psalm, *I will love thee, O Lord! my strength*, are here prefixed as the scope and contents of the whole. Love to God is the first and great commandment of the law, because it is the principle of all our acceptable praise and obedience; and this use we should make of all the mercies God bestows upon us, our hearts should thereby be enlarged in love to him. This he requires and will accept; and we are very ungrateful if we grudge him so poor a return. An interest in the person loved is the lover's delight; this string therefore he touches, and on this he harps with much pleasure (v. 2): "*The Lord Jehovah is my God; and then he is my rock, my fortress*, all that I need and can desire in my present distress." For there is that in God which is suited to all the exigencies and occasions of his people that trust in him. "He is my rock, and strength, and fortress;" that is, 1. "I have found him so in the greatest dangers and difficulties." 2. "I have chosen him to be so, disclaiming all others, and depending upon him alone to protect me." Those that truly love God may thus triumph in him as theirs, and may with confidence call upon him, v. 3. This further use we should make of our deliverances, we must not only love God the better, but love prayer the better—*call upon him as long as we live*, especially in time of trouble, with an assurance that so we shall be saved; for thus it is written, *Who-soever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*, Acts ii. 21.

II. He sets himself to magnify the deliverances God had wrought for him, that he might be the more affected in his returns of praise. It is good for us to observe all the circumstances of a mercy, which magnify the power of God and his goodness to us in it.

1. The more imminent and threatening the danger was out of which we were delivered the greater is the mercy of the deliverance. David now remembered how the forces of his enemies poured in upon him, which he calls *the floods of Belial*, shoals of the children of Belial, likely to overpower him with numbers. They surrounded him, *compassed him about*; they surprised him, and by that means were very near seizing him; their snares prevented him, and, when without were fightings, within were fears and sorrows, v. 4, 5. His spirit was overwhelmed; and he looked upon himself as a lost man; see cxvi. 3.

2. The more earnest we have been with God for deliverance, and the more direct answer it is to our prayers, the more we are obliged to be thankful. David's deliverances were so, v. 6. David was found a praying man, and God was found a prayer-hearing God. If we pray as he did, we shall speed as

he did. Though distress drive us to prayer, God will not therefore be deaf to us; nay, being a God of pity, he will be the more ready to succour us.

3. The more wonderful God's appearances are in any deliverance the greater it is: such were the deliverances wrought for David, in which God's manifestation of his presence and glorious attributes is most magnificently described, *v. 7, &c.* Little appeared of man, but much of God, in these deliverances. (1.) He appeared a God of almighty power; for he made the earth shake and tremble, and moved even the *foundations of the hills* (*v. 7*), as of old at Mount Sinai. When the men of the earth were struck with fear, then the earth might be said to *tremble*; when the great men of the earth were put into confusion, then the hills moved. (2.) He showed his anger and displeasure against the enemies and persecutors of his people: *He was wroth, v. 7.* His wrath smoked, it burned, it was fire, it was devouring fire (*v. 8*), and *coals were kindled by it.* Those that by their own sins make themselves as coals (that is, fuel) to this fire will be consumed by it. He that ordains his arrows against the persecutors sends them forth when he pleases, and they are sure to hit the mark and do execution; for those arrows are lightnings, *v. 14.* (3.) He showed his readiness to plead his people's cause and work deliverance for them; for he rode upon a cherub and did fly, for the maintaining of right and the relieving of his distressed servants, *v. 10.* No opposition, no obstruction, can be given to him *who rides upon the wings of the wind, who rides on the heavens, for the help of his people, and, in his excellency, on the skies.* (4.) He showed his condescension, in taking cognizance of David's case: *He bowed the heavens and came down* (*v. 9*), did not send an angel, but came himself, as one afflicted in the afflictions of his people. (5.) He wrapped himself in darkness, and yet commanded light to shine out of darkness for his people, *Isa. xlv. 15.* He is a God that hideth himself; for he *made darkness his pavilion, v. 11.* His glory is invisible, his counsels are unsearchable, and his proceedings unaccountable, and so, as to us, clouds and darkness are round about him; we know not the way that he takes, even when he is coming towards us in ways of mercy; but, when his designs are secret, they are kind; for, though he hide himself, he is the God of Israel, the Saviour. And, *at his brightness, the thick clouds pass* (*v. 12*), comfort returns, the face of affairs is changed, and that which was gloomy and threatening becomes serene and pleasant.

4. The greater the difficulties are that lie in the way of deliverance the more glorious the deliverance is. For the rescuing of David, the waters were to be divided till the very channels were seen; the earth was to be cloven till the very foundations of it were discovered, *v. 15.* There were waters deep

and many, waters out of which he was to be drawn (*v. 16*), as Moses, who had his name from being drawn out of the water literally, as David was figuratively. His enemies were strong, and they hated him; had he been left to himself, they would have been too strong for him, *v. 17.* And they were too quick for him; for they *prevented him in the day of his calamity, v. 18.* But, in the midst of his troubles, the Lord was his stay, so that he did not sink. Note, God will not only deliver his people out of their troubles in due time, but he will sustain them and bear them up under their troubles in the mean time.

5. That which especially magnified the deliverance was that his comfort was the fruit of it and God's favour was the root and fountain of it. (1.) It was an introduction to his preferment, *v. 19.* "He brought me forth also out of my straits into a large place, where I had room, not only to turn, but to thrive in." (2.) It was a token of God's favour to him, and that made it doubly sweet: "*He delivered me because he delighted in me, not for my merit, but for his own grace and good-will.*" Compare this with 2 Sam. xv. 26, *If he thus say, I have no delight in thee, here I am.* We owe our salvation, that great deliverance, to the delight God had in the Son of David, in whom he has declared himself to be well pleased.

In singing this we must triumph in God and trust in him: and we may apply it to Christ the Son of David. The sorrows of death surrounded him; in his distress he prayed (*Heb. v. 7*); God made the earth to shake and tremble, and the rocks to cleave, and brought him out, in his resurrection, into a large place, because he delighted in him and in his undertaking.

20 The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me. 21 For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God. 22 For all his judgments were before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me. 23 I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity. 24 Therefore hath the LORD recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight. 25 With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt show thyself upright; 26 With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt show thyself froward. 27 For thou wilt save the afflicted people; but wilt

bring down high looks. 28 For thou wilt light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.

Here, I. David reflects with comfort upon his own integrity, and rejoices in the testimony of his conscience that he had had his conversation in godly sincerity and not with fleshly wisdom, 2 Cor. i. 12. His deliverances were an evidence of this, and this was the great comfort of his deliverances. His enemies had misrepresented him, and perhaps, when his troubles continued long, he began to suspect himself; but, when God visibly took his part, he had both the credit and the comfort of his righteousness. 1. His deliverances cleared his innocence before men, and acquitted him from those crimes which he was falsely accused of. This he calls *rewarding him according to his righteousness* (v. 20, 24), that is, determining the controversy between him and his enemies, according to the justice of his cause and the cleanness of his hands, from that sedition, treason, and rebellion, with which he was charged. He had often appealed to God concerning his innocence; and now God had given judgment upon the appeal (as he always will) according to equity. 2. They confirmed the testimony of his own conscience for him, which he here reviews with a great deal of pleasure, v. 21—23. His own heart knows, and is ready to attest it, (1.) That he had kept firmly to his duty, and had not departed, not wickedly, not wilfully departed, from his God. Those that forsake the ways of the Lord do, in effect, depart from their God, and it is a wicked thing to do so. But though we are conscious to ourselves of many a stumble, and many a false step taken, yet if we recover ourselves by repentance, and go on in the way of our duty, it shall not be construed into a departure, for it is not a wicked departure, from our God. (2.) That he had kept his eye upon the rule of God's commands (v. 22): "*All his judgments were before me; and I had a respect to them all, despised none as little, disliked none as hard, but made it my care and business to conform to them all. His statutes I did not put away from me, out of my sight, out of my mind, but kept my eye always upon them, and did not as those who, because they would quit the ways of the Lord, desire not the knowledge of those ways.*" (3.) That he had kept himself from his iniquity, and thereby had approved himself upright before God. Constant care to abstain from that sin, whatever it be, which most easily besets us, and to mortify the habit of it, will be a good evidence for us that we are upright before God. As David's deliverances cleared his integrity, so did the exaltation of Christ clear his, and for ever roll away the reproach that was cast upon him; and therefore he is said to be *justified in the Spirit*, 1 Tim. iii. 16.

II. He takes occasion thence to lay down

the rules of God's government and judgment, that we may know not only what God expects from us, but what we may expect from him, v. 25, 26. 1. Those that show mercy to others (even they need mercy, and cannot depend upon the merit, no, not of their works of mercy) shall find mercy with God, Matt. v. 7. 2. Those that are faithful to their covenants with God, and the relations wherein they stand to him, shall find him all that to them which he has promised to be. Wherever God finds an upright man, he will be found an upright God. 3. Those that serve God with a pure conscience shall find that the words of the Lord are pure words, very sure to be depended on and very sweet to be delighted in. 4. Those that resist God, and walk contrary to him, shall find that he will resist them, and walk contrary to them, Lev. xxvi. 21, 24.

III. Hence he speaks comfort to the humble ("*Thou wilt save the afflicted people, that are wronged and bear it patiently*"), terror to the proud ("*Thou wilt bring down high looks, that aim high, and expect great things for themselves, and look with scorn and disdain upon the poor and pious*"), and encouragement to himself—"*Thou wilt light my candle, that is, thou wilt revive and comfort my sorrowful spirit, and not leave me melancholy; thou wilt recover me out of my troubles and restore me to peace and prosperity; thou wilt make my honour bright, which is now eclipsed; thou wilt guide my way, and make it plain before me, that I may avoid the snares laid for me; thou wilt light my candle to work by, and give me an opportunity of serving thee and the interests of thy kingdom among men.*"

Let those that walk in darkness, and labour under many discouragements in singing these verses, encourage themselves that God himself will be a light to them.

29 For by thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall. 30 *As for* God, his way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him. 31 For who is God save the LORD? or who is a rock save our God? 32 *It is* God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect. 33 He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me upon my high places. 34 He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms. 35 Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great. 36 Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip.

37 I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them: neither did I turn again till they were consumed. 38 I have wounded them that they were not able to rise: they are fallen under my feet. 39 For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle: thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me. 40 Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies; that I might destroy them that hate me. 41 They cried, but *there was none to save them: even unto the LORD*, but he answered them not. 42 Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind: I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets. 43 Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people; *and thou hast made me the head of the heathen: a people whom I have not known shall serve me.* 44 As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me. 45 The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid out of their close places. 46 The LORD liveth; and blessed *be my rock*; and let the God of my salvation be exalted. 47 *It is God* that avengeth me, and subdueth the people unto me. 48 He delivereth me from mine enemies: yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man. 49 Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name. 50 Great deliverance giveth he to his king; and sheweth mercy to his anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore.

In these verses,

I. David looks back, with thankfulness, upon the great things which God had done for him. He had not only wrought deliverance for him, but had given him victory and success, and made him triumph over those who thought to triumph over him. When we set ourselves to praise God for one mercy we must be led by that to observe the many more with which we have been compassed about, and followed, all our days. Many things had contributed to David's advancement, and he owns the hand of God in them all, to teach us to do likewise, in reviewing the several steps by which we have risen to our prosperity. 1. God had given him all his skill and understanding in military af-

fairs, which he was not bred up to nor designed for, his genius leading him more to music, and poetry, and a contemplative life: *He teaches my hands to war, v. 34*. 2. God had given him bodily strength to go through the business and fatigue of war: *God girded him with strength (v. 32, 39) to such a degree that he could break even a bow of steel, v. 34.* What service God designs men for he will be sure to fit them for. 3. God had likewise given him great swiftness, not to flee from the enemies but to fly upon them (v. 33): *He makes my feet like hinds' feet, v. 36.* "Thou hast enlarged my steps under me: but" (whereas those that take large steps are apt to tread awry) "my feet did not slip." He was so swift that he pursued his enemies and overtook them, v. 37. 4. God had made him very bold and daring in his enterprises, and given him spirit proportionable to his strength. If a troop stood in his way, he made nothing of running through them; if a wall, he made nothing of leaping over it (v. 29); if ramparts and bulwarks, he soon mounted them, and by divine assistance set his feet upon the high places of the enemy, v. 33. 5. God had protected him, and kept him safe, in the midst of the greatest perils. Many a time he put his life in his hand, and yet it was wonderfully preserved: "*Thou hast given me the shield of thy salvation (v. 35), and that has compassed me on every side.* By that I have been delivered from the strivings of the people who aimed at my destruction (v. 43), particularly from the violent man" (v. 48), that is, Saul, who more than once threw a javelin at him. 6. God had prospered him in his designs; he it was that made his way perfect (v. 32) and it was his right hand that held him up, v. 35. 7. God had given him victory over his enemies, the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, and all that fought against Israel: those especially he means, yet not excluding the house of Saul, which opposed his coming to the crown, and the partisans of Absalom and Sheba, who would have deposed him. He enlarges much upon the goodness of God to him in defeating his enemies, attributing his victories, not to his own sword or bow, nor to the valour of his mighty men, but to the favour of God: *I pursued them (v. 37), I wounded them (v. 38); for thou hast girded me with strength (v. 39), else I could not have done it.* All the praise is ascribed to God: *Thou hast subdued them under me, v. 39.* Thou hast given me their necks (v. 40), not only to trample upon them (as Josh. x. 24), but to cut them off. Even those who hated David whom God loved, and were enemies to the Israel of God, in their distress cried unto the Lord: but in vain; he answered them not. How could they expect he should when it was he whom they fought against? And, when he disowned them (as he will all those that act against his people), no other succours could stand them in stead: *There was none to save them. v. 41.*

Those whom God has abandoned are easily vanquished: *Then did I beat them small as the dust*, v. 42. But those whose cause is just he avenges (v. 47), and those whom he favours will certainly be *lifted up above those that rise up against them*, v. 48. 8. God had raised him to the throne, and not only delivered him and kept him alive, but dignified him and made him great (v. 35): *Thy gentleness has increased me—thy discipline and instruction*; so some. The good lessons David learned in his affliction prepared him for the dignity and power that were intended him; and the lessening of him helped very much to increase his greatness. God made him not only a great conqueror, but a great ruler: *Thou hast made me the head of the heathen* (v. 43); all the neighbouring nations were tributaries to him. See 2 Sam. viii. 6, 11. In all this David was a type of Christ, whom the Father brought safely through his conflicts with the powers of darkness, and made victorious over them, and gave to be head over all things to his church, which is his body.

II. David looks up with humble and reverent adorations of the divine glory and perfection. When God had, by his providence, magnified him, he endeavours, with his praises, to magnify God, to bless him and exalt him, v. 46. He gives honour to him, 1. As a living God: *The Lord liveth*, v. 46. We had our lives at first from, and we owe the continuance of them to, that God who has life in himself and is therefore fitly called *the living God*. The gods of the heathen were dead gods. The best friends we have among men are dying friends. But God lives, lives for ever, and will not fail those that trust in him, but, because he lives, they shall live also; for he is their life. 2. As a finishing God: *As for God*, he is not only perfect himself, but *his way his perfect*, v. 30. He is known by his name *Jehovah* (Exod. vi. 3), a God performing and perfecting what he begins in providence as well as creation, Gen. ii. 1. If it was God that made David's way perfect (v. 32), much more is his own way so. There is no flaw in God's works, nor any fault to be found with what he does, Eccl. iii. 14. And what he undertakes he will go through with, whatever difficulties lie in the way; what God begins to build he is able to finish. 3. As a faithful God: *The word of the Lord is tried*. "I have tried it" (says David), "and it has not failed me." All the saints, in all ages, have tried it, and it never failed any that trusted in it. It is tried as silver is tried, refined from all such mixture and alloy as lessen the value of men's words. David, in God's providences concerning him, takes notice of the performance of his promises to him, which, as it puts sweetness into the providence, so it puts honour upon the promise. 4. As the protector and defender of his people. David had found him so to him: "*He is the God of my salva-*

tion (v. 46), by whose power and grace I am and hope to be saved; but not of mine only: he is a *buckler to all those that trust in him* (v. 30); he shelters and protects them all, is both able and ready to do so." 5. As a non-such in all this, v. 31. There is a God, and who is God save *Jehovah*? That God is a rock, for the support and shelter of his faithful worshippers; and who is a rock save *our God*? Thus he not only gives glory to God, but encourages his own faith in him. Note, (1.) Whoever pretend to be deities, it is certain that there is no God, save the Lord; all others are counterfeits, Isa. xlv. 8; Jer. x. 10. (2.) Whoever pretend to be our felicities, there is no rock, save *our God*; none that we can depend upon to make us happy.

III. David looks forward, with a believing hope that God would still do him good. He promises himself, 1. That his enemies should be completely subdued, and that those of them that yet remained should be made his footstool,—that his government should be extensive, so that even a people whom he had not known should serve him (v. 43),—that his conquests, and, consequently, his acquiesces, should be easy (*As soon as they hear of me they shall obey me*, v. 44),—and that his enemies should be convinced that it was to no purpose to oppose him; even those that had retired to their fastnesses should not trust to them, but be afraid out of their close places, having seen so much of David's wisdom, courage, and success. Thus the Son of David, though he sees not yet all things put under him, yet knows he shall reign till all opposing rule, principality, and power shall be quite put down. 2. That his seed should be for ever continued in the Messiah, who, he foresaw, should come from his loins, v. 50. He shows mercy to his *unointed*, his Messiah, to David himself, the anointed of the God of Jacob in the type, and to his seed for evermore. He saith not unto seeds, as of many, but to his seed, as of one, that is Christ, Gal. iii. 16. It is he only that shall reign for ever, and of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end. Christ is called *David*, Hos. iii. 5. God has called him *his king*, ii. 6. Great deliverance God does give, and will give, to him, and to his church and people, here called *his seed*, for evermore.

In singing these verses we must give God the glory of the victories of Christ and his church hitherto and of all the deliverances and advancements of the gospel kingdom, and encourage ourselves and one another with an assurance that the church militant will be shortly triumphant, will be eternally so.

PSALM XIX.

There are two excellent books which the great God has published for the instruction and edification of the children of men; this psalm treats of them both, and recommends them both to our diligent study. 1. The book of the creatures, in which we may easily read the power and goodness of the Creator, ver. 1—6. If The book of the scriptures, which makes known to us the will of God concerning our duty. He shows the excellency and usefulness of that book (ver. 7—11) and then teaches us how to improve it, ver. 12—14.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

THE heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. 2 Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. 3 *There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.* 4 Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, 5 Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. 6 His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

From the things that are seen every day by all the world the psalmist, in these verses, leads us to the consideration of the invisible things of God, whose being appears uncontestedly evident and whose glory shines transcendently bright in the visible heavens, the structure and beauty of them, and the order and influence of the heavenly bodies. This instance of the divine power serves not only to show the folly of atheists, who see there is a heaven and yet say, "There is no God," who see the effect and yet say, "There is no cause," but to show the folly of idolaters also, and the vanity of their imagination, who, though the heavens declare the glory of God, yet gave that glory to the lights of heaven which those very lights directed them to give to God only, the Father of lights. Now observe here,

I. What that is which the creatures notify to us. They are in many ways useful and serviceable to us, but in nothing so much as in this, that they declare the glory of God, by showing his handy-works, v. 1. They plainly speak themselves to be God's handy-works; for they could not exist from eternity; all succession and motion must have had a beginning; they could not make themselves, that is a contradiction; they could not be produced by a casual hit of atoms, that is an absurdity, fit rather to be bantered than reasoned with: therefore they must have a Creator, who can be no other than an eternal mind, infinitely wise, powerful, and good. Thus it appears they are God's works, the *work of his fingers* (viii. 3), and therefore they declare his glory. From the excellency of the work we may easily infer the infinite perfection of its great author. From the brightness of the heavens we may collect that the Creator is light; their vastness of extent bespeaks his immensity, their height his transcendency and sovereignty, their influence upon this earth his dominion, and providence, and universal beneficence: and all declare his

almighty power, by which they were at first made, and continue to this day according to the ordinances that were then settled.

II. What are some of those things which notify this? 1. The heavens and the firmament—the vast expanse of air and ether, and the spheres of the planets and fixed stars. Man has this advantage above the beasts, in the structure of his body, that whereas they are made to look downwards, as their spirits must go, he is made erect, to look upwards, because upwards his spirit must shortly go and his thoughts should now rise. 2. The constant and regular succession of day and night (v. 2): *Day unto day, and night unto night*, speak the glory of that God who first divided between the light and the darkness, and has, from the beginning to this day, preserved that established order without variation, according to God's covenant with Noah (Gen. viii. 22), that, *while the earth remains, day and night shall not cease*, to which covenant of providence the covenant of grace is compared for its stability, Jer. xxxiii. 20; xxxi. 35. The counterchanging of day and night, in so exact a method, is a great instance of the power of God, and calls us to observe that, as in the kingdom of nature, so in that of providence, *he forms the light and creates the darkness* (Isa. xlv. 7), and sets the one over-against the other. It is likewise an instance of his goodness to man; for *he makes the outings of the morning and evening to rejoice*, lxxv. 8. He not only glorifies himself, but gratifies us, by this constant revolution; for, as the light of the morning befriends the business of the day, so the shadows of the evening befriend the repose of the night; every day and every night speak the goodness of God, and, when they have finished their testimony, leave it to the next day, to the next night, to say the same. 3. The light and influence of the sun do, in a special manner, declare the glory of God; for of all the heavenly bodies that is the most conspicuous in itself and most useful to this lower world, which would be all dungeon, and all desert, without it. It is not an improbable conjecture that David penned this psalm when he had the rising sun in view, and from the brightness of it took occasion to declare the glory of God. Concerning the sun observe here, (1.) The place appointed him. In the heavens God has *set a tabernacle for the sun*. The heavenly bodies are called *hosts of heaven*, and therefore are fitly said to *dwell in tents*, as soldiers in their encampments. The sun is said to have a tabernacle set him, not only because he is in continual motion and never has a fixed residence, but because the mansion he has will, at the end of time, be taken down like a tent, when the heavens shall be rolled together like a scroll and the sun shall be turned into darkness. (2.) The course assigned him. That glorious creature was not made to be idle, but *his going forth* (at least as it appears to our eye) *is from one*

point of the heavens, and his circuit thence to the opposite point, and thence (to complete his diurnal revolution) to the same point again; and this with such steadiness and constancy that we can certainly foretell the hour and the minute at which the sun will rise at such a place, any day to come. (3.) The brightness wherein he appears. He is *as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber*, richly dressed and adorned, as fine as hands can make him, looking pleasantly himself and making all about him pleasant; *for the friend of the bridegroom rejoices greatly to hear the bridegroom's voice*, John iii. 29. (4.) The cheerfulness wherewith he makes his tour. Though it seems a vast round which he has to walk, and he has not a moment's rest, yet in obedience to the law of his creation, and for the service of man, he not only does it, but does it with a great deal of pleasure and rejoices *as a strong man to run a race*. With such satisfaction did Christ, the Sun of righteousness, finish the work that was given him to do. (5.) His universal influence on this earth: *There is nothing hidden from the heat thereof*, no, not metals in the bowels of the earth, which the sun has an influence upon.

III. To whom this declaration is made of the glory of God. It is made to all parts of the world (v. 3, 4): *There is no speech nor language* (no nation, for the nations were divided *after their tongues*, Gen. x. 31, 32) *where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone through all the earth* (the equinoctial line, suppose) *and with it their words to the end of the world*, proclaiming the eternal power of the God of nature, v. 4. The apostle uses this as a reason why the Jews should not be angry with him and others for preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, because God had already made himself known to the Gentile world by the works of creation, and left not himself without witness among them (Rom. x. 18), so that they were without excuse if they were idolaters, Rom. i. 20, 21. And those were without blame who, by preaching the gospel to them, endeavoured to turn them from their idolatry. If God used these means to prevent their apostasy, and they proved ineffectual, the apostles did well to use other means to recover them from it. *They have no speech or language* (so some read it) *and yet their voice is heard*. All people may hear these natural immortal preachers speak to them in their own tongue the wonderful works of God.

In singing these verses we must give God the glory of all the comfort and benefit we have by the lights of heaven, still looking above and beyond them to the Sun of righteousness.

7 The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. 8 The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the

commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. 9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. 10 More to be desired *are they* than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. 11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned: *and* in keeping of them *there* is great reward. 12 Who can understand *his* errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. 13 Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. 14 Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

God's glory (that is, his goodness to man) appears much in the works of creation, but much more in and by divine revelation. The holy scripture, as it is a rule both of our duty to God and of our expectation from him, is of much greater use and benefit to us than day or night, than the air we breathe in, or the light of the sun. The discoveries made of God by his works might have served if man had retained his integrity; but, to recover him out of his fallen state, another course must be taken; that must be done by the word of God. And here,

I. The psalmist gives an account of the excellent properties and uses of the word of God, in six sentences (v. 7—9), in each of which the name *Jehovah* is repeated, and no vain repetition, for the law has its authority and all its excellency from the law-maker. Here are six several titles of the word of God, to take in the whole of divine revelation, precepts and promises, and especially the gospel. Here are several good properties of it, which prove its divine original, which recommend it to our affection, and which extol it above all other laws whatsoever. Here are several good effects of the law upon the minds of men, which show what it is designed for, what use we are to make of it, and how wonderful the efficacy of divine grace is, going along with it, and working by it. 1. *The law of the Lord is perfect*. It is perfectly free from all corruption, perfectly filled with all good, and perfectly fitted for the end for which it is designed; and it will make the man of God perfect, 2 Tim. iii. 17. Nothing is to be added to it nor taken from it. It is of use to *convert the soul*, to bring us back to ourselves, to our God, to our duty; for it shows us our sinfulness and misery in our departures from God and the indispensable

necessity of our return to him. 2. *The testimony of the Lord* (which witnesses for him to us) is sure, incontestably and inviolably sure, what we may give credit to, may rely upon, and may be confident it will not deceive us. It is a sure discovery of divine truth, a sure direction in the way of duty. It is a sure fountain of living comforts and a sure foundation of lasting hopes. It is of use to make us wise, wise to salvation, 2 Tim. iii. 15. It will give us an insight into things divine and a foresight of things to come. It will employ us in the best work and secure to us our true interests. It will make even *the simple* (poor contrivers as they may be for the present world) wise for their souls and eternity. Those that are humbly simple, sensible of their own folly and willing to be taught, shall be made wise by the word of God, xxv. 9. 3. *The statutes of the Lord* (enacted by his authority, and binding on all wherever they come) are right, exactly agreeing with the eternal rules and principles of good and evil, that is, with the right reason of man and the right counsels of God. All God's precepts, concerning all things, are right (cxix. 128), just as they should be; and they will set us to rights if we receive them and submit to them; and, because they are right, they *rejoice the heart*. The law, as we see it in the hands of Christ, gives cause for joy; and, when it is written in our hearts, it lays a foundation for lasting joy, by restoring us to our right mind. 4. *The commandment of the Lord is pure*; it is clear, without darkness; it is clean, without dross and defilement. It is itself purified from all alloy, and is purifying to those that receive and embrace it. It is the ordinary means which the Spirit uses in *enlightening the eyes*; it brings us to a sight and sense of our sin and misery, and directs us in the way of duty. 5. *The fear of the Lord* (true religion and godliness prescribed in the word, reigning in the heart, and practised in the life) is *clean*, clean itself, and will make us clean (John xv. 3); it will cleanse our way, cxix. 9. And it *endureth for ever*; it is of perpetual obligation and can never be repealed. The ceremonial law is long since done away, but the law concerning the fear of God is ever the same. Time will not alter the nature of moral good and evil. 6. *The judgments of the Lord* (all his precepts, which are framed in infinite wisdom) are *true*; they are grounded upon the most sacred and unquestionable truths; they are *righteous*, all consonant to natural equity; and they are so *altogether*: there is no unrighteousness in any of them, but they are all of a piece.

II. He expresses the great value he had for the word of God, and the great advantage he had, and hoped to have, from it, v. 10, 11.

1. See how highly he prized the commandments of God. It is the character of all good people that they prefer their religion and the word of God, (1.) Far before all the wealth of the world. It is *more desirable than gold*, than

fine gold, *than much fine gold*. Gold is of the earth, earthly; but grace is the image of the heavenly. Gold is only for the body and the concerns of time; but grace is for the soul and the concerns of eternity. (2.) Far before all the pleasures and delights of sense. The word of God, received by faith, is sweet to the soul, *sweeter than honey and the honey-comb*. The pleasures of sense are the delight of brutes, and therefore debase the great soul of man; the pleasures of religion are the delight of angels, and exalt the soul. The pleasures of sense are deceitful, will soon surfeit, and yet never satisfy; but those of religion are substantial and satisfying, and there is no danger of exceeding in them.

2. See what use he made of the precepts of God's word: *By them is thy servant warned*. The word of God is a word of warning to the children of men; it warns us of the duty we are to do, the dangers we are to avoid, and the deluge we are to prepare for, Ezek. iii. 17; xxxiii. 7. It warns the wicked not to go on in his wicked way, and warns the righteous not to turn from his good way. All that are indeed God's servants take this warning.

3. See what advantage he promised himself by his obedience to God's precepts: *In keeping them there is great reward*. Those who make conscience of their duty will not only be no losers by it, but unspeakable gainers. There is a reward, not only after keeping, but in keeping, God's commandments, a present great reward of obedience in obedience. Religion is health and honour; it is peace and pleasure; it will make our comforts sweet and our crosses easy, life truly valuable and death itself truly desirable.

III. He draws some good inferences from this pious meditation upon the excellency of the word of God. Such thoughts as these should excite in us devout affections, and then they are to good purpose.

1. He takes occasion hence to make a penitent reflection upon his sins; for *by the law is the knowledge of sin*. "Is the commandment thus holy, just, and good? Then who can understand his errors?" I cannot, whoever can." From the rectitude of the divine law he learns to call his sins his *errors*. If the commandment be true and righteous, every transgression of the commandment is an error, as grounded upon a mistake; every wicked practice takes rise from some corrupt principle; it is a deviation from the rule we are to work by, the way we are to walk in. From the extent, and strictness, and spiritual nature, of the divine law, he learns that his sins are so many that he cannot understand the number of them, and so exceedingly sinful that he cannot understand the heinousness and malignity of them. We are guilty of many sins which, through our carelessness and partiality to ourselves, we are not aware of; many we have been guilty of which we have forgotten; so that, when we have been ever so particular in the confession of sin, we

must conclude with an *et cætera*—and such like; for God knows a great deal more evil of us than we do of ourselves. In many things we all offend, and who can tell how often he offends? It is well that we are under grace, and not under the law, else we were undone.

2. He takes occasion hence to pray against sin. All the discoveries of sin made to us by the law should drive us to the throne of grace, there to pray, as David does here, (1.) For mercy to pardon. Finding himself unable to specify all the particulars of his transgressions, he cries out, *Lord, cleanse me from my secret faults*; not secret to God, so none are, nor only such as were secret to the world, but such as were hidden from his own observation of himself. The best of men have reason to suspect themselves guilty of many secret faults; and to pray to God to cleanse them from that guilt and not to lay it to their charge; for even our sins of infirmity and inadvertency, and our secret sins, would be our ruin, if God should deal with us according to the desert of them. Even secret faults are defiling, and render us unfit for communion with God; but, when they are pardoned, we are cleansed from them, 1 John i. 7. (2.) For grace to help in time of need. Having prayed that his sins of infirmity might be pardoned, he prays that presumptuous sins might be prevented, v. 13. All that truly repent of their sins, and have them pardoned, are in care not to relapse into sin, nor to return again to folly, as appears by their prayers, which concur with David's here, where observe, [1.] His petition: "Keep me from ever being guilty of a wilful presumptuous sin." We ought to pray that we may be kept from sins of infirmity, but especially from presumptuous sins, which most offend God and wound conscience, which wither our comforts and shock our hopes. "However, let none such have dominion over me, let me not be at the command of any such sin, nor be enslaved by it." [2.] His plea: "*So shall I be upright; I shall appear upright; I shall preserve the evidence and comfort of my uprightness; and I shall be innocent from the great transgression;*" so he calls a presumptuous sin, because no sacrifice was accepted for it, Num. xv: 28—30. Note, *First*, Presumptuous sins are very heinous and dangerous. Those that sin against the habitual convictions and actual admonitions of their own consciences, in contempt and defiance of the law and its sanctions, that sin with a high hand, sin presumptuously, and it is a great transgression. *Secondly*, Even good men ought to be jealous of themselves, and afraid of sinning presumptuously, yea, though through the grace of God they have hitherto been kept from them. Let none be high-minded, but fear. *Thirdly*, Being so much exposed, we have great need to pray to God, when we are pushing forward towards a presumptuous sin, to keep us back from it, either by his providence preventing

the temptation or by his grace giving us victory over it.

3. He takes occasion humbly to beg the divine acceptance of those his pious thoughts and affections, v. 14. Observe the connexion of this with what goes before. He prays to God to keep him from sin, and then begs he would accept his performances; for, if we favour our sins, we cannot expect God should favour us or our services, lxi. 18. Observe, (1.) What his services were—the words of his mouth and the meditations of his heart, his holy affections offered up to God. The pious meditations of the heart must not be smothered, but expressed in the words of our mouth, for God's glory and the edification of others; and the words of our mouth in prayer and praise must not be formal, but arising from the meditation of the heart, xlv.

1. (2.) What was his care concerning these services—that they might be acceptable with God; for, if our services be not acceptable to God, what do they avail us? Gracious souls must have all they aim at if they be accepted of God, for that is their bliss. (3.) What encouragement he had to hope for this, because God was his strength and his redeemer. If we seek assistance from God as our strength in our religious duties, we may hope to find acceptance with God in the discharge of our duties; for by his strength we have power with him.

In singing this we should get our hearts much affected with the excellency of the word of God and delivered into it, we should be much affected with the evil of sin, the danger we are in of it and the danger we are in by it, and we should fetch in help from heaven against it.

PSALM XX.

It is the will of God that prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings, should be made, in a special manner, for kings and all in authority. This psalm is a prayer, and the next a thanksgiving, for the king. David was a martial prince, much in war. Either this psalm was penned upon occasion of some particular expedition of his, or, in general, as a form to be used in the daily service of the church for him. In this psalm we may observe, I. What it is they beg of God for the king, ver. 1—4. II. With what assurance they beg it. The people triumph (ver. 5), the prince (ver. 6), both together (ver. 7, 8), and so he concludes with a prayer to God for audience, ver. 9. In this, David may well be looked upon as a type of Christ, to whose kingdom and its interests among men the church was, in every age, a hearty well-wisher.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

THE LORD hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee. 2 Send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion. 3 Remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice. Selah. 4 Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfil all thy counsel. 5 We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners: the LORD fulfil all thy petitions.

This prayer for David is entitled a *psalm of David*; nor was it any absurdity at all for

appointed; let him, as the great Master of requests, receive all our petitions and present them to his Father. But many interpreters give another reading of this verse, by altering the pause, *Lord, save the king, and hear us when we call*; and so it is a summary of the whole psalm and is taken into our English Liturgy: *O Lord! save the king, and mercifully hear us when we call upon thee.*

In singing these verses we should encourage ourselves to trust in God, and stir up ourselves to pray earnestly, as we are in duty bound, for those in authority over us, that under them we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty.

PSALM XXI.

As the foregoing psalm was a prayer for the king that God would protect and prosper him, so this is a thanksgiving for the success God had blessed him with. Those whom we have prayed for we ought to give thanks for, and particularly for kings, in whose prosperity we share. They are here taught, 1. To congratulate him on his victories, and the honour he had achieved, ver. 1-6. 11. To confide in the power of God for the completing of the ruin of the enemies of his kingdom, ver. 7-13. In this there is an eye to Messiah the Prince, and the glory of his kingdom; for to him divers passages in this psalm are more applicable than to David himself.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

THE king shall joy in thy strength, O LORD; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice! 2 Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips. Selah. 3 For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness: thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head. 4 He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever. 5 His glory is great in thy salvation: honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him. 6 For thou hast made him most blessed for ever: thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance.

David here speaks for himself in the first place, professing that his joy was in God's strength and in his salvation, and not in the strength or success of his armies. He also directs his subjects herein to rejoice with him, and to give God all the glory of the victories he had obtained; and all with an eye to Christ, of whose triumphs over the powers of darkness David's victories were but shadows. 1. They here congratulate the king on his joys and concur with him in them (v. 1): "*The king rejoices*, he uses to rejoice in *thy strength*, and so do we; what pleases the king pleases us," 2 Sam. iii. 36. Happy the people the character of whose king it is that he makes God's strength his confidence and God's salvation his joy, that is pleased with all the advancements of God's kingdom and trusts God to bear him out in all he does for the service of it. Our Lord Jesus, in his great undertaking, relied upon help from heaven, and pleased himself with the prospect of that great salvation which he

was thereby to work out. 2. They give God all the praise of those things which were the matter of their king's rejoicing (1.) That God had heard his prayers (v. 2): *Thou hast given him his heart's desire* (and there is no prayer accepted but what is the heart's desire), the very thing they begged of God for him, xx. 4. Note, God's gracious returns of prayer do, in a special manner, require our humble returns of praise. When God gives to Christ the heathen for his inheritance, gives him to see his seed, and accepts his intercession for all believers, he gives him his heart's desire. (2.) That God had surprised him with favours, and much outdone his expectations (v. 3): *Thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness*. All our blessings are blessings of goodness, and are owing, not at all to any merit of ours, but purely and only to God's goodness. But the psalmist here reckons it in a special manner obliging that these blessings were given in a preventing way; this fixed his eye, enlarged his soul, and endeared his God, as one expresses it. When God's blessings come sooner and prove richer than we imagine, when they are given before we prayed for them, before we were ready for them, nay, when we feared the contrary, then it may be truly said that he prevented us with them: Nothing indeed prevented Christ, but to mankind never was any favour more preventing than our redemption by Christ and all the blessed fruits of his mediation. (3.) That God had advanced him to the highest honour and the most extensive power: "*Thou hast set a crown of pure gold upon his head and kept it there*, when his enemies attempted to throw it off." Note, Crowns are at God's disposal; no head wears them but God sets them there, whether in judgment to his land or for mercy the event will show. On the head of Christ God never set a crown of gold, but of thorns first, and then of glory. (4.) That God had assured him of the perpetuity of his kingdom, and therein had done more for him than he was able either to ask or think (v. 4): "When he went forth upon a perilous expedition *he asked his life of thee*, which he then put into his hand, and *thou not only gavest him that*, but withal gavest him *length of days for ever and ever*, didst not only prolong his life far beyond his expectation, but didst assure him of a blessed immortality in a future state and of the continuance of his kingdom in the Messiah that should come of his loins." See how God's grants often exceed our petitions and hopes, and infer thence how rich he is in mercy to those that call upon him. See also and rejoice in the length of the days of Christ's kingdom. He was dead, indeed, that we might live through him; but he is alive, and lives for evermore, and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end; and because he thus lives we shall thus live also. (5.) That God had advanced him to the highest honour and dignity (v. 5):

"His glory is great, far transcending that of all the neighbouring princes, in the salvation thou hast wrought for him and by him." The glory which every good man is ambitious of is to see the salvation of the Lord. *Honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him, as a burden which he must bear, as a charge which he must account for.* Jesus Christ received from God the Father honour and glory (2 Pet. i. 17), the glory which he had with him before the worlds were, John xvii. 5. And on him is laid the charge of universal government and to him all power in heaven and earth is committed. (6.) That God had given him the satisfaction of being the channel of all bliss to mankind (v. 6): "*Thou hast set him to be blessings for ever*" (so the margin reads it), "thou has made him to be a universal everlasting blessing to the world, in whom the families of the earth are, and shall be, blessed; and so thou hast made him exceedingly glad with the countenance thou hast given to his undertaking and to him in the prosecution of it." See how the spirit of prophecy gradually rises here to that which is peculiar to Christ, for none besides is blessed for ever, much less a blessing for ever to that eminency that the expression denotes: and of him it is said that God made him full of joy with his countenance.

In singing this we should rejoice in his joy and triumph in his exaltation.

7 For the king trusteth in the LORD, and through the mercy of the most High he shall not be moved. 8 Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies: thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee. 9 Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the LORD shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them. 10 Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men. 11 For they intended evil against thee: they imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform. 12 Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back, when thou shalt make ready thine arrows upon thy strings against the face of them. 13 Be thou exalted, LORD, in thine own strength: so will we sing and praise thy power.

The psalmist, having taught his people to look back with joy and praise on what God had done for him and them, here teaches them to look forward with faith, and hope, and prayer, upon what God would further do for them: *The king rejoices in God* (v. 1), and therefore we will be thankful; *the king trusteth in God* (v. 7), therefore will we be encouraged. The joy and confidence of Christ

our King is the ground of all our joy and confidence.

I. They are confident of the stability of David's kingdom. *Through the mercy of the Most High*, and not through his own merit or strength, *he shall not be moved*. His prosperous state shall not be disturbed; his faith and hope in God, which are the stay of his spirit, shall not be shaken. The mercy of the Most High (the divine goodness, power, and dominion) is enough to secure our happiness, and therefore our trust in that mercy should be enough to silence all our fears. God being at Christ's right hand in his sufferings (xvi. 8), and he being at God's right hand in his glory, we may be sure he shall not, he cannot, be moved, but continues ever.

II. They are confident of the destruction of all the impenitent implacable enemies of David's kingdom. The success with which God had blessed David's arms hitherto was an earnest of the rest which God would give him from all his enemies round about, and a type of the total overthrow of all Christ's enemies who would not have him to reign over them. Observe, 1. The description of his enemies. They are such as hate him, v. 8. They hated David because God had set him apart for himself, hated Christ because they hated the light; but both were hated without any just cause, and in both God was hated, John xv. 23, 25. 2. The designs of his enemies (v. 11): *They intended evil against thee, and imagined a mischievous device*; they pretended to fight against David only, but their enmity was against God himself. Those that aimed to un-king David aimed, in effect, to un-God Jehovah. What is devised and designed against religion, and against the instruments God raises up to support and advance it, is very evil and mischievous, and God takes it as devised and designed against himself and will so reckon for it. (3.) The disappointment of them: "*They devise what they are not able to perform*," v. 11. Their malice is impotent, and they *imagine a vain thing*, ii. 1. (4.) The discovery of them (v. 8): "*Thy hand shall find them out*. Though ever so artfully disguised by the pretences and professions of friendship, though mingled with the faithful subjects of this kingdom and hardly to be distinguished from them, though flying from justice and absconding in their close places, yet thy hand shall find them out wherever they are." There is no escaping God's avenging eye, no going out of the reach of his hand; rocks and mountains will be no better shelter at last than fig-leaves were at first. (5.) The destruction of them; it will be an utter destruction (Luke xix. 27); they shall be swallowed up and devoured, v. 9. Hell, the portion of all Christ's enemies, is the complete misery both of body and soul. *Their fruit and their seed shall be destroyed*, v. 10. The enemies of God's kingdom, in every age, shall fall under the same doom, and the

whole generation of them will at last be rooted out, and all opposing rule, principality, and power, shall be put down. The arrows of God's wrath shall confound them and put them to flight, being levelled at the face of them, *v.* 12. That will be the lot of daring enemies that face God. The fire of God's wrath will consume them (*v.* 9); they shall not only be cast into a furnace of fire (*Matt.* xiii. 42), but he shall make them themselves as a fiery oven or furnace; they shall be their own tormentors; the reflections and terrors of their own consciences will be their hell. Those that might have had Christ to rule and save them, but rejected him and fought against him, shall find that even the remembrance of that will be enough to make them, to eternity, a fiery oven to themselves: it is the worm that dies not.

III. In this confidence they beg of God that he would still appear for his anointed (*v.* 13), that he would act for him in his own strength, by the immediate operations of his power as Lord of hosts and Father of spirits, making little use of means and instruments. And, 1. Hereby he would exalt himself and glorify his own name. "We have but little strength, and are not so active for thee as we should be, which is our shame; Lord, take the work into thy own hands, do it without us, and it will be thy glory." 2. Hereupon they would exalt him: *So will we sing, and praise thy power, the more triumphantly.*" The less God has of our service when a deliverance is in the working the more he must have of our praises when it is wrought without us.

PSALM XXII.

The Spirit of Christ, which was in the prophets, testifies in this psalm, as clearly and fully as any where in all the Old Testament, "the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow" (1 Pet. i. 11); of him, no doubt, David here speaks, and not of himself, or any other man. Much of it is expressly applied to Christ in the New Testament, all of it may be applied to him, and some of it must be understood of him only. The providences of God concerning David were so very extraordinary that we may suppose there were some wise and good men who then could not but look upon him as a figure of him that was to come. But the composition of his psalms especially, in which he found himself wonderfully carried out by the spirit of prophecy far beyond his own thought and intention, was (we may suppose) an abundant satisfaction to himself that he was not only a father of the Messiah, but a figure of him. In this psalm he speaks, 1. Of the humiliation of Christ (*ver.* 1–21), where David, as a type of Christ, complains of the very calamitous condition he was in upon many accounts. 1. He complains, and mixes comforts with his complaints; he complains (*ver.* 1, 2), but comforts himself (*ver.* 3–5), complains again (*ver.* 6–8), but comforts himself again, *ver.* 9, 10. 2. He complains, and mixes prayers with his complaints; he complains of the power and rage of his enemies (*ver.* 12, 13, 16, 18), of his own bodily weakness and decay (*ver.* 14, 15, 17); but prays that God would not be far from him (*ver.* 11, 19), that he would save and deliver him, *ver.* 19–21. 3. Of the exaltation of Christ, that his undertaking should be for the glory of God (*ver.* 22–25), for the salvation and joy of his people (*ver.* 26–29), and for the perpetuating of his own kingdom, *ver.* 30, 31. In singing this psalm we must keep our thoughts fixed upon Christ, and be so affected with his sufferings as to experience the fellowship of them, and so affected with his grace as to experience the power and influence of it.

To the chief musician upon Ajeleth Shahar.

A psalm of David.

MY God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? *why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?* 2 O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest

not; and in the night season, and am not silent. 3 But thou *art* holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. 4 Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. 5 They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded. 6 But I *am* a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. 7 All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, *saying*, 8 He trusted on the LORD *that* he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. 9 But thou *art* he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope *when I was* upon my mother's breasts. 10 I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou *art* my God from my mother's belly.

Some think they find Christ in the title of this psalm, upon *Ajeleth Shahar*—*The hind of the morning*. Christ is as the swift hind upon the mountains of spices (*Cant.* viii. 14), as the loving hind and the pleasant roe, to all believers (*Prov.* v. 19); he giveth goodly words like Naphtali, who is compared to a *hind let loose*, *Gen.* xlix. 21. He is the hind of the morning, marked out by the counsels of God from eternity, to be run down by those dogs that compassed him, *v.* 16. But others think it denotes only the tune to which the psalm was set. In these verses we have,

I. A sad complaint of God's withdrawals, *v.* 1, 2.

1. This may be applied to David, or any other child of God, in the want of the tokens of his favour, pressed with the burden of his displeasure, roaring under it, as one overwhelmed with grief and terror, crying earnestly for relief, and, in this case, apprehending himself forsaken of God, unhelped, unheard, yet calling him, again and again, "*My God*," and continuing to cry day and night to him and earnestly desiring his gracious returns. Note, (1.) Spiritual desertions are the saints' sorest afflictions; when their evidences are clouded, divine consolations suspended, their communion with God interrupted, and the terrors of God set in array against them, how sad are their spirits, and how sapless all their comforts! (2.) Even their complaint of these burdens is a good sign of spiritual life and spiritual senses exercised. To cry out, "*My God, why am I sick? Why am I poor?*" would give cause to suspect discontent and worldliness. But, *Why hast thou forsaken me?* is the language of a heart binding up its happiness in God's favour. (3.) When we are lamenting God's withdrawals, yet still we must call him our

God, and continue to call upon him as ours. When we want the faith of assurance we must live by a faith of adherence. "However it be, yet God is good, and he is mine; *though he slay me, yet will I trust in him; though he do not answer me immediately, I will continue praying and waiting; though he be silent, I will not be silent.*"

2. But it must be applied to Christ; for, in the first words of this complaint, he poured out his soul before God when he was upon the cross (Matt. xxvii. 46); probably he proceeded to the following words, and, some think, repeated the whole psalm, if not aloud (because they cavilled at the first words), yet to himself. Note, (1.) Christ, in his sufferings, cried earnestly to his Father for his favour and presence with him. He cried *in the day-time*, upon the cross, and *in the night-season*, when he was in his agony in the garden. *He offered up strong crying and tears to him that was able to save him*, and with some fear too, Heb. v. 7. (2.) Yet God forsook him, was far from helping him, and did not hear him, and it was this that he complained of more than all his sufferings. God delivered him into the hands of his enemies; it was by his determinate counsel that he was crucified and slain, and he did not give in sensible comforts. But, Christ having made himself sin for us, in conformity thereunto the Father laid him under the present impressions of his wrath and displeasure against sin. *It pleased the Lord to bruise him and put him to grief*, Isa. liii. 10. But even then he kept fast hold of his relation to his Father as his God, by whom he was now employed, whom he was now serving, and with whom he should shortly be glorified.

II. Encouragement taken, in reference hereunto, v. 3—5. Though God did not hear him, did not help him, yet, 1. He will think well of God: "*But thou art holy, not unjust, untrue, nor unkind, in any of thy dispensations. Though thou dost not immediately come in to the relief of thy afflicted people, yet thou lovest them, art true to thy covenant with them, and dost not countenance the iniquity of their persecutors*, Hab. i. 13. And, as thou art infinitely pure and upright thyself, so thou delightest in the services of thy upright people: *Thou inhabitest the praises of Israel; thou art pleased to manifest thy glory, and grace, and special presence with thy people, in the sanctuary, where they attend thee with their praises. There thou art always ready to receive their homage, and of the tabernacle of meeting thou hast said, This is my rest for ever.*" This bespeaks God's wonderful condescension to his faithful worshippers—that, though he is attended with the praises of angels, yet he is pleased to inhabit the praises of Israel, and it may comfort us in all our complaints—that, though God seem, for a while, to turn a deaf ear to them, yet he is so well pleased with his people's praises that he will, in due

time, give them cause to change their note: *Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him.* Our Lord Jesus, in his sufferings, had an eye to the holiness of God, to preserve and advance the honour of that, and of his grace in inhabiting the praises of Israel notwithstanding the iniquities of their holy things. 2. He will take comfort from the experiences which the saints in former ages had of the benefit of faith and prayer (v. 4, 5): "*Our fathers trusted in thee, cried unto thee, and thou didst deliver them; therefore thou wilt, in due time, deliver me, for never any that hoped in thee were made ashamed of their hope, never any that sought thee sought thee in vain. And thou art still the same in thyself and the same to thy people that ever thou wast. They were our fathers, and thy people are beloved for the fathers' sake.*" Rom. xi. 28. The entail of the covenant is designed for the support of the seed of the faithful. He that was our fathers' God must be ours and will therefore be ours. Our Lord Jesus, in his sufferings, supported himself with this—that all the fathers who were types of him in his sufferings, Noah, Joseph, David, Jonah, and others, were in due time delivered and were types of his exaltation too; therefore he knew that *he also should not be confounded*, Isa. i. 7.

III. The complaint renewed of another grievance, and that is the contempt and reproach of men. This complaint is by no means so bitter as that before of God's withdrawals; but, as that touches a gracious soul, so this a generous soul, in a very tender part, v. 6—8. Our fathers were honoured, the patriarchs in their day, first or last, appeared great in the eye of the world, Abraham, Moses, David; but Christ is *a worm, and no man*. It was great condescension that he became man, a step downwards, which is, and will be, the wonder of angels; yet, as if it were too much, too great, to be a man, he becomes a worm, and no man. He was *Adam—a mean man*, and *Enosh—a man of sorrows*, but *lo Ish—not a considerable man*; for he took upon him the form of a servant, and *his visage was marred more than any man's*, Isa. lii. 14. Man, at the best, is a worm; but he became a worm, and no man. If he had not made himself a worm, he could not have been trampled upon as he was. The word signifies such a worm as was used in dyeing scarlet or purple, whence some make it an allusion to his bloody sufferings. See what abuses were put upon him. 1. He was reproached as a bad man, as a blasphemer, a sabbath-breaker, a wine-bibber, a false prophet, an enemy to Cæsar, a confederate with the prince of the devils. 2. He was despised of the people as a mean contemptible man, not worth taking notice of, his country in no repute, his relations poor mechanics, his followers none of the rulers, or the Pharisees, but the mob. 3. He was ridiculed as a foolish man, and one that not only deceived

others, but himself too. Those that saw him hanging on the cross laughed him to scorn. So far were they from pitying him, or concerning themselves for him, that they added to his afflictions, with all the gestures and expressions of insolence upbraiding him with his fall. They make mouths at him, make merry over him, and make a jest of his sufferings: *They shoot out the lip, they shake their head, saying, This was he that said he trusted God would deliver him; now let him deliver him.* David was sometimes taunted for his confidence in God; but in the sufferings of Christ this was literally and exactly fulfilled. Those very gestures were used by those that reviled him (Matt. xxvii. 39); they wagged their heads, nay, and so far did their malice make them forget themselves that they used the very words (v. 43), *He trusted in God; let him deliver him.* Our Lord Jesus, having undertaken to satisfy for the dishonour we had done to God by our sins, did it by submitting to the lowest possible instance of ignominy and disgrace.

IV. Encouragement taken as to this also (v. 9, 10): Men despise me, *but thou art he that took me out of the womb.* David and other good men have often, for direction to us, encouraged themselves with this, that God was not only the *God of their fathers*, as before (v. 4), but the God of their infancy, who began by times to take care of them, as soon as they had a being, and therefore, they hope, will never cast them off. He that did so well for us in that helpless useless state will not leave us when he has reared us and nursed us up into some capacity of serving him. See the early instances of God's providential care for us, 1. In the birth: *He took us also out of the womb*, else we had died there, or been stifled in the birth. Every man's particular time begins with this pregnant proof of God's providence, as time, in general, began with the creation, that pregnant proof of his being. 2. At the breast: *"Then didst thou make me hope;"* that is, "thou didst that for me, in providing sustenance for me and protecting me from the dangers to which I was exposed, which encourages me to hope in thee all my days." The blessings of the breasts, as they crown the blessings of the womb, so they are ear-nests of the blessings of our whole lives; surely he that fed us then will never starve us, Job iii. 12. 3. In our early dedication to him: *I was cast upon thee from the womb*, which perhaps refers to his circumcision on the eighth day; he was then by his parents committed and given up to God as his God in covenant; for circumcision was a seal of the covenant; and this encouraged him to trust in God. Those have reason to think themselves safe who were so soon, so solemnly, *gathered under the wings of the divine majesty.* 4. In the experience we have had of God's goodness to us all along ever since, drawn out in a constant uninterrupted series

of preservations and supplies: *Thou art my God, providing for me and watching over me for good, from my mother's belly*, that is, from my coming into the world unto this day. And if, as soon as we became capable of exercising reason, we put our confidence in God and committed ourselves and our way to him, we need not doubt but he will always remember the *kindness of our youth and the love of our espousals*, Jer. ii. 2. This is applicable to our Lord Jesus, over whose incarnation and birth the divine Providence watched with a peculiar care, when he was born in a stable, laid in a manger, and immediately exposed to the malice of Herod, and forced to flee into Egypt. *When he was a child God loved him and called him thence* (Hos. xi. 1), and the remembrance of this comforted him in his sufferings. Men reproached him, and discouraged his confidence in God; but God had honoured him and encouraged his confidence in him.

11 Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for *there is none to help.* 12 Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. 13 They gaped upon me *with* their mouths, *as* a ravening and a roaring lion. 14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. 15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. 16 For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. 17 I may tell all my bones: they look *and* stare upon me. 18 They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture. 19 But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me. 20 Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog. 21 Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.

In these verses we have Christ suffering and Christ praying, by which we are directed to look for crosses and to look up to God under them.

I. Here is Christ suffering. David indeed was often in trouble, and beset with enemies; but many of the particulars here specified are such as were never true of David, and therefore must be appropriated to Christ in the depth of his humiliation.

1. He is here deserted by his friends. Trouble and distress are near, and *there is*

none to help, none to uphold, v. 11. He trod the wine-press alone; for all his disciples forsook him and fled. It is God's honour to help when all other helps and succours fail.

2. He is here insulted and surrounded by his enemies, such as were of a higher rank, who, for their strength and fury, are compared to bulls, *strong bulls of Bashan* (v. 12), 'at and fed to the full, haughty and sour; such were the chief priests and elders that persecuted Christ; and others of a lower rank, who are compared to dogs (v. 16), filthy and greedy, and unwearied in running him down. There was an assembly of the wicked plotting against him (v. 16); for the chief priests sat in council, to consult of ways and means to take Christ. These enemies were numerous and unanimous: "Many, and those of different and clashing interests among themselves, as Herod and Pilate, have agreed to compass me. They have carried their plot far, and seem to have gained their point, for they have beset me round, v. 12. They have enclosed me, v. 16. They are formidable and threatening (v. 13): *They gaped upon me with their mouths*, to show me that they would swallow me up; and this with as much strength and fierceness as a roaring ravening lion leaps upon his prey."

3. He is here crucified. The very manner of his death is described, though never in use among the Jews: *They pierced my hands and my feet* (v. 16), which were nailed to the accursed tree, and the whole body left so to hang, the effect of which must needs be the most exquisite pain and torture. There is no one passage in all the Old Testament which the Jews have so industriously corrupted as this, because it is such an eminent prediction of the death of Christ and was so exactly fulfilled.

4. He is here dying (v. 14, 15), dying in pain and anguish, because he was to satisfy for sin, which brought in pain, and for which we must otherwise have lain in everlasting anguish. Here is, (1.) The dissolution of the whole frame of his body: *I am poured out like water*, weak as water, and yielding to the power of death, emptying himself of all the supports of his human nature. (2.) The dislocation of his bones. Care was taken that not one of them should be broken (John xix. 36), but they were all out of joint by the violent stretching of his body upon the cross as upon a rack. Or it may denote the fear that seized him in his agony in the garden, when he began to be sore amazed, the effect of which perhaps was (as sometimes it has been of great fear, Dan. v. 6), that the *joints of his loins were loosed and his knees smote one against another*. His bones were put out of joint that he might put the whole creation into joint again, which sin had put out of joint, and might make our broken bones to rejoice. (3.) The colliquation of his spirits: *My heart is like wax*, melted to receive the impressions of God's wrath against the sins

he undertook to satisfy for, melting away like the vitals of a dying man; and, as this satisfied for the hardness of our hearts, so the consideration of it should help to soften them. When Job speaks of his inward trouble he says, *The Almighty makes my heart soft*, Job xxiii. 16, and see Ps. lvi. 2 (4.) The failing of his natural force: *My strength is dried up*; so that he became parched and brittle like a potsherd, the radical moisture being wasted by the fire of divine wrath preying upon his spirits. Who then can stand before God's anger? Or who knows the power of it? *If this was done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?* (5.) The clamminess of his mouth, a usual symptom of approaching death: *My tongue cleaveth to my jaws*; this was fulfilled both in his thirst upon the cross (John xix. 28) and in his silence under his sufferings; for, *as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth*, nor objected against any thing done to him. (6.) His giving up the ghost: *"Thou hast brought me to the dust of death; I am just ready to drop into the grave;"* for nothing less would satisfy divine justice. The life of the sinner was forfeited, and therefore the life of the sacrifice must be the ransom for it. The sentence of death passed upon Adam was thus expressed: *Unto dust thou shalt return*. And therefore Christ, having an eye to that sentence in his obedience to death, here uses a similar expression: *Thou hast brought me to the dust of death*.

5. He was stripped. The shame of nakedness was the immediate consequence of sin; and therefore our Lord Jesus was stripped of his clothes, when he was crucified, that he might clothe us with the robe of his righteousness, and that the shame of our nakedness might not appear. Now here we are told, (1.) How his body looked when it was thus stripped: *I may tell all my bones*, v. 17. His blessed body was lean and emaciated with labour, grief, and fasting, during the whole course of his ministry, which made him look as if he was nearly 50 years old when he was yet but 33, as we find, John viii. 57. His wrinkles now witnessed for him that he was far from being what he was called, *a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber*. Or his bones might be numbered, because his body was distended upon the cross, which made it easy to count his ribs. *They look and stare upon me*, that is, my bones do, being distorted, and having no flesh to cover them, as Job says (ch. xvi. 8), *My leanness, rising up in me, beareth witness to my face*. Or "the standers by, the passers by, are amazed to see my bones start out thus; and, instead of pitying me, are pleased even with such a rueful spectacle." (2.) What they did with his clothes, which they took from him (v. 18): *They part my garments among them*, to every soldier a part, and *upon my vesture*, the seamless coat, *do they cast lots*. This very circumstance was exactly fulfilled, John xix. 23, 24. And, though

it was no great instance of Christ's suffering, yet it is a great instance of the fulfilling of the scripture in him. *Thus it was written, and therefore thus it behoved Christ to suffer.* Let this therefore confirm our faith in him as the true Messiah, and inflame our love to him as the best of friends, who loved us and suffered all this for us

II. Here is Christ praying, and with that supporting himself under the burden of his sufferings. Christ, in his agony, prayed, prayed earnestly, prayed that the cup might pass from him. When the prince of this world with his terrors set upon him, *gaped upon him as a roaring lion*, he fell upon the ground and prayed. And of that David's praying here was a type. He calls God his strength, *v. 19*. When we cannot rejoice in God as our song, yet let us stay ourselves upon him as our strength, and take the comfort of spiritual supports when we cannot come at spiritual delights. He prays, 1. That God would be with him. and not set himself at a distance from him: *Be not thou far from me (v. 11)*, and again, *v. 19*. "Whoever stands aloof from my sore, Lord, do not thou." The nearness of trouble should quicken us to draw near to God and then we may hope that he will draw near to us. 2. That he would help him and make haste to help him, help him to bear up under his troubles, that he might not fail nor be discouraged, that he might neither shrink from his undertaking nor sink under it. And the Father *heard him in that he feared* (*Heb. v. 7*) and enabled him to go through with his work. 3. That he would deliver him and save him, *v. 20, 21*. (1.) Observe what the jewel is which he is in care for, "The safety of my soul, my darling; let that be redeemed from the power of the grave, *xlix. 15*. Father, into thy hands I commit that, to be conveyed safely to paradise." The psalmist here calls his soul his *darling*, his *only one* (so the word is): "*My soul is my only one*. I have but one soul to take care of, and therefore the greater is my shame if I neglect it and the greater will the loss be if I let it perish. Being my only one, it ought to be my darling, for the eternal welfare of which I ought to be deeply concerned. I do not use my soul as my darling, unless I take care to preserve it from every thing that would hurt it and to provide all necessities for it, and be entirely tender of its welfare. 2.) Observe what the danger is from which he prays to be delivered, *from the sword*, the flaming sword of divine wrath, which turns every way. This he dreaded more than any thing, *Gen. iii. 24*. God's anger was the wormwood and the gall in the bitter cup that was put into his hands. "O deliver my soul from that. Lord, though I lose my life, let me not lose thy love. Save me from the power of the dog, and from the lion's mouth." This seems to be meant of Satan, that old enemy who bruised the heel of the seed of the woman, the prince of this world, with whom

he was to engage in close combat and whom he saw coming, *John xiv. 30*. "Lord, save me from being overpowered by his terrors." He pleads, "Thou hast formerly heard me from the horns of the unicorn," that is, "saved me from him in answer to my prayer." This may refer to the victory Christ had obtained over Satan and his temptations (*Matt. iv.*), when the devil left him for a season (*Luke iv. 13*), but now returned in another manner to attack him with his terrors. "Lord, thou gavest me the victory then, give it me now, that I may spoil principalities and powers, and cast out the prince of this world." Has God delivered us from the horns of the unicorn, that we be not tossed? Let that encourage us to hope that we shall be delivered from the lion's mouth, that we be not torn. He that has delivered doth and will deliver. This prayer of Christ, no doubt, was answered, for the Father heard him always. And, though he did not deliver him from death, yet he suffered him not to see corruption, but, the third day, raised him out of the dust of death, which was a greater instance of God's favour to him than if he had helped him down from the cross; for that would have hindered his undertaking, whereas his resurrection crowned it.

In singing this we should meditate on the sufferings and resurrection of Christ till we experience in our own souls the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings.

22 I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee. 23 Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel. 24 For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard. 25 My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him. 26 The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live for ever. 27 All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. 28 For the kingdom is the LORD's: and he is the governor among the nations. 29 All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul. 30 A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to

the Lord for a generation. 31 They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done *this*.

The same that began the psalm complaining, who was no other than Christ in his humiliation, ends it here triumphing, and it can be no other than Christ in his exaltation. And, as the first words of the complaint were used by Christ himself upon the cross, so the first words of the triumph are expressly applied to him (Heb. ii. 12) and are made his own words: *I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee*. The certain prospect which Christ had of the joy set before him not only gave him a satisfactory answer to his prayers, but turned his complaints into praises; he saw of the travail of his soul, and was well satisfied, witness that triumphant word wherewith he breathed his last: *It is finished*.

Five things are here spoken of, the view of which were the satisfaction and triumph of Christ in his sufferings:—

I. That he should have a church in the world, and that those that were given him from eternity should, in the fulness of time, be gathered in to him. This is implied here; that he should see *his seed*, Isa. liii. 10. It pleased him to think, 1. That by the declaring of God's name, by the preaching of the everlasting gospel in its plainness and purity, many should be effectually called to him and to God by him. And for this end ministers should be employed to publish this doctrine to the world, and they should be so much his messengers and his voice that their doing it should be accounted his doing it; their word is his, and by them he declares God's name. 2. That those who are thus called in should be brought into a very near and dear relation to him as his brethren; for he is not only not ashamed, but greatly well pleased, to call them so; not the believing Jews only, his countrymen, but those of the Gentiles also who became fellow-heirs and of the same body, Heb. ii. 11. Christ is our elder brother, who takes care of us, and makes provision for us, and expects that our desire should be towards him and that we should be willing he should rule over us. 3. That these his brethren should be incorporated into a congregation, a great congregation; such is the universal church, the whole family that is named from him, into which all the *children of God that were scattered abroad are collected*, and in which they are united (John xi. 52, Eph. i. 10), and that they should also be incorporated into smaller societies, members of that great body, many religious assemblies for divine worship, on which the face of Christianity should appear and in which the interests of it should be supported and advanced. 4. That these should be accounted the seed of Jacob and Israel (v. 23), that on them, though Gentiles, the blessing of Abraham

might come (Gal. iii. 14), and to them might pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenant, and the service of God, as much as ever they did to Israel according to the flesh, Rom. ix. 4, Heb. viii. 10. The gospel church is called *the Israel of God*, Gal. vi. 16.

II. That God should be greatly honoured and glorified in him by that church. His Father's glory was that which he had in his eye throughout his whole undertaking (John xvii. 4), particularly in his sufferings, which he entered upon with this solemn request, *Father, glorify thy name*, John xii. 27, 28. He foresees with pleasure, 1. That God would be glorified by the church that should be gathered to him, and that for this end they should be called and gathered in that they might be unto God *for a name and a praise*. Christ by his ministers will declare God's name to his brethren, as God's mouth to them. and then by them, as the mouth of the congregation to God, will God's name be praised. All that fear the Lord will praise him (v. 23) even every Israelite indeed. See cxviii. 2—4 cxxxv. 19, 20. The business of Christians, particularly in their solemn religious assemblies, is to praise and glorify God with a holy awe and reverence of his majesty, and therefore those that are here called upon to praise God are called upon to fear him. 2. That God would be glorified in the Redeemer and in his undertaking. Therefore Christ is said to *praise God in the church*, not only because he is the Master of the assemblies in which God is praised, and the Mediator of all the praises that are offered up to God, but because he is the matter of the church's praise. See Eph. iii. 21. All our praises must centre in the work of redemption and a great deal of reason we have to be thankful, (1.) That Jesus Christ was owned by his Father in his undertaking, notwithstanding the apprehension he was sometimes under that his Father had forsaken him (v. 24): *For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted one* (that is, of the suffering Redeemer), but has graciously accepted it as a full satisfaction for sin, and a valuable consideration on which to ground the grant of eternal life to all believers. Though it was offered for us poor sinners, he did not despise nor abhor it for our sakes; nor did he turn his face from him that offered it, as Saul was angry with his own son because he interceded for David, whom he looked upon as his enemy. But when he cried unto him, when his blood cried for peace and pardon for us, he heard him. This, as it is the matter of our rejoicing, ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving. Those who have thought their prayers slighted and unheard, if they continue to pray and wait, will find they have not sought in vain. (2.) That he himself will go on with his undertaking and complete it. Christ says, *I will pay my vows*, v. 25. Having engaged to bring many sons to glory, he will perform his engagement to the utmost, and will lose none.

III. That all humble gracious souls should have a full satisfaction and happiness in him, v. 26. It comforted the Lord Jesus in his sufferings that in and through him all true believers should have everlasting consolation.

1. The poor in spirit shall be rich in blessings, spiritual blessings; the hungry shall be filled with good things. Christ's sacrifice being accepted, the saints shall feast upon the sacrifice, as, under the law, upon the peace-offerings, and so partake of the altar: *The meek shall eat and be satisfied, eat of the bread of life, feed with an appetite upon the doctrine of Christ's mediation, which is meat and drink to the soul that knows its own nature and case. Those that hunger and thirst after righteousness in Christ shall have all they can desire to satisfy them and make them easy, and shall not labour, as they have done, for that which satisfies not.* 2. Those that are much in praying shall be much in thanksgiving: *Those shall praise the Lord that seek him, because through Christ they are sure of finding him, in the hopes of which they have reason to praise him even while they are seeking him; and the more earnest they are in seeking him the more will their hearts be enlarged in his praises when they have found him.* 3. The souls that are devoted to him shall be for ever happy with him: *"Your heart shall live for ever. Yours that are meek, that are satisfied in Christ, that continue to seek God; whatever becomes of your bodies, your hearts shall live for ever; the graces and comforts you have shall be perfected in everlasting life. Christ has said, Because I live, you shall live also (John xiv. 19); and therefore that life shall be as sure and as long as his."*

IV. That the church of Christ, and with it the kingdom of God among men, should extend itself to all corners of the earth and should take in all sorts of people.

1. That it should reach far (v. 27, 28), that, whereas the Jews had long been the only professing people of God, now all the ends of the world should come into the church, and the partition-wall being taken down, the Gentiles should be taken in. It is here prophesied, (1.) That they should be converted: *They shall remember, and turn to the Lord.* Note, Serious reflection is the first step, and a good step it is, towards true conversion. We must consider and turn. The prodigal came first to himself, and then to his father. (2.) That then they should be admitted into communion with God and with the assemblies that serve him: *They shall worship before thee, for in every place incense shall be offered to God,* Mal. i. 11; Isa. lxvi. 23. Those that turn to God will make conscience of worshipping before him. And good reason there is why all the kindreds of the nations should do homage to God, for (v. 28) *the kingdom is the Lord's; his, and his only, is the universal monarchy.* [1.] The kingdom of nature is the Lord Jehovah's, and his providence rules among the nations, and upon that account we are bound

to worship him; so that the design of the Christian religion is to revive natural religion and its principles and laws. Christ died to bring us to God, the God that made us, from whom we had revolted, and to reduce us to our native allegiance. [2.] The kingdom of grace is the Lord Christ's, and he, as Mediator, is appointed governor among the nations, head over all things to his church. Let every tongue therefore confess that he is Lord.

2. That it should include many of different ranks, v. 29. High and low, rich and poor bond and free, meet in Christ. (1.) Christ shall have the homage of many of the great ones. *Those that are fat upon the earth, that live in pomp and power, shall eat and worship; even those that fare deliciously, when they have eaten and are full, shall bless the Lord their God for their plenty and prosperity.* (2.) The poor also shall receive his gospel: *Those that go down to the dust, that sit in the dust (cxiii. 7), that can scarcely keep life and soul together, shall bow before him, before the Lord Jesus, who reckons it his honour to be the poor man's King (lxxii. 12) and whose protection does, in a special manner, draw their allegiance.* Or this may be understood in general of dying men, whether poor or rich. See then what is our condition—we are going down to the dust to which we are sentenced and where shortly we must make our bed. Nor can we keep alive our own souls; we cannot secure our own natural life long, nor can we be the authors of our own spiritual and eternal life. It is therefore our great interest, as well as duty, to bow before the Lord Jesus, to give up ourselves to him to be his subjects and worshippers; for this is the only way, and it is a sure way, to secure our happiness when we go down to the dust. Seeing we cannot keep alive our own souls, it is our wisdom, by an obedient faith, to commit our souls to Jesus Christ, who is able to save them and keep them alive for ever.

V. That the church of Christ, and with it the kingdom of God among men, should continue to the end, through all the ages of time. Mankind is kept up in a succession of generations; so that there is always a generation passing away and a generation coming up. Now, as Christ shall have honour from that which is passing away and leaving the world (v. 29, *those that go down to the dust shall bow before him*, and it is good to die bowing before Christ; *blessed are the dead who thus die in the Lord*), so he shall have honour from that which is rising up, and setting out, in the world, v. 30. Observe, 1. Their application to Christ: *A seed shall serve him*, shall keep up the solemn worship of him and profess and practise obedience to him as their Master and Lord. Note, God will have a church in the world to the end of time; and, in order to that, there shall be a succession of professing Christians and gospel ministers from generation to generation. *A seed shall*

serve him; there shall be a remnant, more or less, to whom shall pertain the service of God and to whom God will give grace to serve him,—perhaps not the seed of the same persons, for grace does not run in a blood (he does not say *their* seed, but *a* seed),—perhaps but few, yet enough to preserve the entail. 2. Christ's acknowledgment of them: *They shall be accounted to him for a generation*; he will be the same to them that he was to those who went before them; his kindness to his friends shall not die with them, but shall be drawn out to their heirs and successors, and instead of the fathers shall be the children, whom all shall acknowledge to be a seed that the Lord hath blessed, Isa. lxi. 9; lxxv. 23. The generation of the righteous God will graciously own as his treasure, his children. 3. Their agency for him (v. 31): *They shall come*, shall rise up in their day, not only to keep up the virtue of the generation that is past, and to do the work of their own generation, but to serve the honour of Christ and the welfare of souls in the generations to come; they shall transmit to them the gospel of Christ (that sacred deposit) pure and entire, even to a people that shall be born hereafter; to them they shall declare two things:—(1.) That there is an everlasting righteousness, which Jesus Christ has brought in. This righteousness of his, and not any of our own, they shall declare to be the foundation of all our hopes and the fountain of all our joys. See Rom. i. 16, 17. (2.) That the work of our redemption by Christ is the Lord's own doing (cxviii. 23) and no contrivance of ours. We must declare to our children that God has done this; it is his wisdom in a mystery; it is his arm revealed.

In singing this we must triumph in the name of Christ as above every name, must give him honour ourselves, rejoice in the honours others do him, and in the assurance we have that there shall be a people praising him on earth when we are praising him in heaven.

PSALM XXIII.

Many of David's psalms are full of complaints, but this is full of comforts, and the expressions of delight in God's great goodness and dependence upon him. It is a psalm which has been sung by good Christians, and will be while the world stands, with a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction. 1. The psalmist here claims relation to God, as his shepherd, v. 1. II. He recounts his experience of the kind things God had done for him as his shepherd, ver. 2, 3, 5. III. Hence he infers that he should want no good (ver. 1), that he needed to fear no evil (ver. 4), that God would never leave nor forsake him in a way of mercy; and therefore he resolves never to leave nor forsake God in a way of duty, ver. 6. In this he has certainly an eye, not only to the blessings of God's providence, which made his outward condition prosperous, but to the communications of God's grace, received by a lively faith, and returned in a warm devotion, which filled his soul with joy unspeakable. And, as in the foregoing psalm he represented Christ dying for his sheep, so here he represents Christians receiving the benefit of all the care and tenderness of that great and good shepherd.

A psalm of David.

THE LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. 3

He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. 5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

From three very comfortable premises David, in this psalm, draws three very comfortable conclusions, and teaches us to do so too. We are saved by hope, and that hope will not make us ashamed, because it is well grounded. It is the duty of Christians to encourage themselves in the Lord their God; and we are here directed to take that encouragement both from the relation wherein he stands to us and from the experience we have had of his goodness according to that relation.

I. From God's being his shepherd he infers that he shall not want any thing that is good for him, v. 1. See here, 1. The great care that God takes of believers. He is their shepherd, and they may call him so. Time was when David was himself a shepherd; he was taken from following the ewes great with young (lxxviii. 70, 71), and so he knew by experience the cares and tender affections of a good shepherd towards his flock. He remembered what need they had of a shepherd, and what a kindness it was to them to have one that was skilful and faithful; he once ventured his life to rescue a lamb. By this therefore he illustrates God's care of his people; and to this our Saviour seems to refer when he says, *I am the shepherd of the sheep; the good shepherd*, John x. 11. He that is the shepherd of Israel, of the whole church in general (lxxx. 1), is the shepherd of every particular believer; the meanest is not below his cognizance, Isa. xl. 11. He takes them into his fold, and then takes care of them, protects them, and provides for them, with more care and constancy than a shepherd can, that makes it his business to keep the flock. If God be as a shepherd to us, we must be as sheep, inoffensive, meek, and quiet, silent before the shearers, nay, and before the butcher too, useful and sociable; we must know the shepherd's voice, and follow him. 2. The great confidence which believers have in God: "If the Lord is my shepherd, my feeder, I may conclude I shall not want any thing that is really necessary and good for me." If David penned this psalm before his coming to the crown, though destined to it, he had as much reason to fear wanting as any man. Once he sent his men a begging

for him to Nabal, and another time went himself a begging to Ahimelech; and yet, when he considers that God is his shepherd, he can boldly say, *I shall not want*. Let not those fear starving that are at God's finding and have him for their feeder. More is implied than is expressed, not only, *I shall not want*, but, "I shall be supplied with whatever I need; and, if I have not every thing I desire, I may conclude it is either not fit for me or not good for me, or I shall have it in due time."

II. From his performing the office of a good shepherd to him he infers that he needs not fear any evil in the greatest dangers and difficulties he could be in, *v. 2-4*. He experiences the benefit of God's presence with him and care of him now, and therefore expects the benefit of them when he most needs it. See here,

1. The comforts of a living saint. God is his shepherd and his God—a God all-sufficient to all intents and purposes. David found him so, and so have we. See the happiness of the saints as the sheep of God's pasture. (1.) They are well placed, well laid: *He maketh me to lie down in green pastures*. We have the supports and comforts of this life from God's good hand, our daily bread from him as our Father. The greatest abundance is but a dry pasture to a wicked man, who relishes that only in it which pleases the senses; but to a godly man, who tastes the goodness of God in all his enjoyments, and by faith relishes that, though he has but little of the world, it is a green pasture, xxxvii. 16; Prov. xv. 16, 17. God's ordinances are the green pastures in which food is provided for all believers; the word of life is the nourishment of the new man. It is milk for babes, pasture for the sheep, never barren, never eaten bare, never parched, but always a green pasture for faith to feed in. God makes his saints to lie down; he gives them quiet and contentment in their own minds, whatever their lot is; their souls dwell at ease in him, and that makes every pasture green. Are we blessed with the green pastures of the ordinances? Let us not think it enough to pass through them, but let us lie down in them, abide in them; this is my rest for ever. It is by a constancy of the means of grace that the soul is fed. (2.) They are well guided, well led. The shepherd of Israel guides Joseph like a flock; and every believer is under the same guidance: *He leadeth me beside the still waters*. Those that feed on God's goodness must follow his direction; he leads them by his providence, by his word, by his Spirit, disposes their affairs for the best, according to his counsel, disposes their affections and actions according to his command, directs their eye, their way, and their heart, into his love. The still waters by which he leads them yield them, not only a pleasant prospect, but many a cooling draught, many a reviving cordial, when they are thirsty and weary. God pro-

vides for his people not only food and rest, but refreshment also and pleasure. The consolations of God, the joys of the Holy Ghost, are these still waters, by which the saints are led, streams which flow from the fountain of living waters and make glad the city of our God. God leads his people, not to the standing waters which corrupt and gather filth, nor to the troubled sea, nor to the rapid rolling floods, but to the silent purling waters; for the still but running waters agree best with those spirits that flow out towards God and yet do it silently. The divine guidance they are under is stripped of its metaphor (*v. 3*): *He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, in the way of my duty*; in that he instructs me by his word and directs me by conscience and providence. These are the paths in which all the saints desire to be led and kept, and never to turn aside out of them. And those only are led by the still waters of comfort that walk in the paths of righteousness. The way of duty is the truly pleasant way. It is the work of righteousness that is peace. In these paths we cannot walk unless God both lead us into them and lead us in them. (3.) They are well helped when any thing ails them: *He restoreth my soul*. [1.] "He restores me when I wander." No creature will lose itself sooner than a sheep, so apt it is to go astray, and then so unapt to find the way back. The best saints are sensible of their proneness to go astray like lost sheep (*cxix. 176*); they miss their way, and turn aside into by-paths; but when God shows them their error, gives them repentance, and brings them back to their duty again, he restores the soul; and, if he did not do so, they would wander endlessly, and be undone. When, after one sin, David's heart smote him, and, after another, Nathan was sent to tell him, *Thou art the man*, God restored his soul. Though God may suffer his people to fall into sin, he will not suffer them to lie still in it. [2.] "He recovers me when I am sick, and revives me when I am faint, and so restores the soul which was ready to depart." He is the Lord our God that heals us, *Exod. xv. 26*. Many a time we should have fainted unless we had believed; and it was the good shepherd that kept us from fainting.

2. See here the courage of a dying saint (*v. 4*): "Having had such experience of God's goodness to me all my days, in six troubles and in seven, I will never distrust him, no, not in the last extremity; the rather because all he has done for me hitherto was not for any merit or desert of mine, but purely for his name's sake, in pursuance of his word, in performance of his promise, and for the glory of his own attributes and relations to his people. That name therefore shall still be my strong tower, and shall assure me that he who has led me, and fed me, all my life long, will not leave me at last." Here is,

(1.) Imminent danger supposed: "Though

I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, that is, though I am in peril of death, though in the midst of dangers, deep as a valley, dark as a shadow, and dreadful as death itself," or, rather, "though I am under the arrests of death, have received the sentence of death within myself, and have all the reason in the world to look upon myself as a dying man, yet I am easy." Those that are sick, those that are old, have reason to look upon themselves as in the valley of the shadow of death. Here is one word indeed which sounds terrible; it is *death*, which we must all count upon; *there is no discharge in that war*. But, even in the supposition of the distress, there are four words which lessen the terror:—It is death indeed that is before us; but, [1.] It is but the *shadow* of death; there is no substantial evil in it; the shadow of a serpent will not sting nor the shadow of a sword kill. [2.] It is the *valley* of the shadow, deep indeed, and dark, and dirty; but the valleys are fruitful, and so is death itself fruitful of comforts to God's people. [3.] It is but a *walk* in this valley, a gentle pleasant walk. The wicked are chased out of the world, and their souls are required; but the saints take a walk to another world as cheerfully as they take their leave of this. [4.] It is a *walk through it*; they shall not be lost in this valley, but get safely to the mountain of spices on the other side of it.

(2.) This danger made light of, and triumphed over, upon good grounds. Death is a king of terrors, but not to the sheep of Christ; they tremble at it no more than sheep do that are appointed for the slaughter. "Even in the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil. None of these things move me." Note, A child of God may meet the messengers of death and receive its summons with a holy security and serenity of mind. The sucking child may play upon the hole of this asp; and the weaned child, that, through grace, is weaned from this world, may put his hand upon this cockatrice's den, bidding a holy defiance to death, as Paul, *O death! where is thy sting?* And there is ground enough for this confidence, [1.] Because there is no evil in it to a child of God; death cannot separate us from the love of God, and therefore it can do us no real harm; it kills the body, but cannot touch the soul. Why should it be dreadful when there is nothing in it hurtful? [2.] Because the saints have God's gracious presence with them in their dying moments; he is then at their right hand, and therefore why should they be moved? The good shepherd will not only conduct, but convoy, his sheep through this valley, where they are in danger of being set upon by the beasts of prey, the ravening wolves: he will not only convoy them, but comfort them when they most need comfort. His presence shall comfort them: *Thou art with me*. His word and Spirit shall comfort them—*his rod and staff*, alluding to the shepherd's crook, or the rod under which

the sheep passed when they were counted (Lev. xxvii. 32), or the staff with which the shepherds drove away the dogs that would scatter or worry the sheep. It is a comfort to the saints, when they come to die, that God takes cognizance of them (*he knows those that are his*), that he will rebuke the enemy that he will guide them with his rod and sustain them with his staff. The gospel is called *the rod of Christ's strength* (ex. 2), and there is enough in that to comfort the saints when they come to die, and underneath them are *the everlasting arms*.

III. From the good gifts of God's bounty to him now he infers the constancy and perpetuity of his mercy, v. 5, 6. Here we may observe,

1. How highly he magnifies God's gracious vouchsafements to him (v. 5): "*Thou preparest a table before me*; thou hast provided for me all things pertaining both to life and godliness, all things requisite both for body and soul, for time and eternity;" such a bountiful benefactor is God to all his people; and it becomes them abundantly to utter his great goodness, as David here, who acknowledges, (1.) That he had food convenient, a table spread, a cup filled, meat for his hunger, drink for his thirst. (2.) That he had it carefully and readily provided for him. His table was not spread with any thing that came next to hand, but prepared, and prepared before him. (3.) That he was not stinted, was not straitened, but had abundance: "*My cup runs over*, enough for myself and my friends too." (4.) That he had not only for necessity, but for ornament and delight: *Thou anointest my head with oil*. Samuel anointed him king, which was a certain pledge of further favour; but this is rather an instance of the plenty with which God had blessed him, or an allusion to the extraordinary entertainment of special friends, whose heads they anointed with oil, Luke vii. 46. Nay, some think he still looks upon himself as a sheep, but such a one as the *poor man's ewe-lamb* (2 Sam. xii. 3), that did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom; not only thus nobly, but thus tenderly, are the children of God looked after. Plentiful provision is made for their bodies, for their souls, for the life that now is and for that which is to come. If Providence do not bestow upon us thus plentifully for our natural life, it is our own fault if it be not made up to us in spiritual blessings.

2. How confidently he counts upon the continuance of God's favours, v. 6. He had said (v. 1), *I shall not want*; but now he speaks more positively, more comprehensively: *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life*. His hope rises, and his faith is strengthened, by being exercised. Observe, (1.) What he promises himself—goodness and mercy, all the streams of mercy flowing from the fountain, pardoning mercy, protecting mercy, sustaining mercy,

supplying mercy. (2.) The manner of the conveyance of it: It shall *follow* me, as the water out of the rock followed the camp of Israel through the wilderness; it shall follow into all places and all conditions, shall be always ready. (3.) The continuance of it: It shall follow me *all my life long*, even to the last; for whom God loves he loves to the end. (4.) The constancy of it: *All the days of my life*, as duly as the day comes; it shall be *new every morning* (Lam. iii. 22, 23) like the manna that was given to the Israelites daily. (5.) The certainty of it: *Surely* it shall. It is as sure as the promise of the God of truth can make it; and we know whom we have believed. (6.) Here is a prospect of the perfection of bliss in the future state. So some take the latter clause: "Goodness and mercy having followed me all the days of my life on this earth, when that is ended I shall remove to a better world, to dwell in the house of the Lord for ever, in our Father's house above, where there are many mansions. *With what I have I am pleased much; with what I hope for I am pleased more.*" All this, and heaven too! Then we serve a good Master.

3. How resolutely he determines to cleave to God and to his duty. We read the last clause as David's covenant with God: *I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever* (as long as I live), and I will praise him while I have any being." We must dwell in his house as servants, that desired to have their ears bored to the door-post, to serve him for ever. If God's goodness to us be like the morning light, which shines more and more to the perfect day, let not ours to him be like the morning cloud and the early dew that passeth away. Those that would be satisfied with the fatness of God's house must keep close to the duties of it.

PSALM XXIV.

This psalm is concerning the kingdom of Jesus Christ, 1. His providential kingdom, by which he rules the world, ver. 1, 2. 11. The kingdom of his grace, by which he rules in his church, 1. Concerning the subjects of that kingdom; their character (ver. 4, 6), their charter, ver. 5. 2. Concerning the King of that kingdom; and a summons to all to give him admission, ver. 7—10. It is supposed that the psalm was penned upon occasion of David's bringing up the ark to the place prepared for it, and that the intention of it was to lead the people above the pomp of external ceremonies to a holy life and faith in Christ, of whom the ark was a type.

A psalm of David.

THE earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. 2 For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.

Here is, I. God's absolute propriety in this part of the creation where our lot is cast, v. 1. We are not to think that the heavens, even the heavens only, are the Lord's, and the numerous and bright inhabitants of the upper world, and that this earth, being so small and inconsiderable a part of the creation, and at such a distance from the royal palace above, is neglected, and that he claims

no interest in it. No, even the earth is his, and this lower world; and, though he has prepared the throne of his glory in the heavens, yet his kingdom rules over all, and even the worms of this earth are not below his cognizance, nor from under his dominion.

1. When God gave the earth to the children of men he still reserved to himself the property, and only let it out to them as tenants, or usufructuaries: *The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof.* The mines that are lodged in the bowels of it, even the richest, the fruits it produces, all the beasts of the forest and the cattle upon a thousand hills, our lands and houses, and all the improvements that are made of this earth by the skill and industry of man, are all his. These indeed, in the kingdom of grace, are justly looked upon as emptiness; for they are vanity of vanities, nothing to a soul; but, in the kingdom of providence, they are fulness. *The earth is full of God's riches, so is the great and wide sea also.* All the parts and regions of the earth are the Lord's, all under his eye, all in his hand: so that, wherever a child of God goes, he may comfort himself with this, that he does not go off his Father's ground. That which falls to our share of the earth and its productions is but lent to us; it is the Lord's; what is our own against all the world is not so against his claims. That which is most remote from us, as that which passes through the paths of the sea, or is hidden in the bottom of it, is the Lord's, and he knows where to find it. 2. The habitable part of this earth (Prov. viii. 31) is his in a special manner—the world and those that dwell therein. We ourselves are not our own, our bodies, our souls, are not. *All souls are mine*, says God; for he is the former of our bodies and the Father of our spirits. Our tongues are not our own; they are to be at his service. Even those of the children of men that know him not, nor own their relation to him, are his. Now this comes in here to show that, though God is graciously pleased to accept the devotions and services of his peculiar chosen people (v. 3—5), it is not because he needs them, or can be benefited by them, for the earth is his and all in it, Exod. xix. 5; Ps. l. 12. It is likewise to be applied to the dominion Christ has, as Mediator, over the utmost parts of the earth, which are given him for his possession: the Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into his hand, power over all flesh. The apostle quotes this scripture twice together in his discourse about things offered to idols, 1 Cor. x. 26, 28. "If it be sold in the shambles, eat it, and ask no questions; for the earth is the Lord's; it is God's good creature, and you have a right to it. But, if one tell you it was offered to an idol, forbear, for the earth is the Lord's, and there is enough besides." This is a good reason why we should be content with our allotment in this world, and not envy others

theirs; *the earth is the Lord's*, and may he not do what he will with his own, and give to some more of it, to others less, as it pleases him?

II. The ground of this propriety. The earth is his by an indisputable title, *for he hath founded it upon the seas and established it upon the floods*, v. 2. It is his; for, 1. He made it, formed it, founded it, and fitted it for the use of man. The matter is his, for he made it out of nothing; the form is his, for he made it according to the eternal counsels and ideas of his own mind. He made it himself, he made it for himself; so that he is sole, entire, and absolute owner, and none can let us a title to any part, but by, from, and under him; see lxxxix. 11, 12. 2. He made it so as no one else could. It is the creature of omnipotence, for it is founded upon the seas, upon the floods, a weak and unstable foundation (one would think) to build the earth upon, and yet, if almighty power please, it shall serve to bear the weight of this earth. The waters which at first covered the earth, and rendered it unfit to be a habitation for man, were ordered under it, that the dry land might appear, and so they are as a foundation to it; see civ. 8, 9. 3. He continues it, he has *established it*, fixed it, so that, though one generation passes and another comes, the earth abides, Eccl. i. 4. And his providence is a continued creation, cxix. 90. The founding of the earth upon the floods should remind us how slippery and uncertain all earthly things are; their foundation is not only sand, but water; it is therefore our folly to build upon them.

3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? 4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. 5 He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. 6 This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah.

From this world, and the fulness thereof, the psalmist's meditations rise, of a sudden, to the great things of another world, the foundation of which is not on the seas, nor on the floods. The things of this world God has given to the children of men and we are much indebted to his providence for them; but they will not make a portion for us. And therefore,

I. Here is an enquiry after better things, v. 3. This earth is God's footstool; but, if we had ever so much of it, we must be here but a while, must shortly go hence, and *Who then shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?* Who shall go to heaven hereafter, and, as an earnest of that, shall have communion

with God in holy ordinances now? A soul that knows and considers its own nature, origin, and immortality, when it has viewed the earth and the fulness thereof, will sit down unsatisfied; there is not found among all the creatures a help meet for man, and therefore it will think of ascending towards God, towards heaven, will ask, "What shall I do to rise to that high place, that hill, where the Lord dwells and manifests himself, that I may be acquainted with him, and to abide in that happy holy place where he meets his people and makes them holy and happy? What shall I do that I may be of those whom God owns for his peculiar people and who are his in another manner than the earth is his and its fulness?" This question is much the same with that, xv. 1. The hill of Zion on which the temple was built typified the church, both visible and invisible. When the people attended the ark to its holy place David puts them in mind that these were but patterns of heavenly things, and therefore that by them they should be led to consider the heavenly things themselves.

II. An answer to this enquiry, in which we have,

1. The properties of God's peculiar people, who shall have communion with him in grace and glory. (1.) They are such as keep themselves from all the gross acts of sin. They have *clean hands*; not spotted with the pollutions of the world and the flesh. None that were ceremonially unclean might enter into the mountain of the temple, which signified that cleanness of conversation which is required in all those that have fellowship with God. The hands lifted up in prayer must be pure hands, no blot of unjust gain cleaving to them, nor any thing else that defiles the man and is offensive to the holy God. (2.) They are such as make conscience of being really (that is, of being inwardly) as good as they seem to be outwardly. They have *pure hearts*. We make nothing of our religion if we do not make heart-work of it. It is not enough that our hands be clean before men, but we must also wash our hearts from wickedness, and not allow ourselves in any secret heart-impurities, which are open before the eye of God. Yet in vain do those pretend to have pure and good hearts whose hands are defiled with the acts of sin. That is a pure heart which is sincere and without guile in covenanting with God, which is carefully guarded, that the wicked one, the unclean spirit, touch it not, which is purified by faith, and conformed to the image and will of God; see Matt. v. 8. (3.) They are such as do not set their affections upon the things of this world, do not *lift up their souls unto vanity*, whose hearts are not carried out inordinately towards the wealth of the world, the praise of men, or the delights of sense, who do not choose these things for their portion, nor reach forth after them, because they believe them to be vanity, uncertain and un-

satisfying. (4.) They are such as deal honestly both with God and man. In their covenant with God, and their contracts with men, they have not sworn deceitfully, nor broken their promises, violated their engagements, nor taken any false oath. Those that have no regard to the obligations of truth or the honour of God's name are unfit for a place in God's holy hill. (5.) They are a praying people (v. 6): *This is the generation of those that seek him.* In every age there is a remnant of such as these, men of this character, who are *accounted to the Lord for a generation*, xxii. 30. And they are such as seek God, *that seek thy face, O Jacob!* [1.] They join themselves to God, to seek him, not only in earnest prayer, but in serious endeavours to obtain his favour and keep themselves in his love. Having made it the summit of their happiness, they make it the summit of their ambition to be accepted of him, and therefore take care and pains to approve themselves to him. It is to the hill of the Lord that we must ascend, and, the way being up-hill, we have need to put forth ourselves to the utmost, as those that seek diligently. [2.] They join themselves to the people of God, to seek God with them. Being brought into communion with God, they come into the communion of saints; conforming to the patterns of the saints that have gone before (so some understand this), they seek God's face, as Jacob (so some), who was *therefore surnamed Israel*, because he wrestled with God and prevailed, sought him and found him; and, associating with the saints of their own day, they shall court the favour of God's church (Rev. iii. 9), shall be glad of an acquaintance with God's people (Zech. viii. 23), shall incorporate themselves with them, and, when they *subscribe with their hands to the Lord*, shall *call themselves by the name of Jacob*, Isa. xlv. 5. As soon as ever Paul was converted he *joined himself to the disciples*, Acts ix. 26. They shall seek God's face in Jacob (so some), that is, in the assemblies of his people. *Thy face, O God of Jacob!* so our margin supplies it, and makes it easy. As all believers are the spiritual seed of Abraham, so all that strive in prayer are the spiritual seed of Jacob, to whom God never said, *Seek you me in vain.*

2. The privileges of God's peculiar people, v. 5. They shall be made truly and for ever happy. (1.) They shall be blessed: they shall receive the blessing from the Lord, all the fruits and gifts of God's favour, according to his promise; and those whom God blesses are blessed indeed, for it is his prerogative to command the blessing. (2.) They shall be justified and sanctified. These are the spiritual blessings in heavenly things which they shall receive, even righteousness, the very thing they hunger and thirst after, Matt. v. 6. Righteousness is blessedness, and it is from God only that we must expect it, for we have no righteousness of our own. They shall re-

ceive the reward of their righteousness (so some), the *crown of righteousness which the righteous Judge shall give*, 2 Tim. iv. 8. (3.) They shall be saved; for God himself will be the God of their salvation. Note, Where God gives righteousness he certainly designs salvation. Those that are made meet for heaven shall be brought safely to heaven, and then they will find what they have been seeking, to their endless satisfaction.

7 Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. 8 Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. 9 Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. 10 Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah.

What is spoken once is spoken a second time in these verses; such repetitions are usual in songs, and have much beauty in them. Here is, 1. Entrance once and again demanded for the King of glory; the doors and gates are to be thrown open, thrown wide open, to give him admission, for behold he stands at the door and knocks, ready to come in. 2. Enquiry once and again made concerning this mighty prince, in whose name entrance is demanded: *Who is this King of glory?* As, when any knock at our door, it is common to ask, *Who is there?* 3. Satisfaction once and again given concerning the royal person that makes the demand: *It is the Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle, the Lord of hosts*, v. 3, 10. Now,

1. This splendid entry here described it is probable refers to the solemn bringing in of the ark into the tent David pitched for it or the temple Solomon built for it; for, when David prepared materials for the building of it, it was proper for him to prepare a psalm for the dedication of it. The porters are called upon to open the doors, and they are called *everlasting doors*, because much more durable than the door of the tabernacle, which was but a curtain. They are taught to ask, *Who is this King of glory?* And those that bore the ark are taught to answer in the language before us, and very fitly, because the ark was a symbol or token of God's presence, Josh. iii. 11. Or it may be taken as a poetical figure designed to represent the subject more affectingly. God, in his word and ordinances, is thus to be welcomed by us, 1. With great readiness; the doors and gates must be thrown open to him. Let the word of the Lord come into the innermost and uppermost place in our souls; and, if we had 600 necks, we should bow them all to the authority of it. 2. With all reverence, remembering how great a God he is with whom we have to do, in all our approaches to him.

II. Doubtless it points at Christ, of whom the ark, with the mercy-seat, was a type. 1. We may apply it to the ascension of Christ into heaven and the welcome given to him there. When he had finished his work on earth he ascended *in the clouds of heaven*, Dan. vii. 13, 14. The gates of heaven must then be opened to him, those doors that may be truly called *everlasting*, which had been shut against us, to keep the way of the tree of life, Gen. iii. 24. Our Redeemer found them shut, but, having by his blood made atonement for sin and gained a title to *enter into the holy place* (Heb. ix. 12), as one having authority, he demanded entrance, not for himself only, but for us; for, as the forerunner, he has for us entered and *opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers*. The keys not only of hell and death, but of heaven and life, must be put into his hand. His approach being very magnificent, the angels are brought in asking, *Who is this King of glory?* For angels keep the gates of the New Jerusalem, Rev. xxi. 12. When the first-begotten was brought into the upper world the angels were to worship him (Heb. i. 6); and, accordingly, they here ask with wonder, "Who is he?—this that cometh with dyed garments from Bozrah (Isa. lxiii. 1—3), for he appears in that world as a *Lamb that had been slain*. It is answered that he is *strong and mighty, mighty in battle*, to save his people and subdue his and their enemies. 2. We may apply it to Christ's entrance into the souls of men by his word and Spirit, that they may be his temples. Christ's presence in them is like that of the ark in the temple; it sanctifies them. *Behold, he stands at the door and knocks*, Rev. iii. 20. It is required that the gates and doors of the heart be opened to him, not only as admission is given to a guest, but as possession is delivered to the rightful owner, after the title has been contested. This is the gospel call and demand, that we let Jesus Christ, the King of glory, come into our souls, and welcome him with hosannas, *Blessed is he that cometh*. That we may do this aright we are concerned to ask, *Who is this King of glory?*—to acquaint ourselves with him, whom we are to believe in, and to love above all. And the answer is ready: He is *Jehovah*, and will be *Jehovah our righteousness*, an all-sufficient Saviour to us, if we give him entrance and entertainment. He is *strong and mighty*, and *the Lord of hosts*; and therefore it is at our peril if we deny him entrance: for he is able to avenge the affront; he can force his way, and can break those in pieces with his iron rod that will not submit to his golden sceptre.

In singing this let our hearts cheerfully answer to this call, as it is in the first words of the next psalm, *Unto thee, O Lord! do I lift up my soul*.

PSALM XXV.

This psalm is full of devout affection to God, the out-goings of holy desires towards his favour and grace and the lively actings of faith in his promises. We may learn out of it, I. What it is to pray, ver. 1, 15. II. What we must pray for, the pardon of sin (ver. 6, 7, 18), direction in the way of duty (ver. 4, 5), the favour

of God (ver. 16), deliverance out of our troubles (ver. 17, 18), preservation from our enemies (ver. 20, 21), and the salvation of the church of God, ver. 22. III. What we may plead in prayer, our confidence in God (ver. 2, 3, 5, 20, 21), our distress and the malice of our enemies (ver. 17, 19), our sincerity, ver. 21. IV. What precious promises we have to encourage us in prayer, of guidance and instruction (ver. 8, 9, 12), the benefit of the covenant (ver. 10), and the pleasure of communion with God, ver. 13, 14. It is easy to apply the several passages of this psalm to ourselves in the singing of it; for we have often troubles, and always sins, to complain of at the throne of grace.

A psalm of David.

UNTO thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul. 2 O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me. 3 Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause. 4 Show me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths. 5 Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day. 6 Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses; for they have been ever of old. 7 Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD.

Here we have David's professions of desire towards God and dependence on him. He often begins his psalms with such professions, not to move God, but to move himself, and to engage himself to answer those professions.

I. He professes his desire towards God: *Unto thee, O Lord! do I lift up my soul*, v. 1. In the foregoing psalm (v. 4) it was made the character of a good man that he *has not lifted up his soul to vanity*; and a call was given to the *King of glory to come in*, v. 1. To this character, to this call, David here answers, "Lord, I lift up my soul, not to vanity, but to thee." Note, In worshipping God we must lift up our souls to him. Prayer is the ascent of the soul to God; God must be eyed and the soul employed. *Sursum corda*—*Up with your hearts*, was anciently used as a call to devotion. With a holy contempt of the world and the things of it, by a fixed thought and active faith, we must set God before us, and let out our desires towards him as the foundation of our happiness.

II. He professes his dependence upon God and begs for the benefit and comfort of that dependence (v. 2): *O my God! I trust in thee*. His conscience witnessed for him that he had no confidence in himself nor in any creature, and that he had no diffidence of God or of his power or promise. He pleases himself with this profession of faith in God. Having put his trust in God, he is easy, is well satisfied, and quiet from the fear of evil; and he pleads it with God whose honour it is to help those that honour him by trusting in him. What men put a confidence in is either their joy or their shame, according as it

proves. Now David here, under the direction of faith, prays earnestly, 1. That shame might not be his lot: "*Let me not be ashamed of my confidence in thee; let me not be shaken from it by any prevailing fears, and let me not be, in the issue, disappointed of what I depend upon thee for; but, Lord, keep what I have committed unto thee.*" Note, If we make our confidence in God our stay, it shall not be our shame; and, if we triumph in him, our enemies shall not triumph over us, as they would if we should now sink under our fears, or should, in the issue, come short of our hopes. 2. That it might not be the lot of any that trusted in God. All the saints have obtained a like precious faith; and therefore, doubtless, it will be alike successful in the issue. Thus the communion of saints is kept up, even by their praying one for another. True saints will make supplication for all saints. It is certain that none who, by a believing attendance, wait on God, and, by a believing hope, wait for him, shall be made ashamed of it. 3. That it might be the lot of the transgressors: "*Let those be ashamed that transgress without cause, or vainly, as the word is.*" (1.) Upon no provocation. They revolt from God and their duty, from David and his government (so some), without any occasion given them, not being able to pretend any iniquity they have found in God, or that in any thing he has wearied them. The weaker the temptation is by which men are drawn to sin the stronger the corruption is by which they are driven to it. Those are the worst transgressors that sin for sinning-sake. (2.) To no purpose. They know their attempts against God are fruitless; they imagine a vain thing, and therefore they will soon be ashamed of it.

III. He begs direction from God in the way of his duty, v. 4, 5. Once and again he here prays to God to teach him. He was a knowing man himself, but the most intelligent, the most observant, both need and desire to be taught of God; from him we must be ever learning. Observe,

1. What he desired to learn: "*Teach me, not fine words or fine notions, but thy ways, thy paths, thy truth,* the ways in which thou walkest towards me, which are *all mercy and truth* (v. 10), and the ways in which thou wouldst have me to walk towards thee." Those are best taught who understand their duty, and know the good things they should do, Eccl. ii. 3. God's *paths* and his *truth* are the same; divine laws are all founded upon divine truths. The way of God's precepts is the way of truth, ex. 30. Christ is both the way and the truth, and therefore we must learn Christ.

2. What he desired of God, in order to this. (1.) That he would enlighten his understanding concerning his duty: "*Show me thy way, and so teach me.*" In doubtful cases we should pray earnestly that God would make it plain to us what he would have us to do. (2.) That he would incline his will to it, and strengthen him in it: "*Lead me, and so teach*

me." Not only as we lead one that is dim-sighted, to keep him from missing his way, but as we lead one that is sick, and feeble, and faint, to help him forward in the way and to keep him from fainting and falling. We go no further in the way to heaven than God is pleased to lead us and to hold us up.

3. What he pleads, (1.) His great expectation from God: "*Thou art the God of my salvation.*" Note, Those that choose the salvation of God as their end, and make him the God of their salvation, may come boldly to him for direction in the way that leads to that end. If God save us, he will teach us and lead us. He that gives salvation will give instruction. (2.) His constant attendance on God: "*On thee do I wait all the day.*" Whence should a servant expect direction what to do but from his own master, on whom he waits all the day? If we sincerely desire to know our duty, with a resolution to do it, we need not question but that God will direct us in it.

IV. He appeals to God's infinite mercy, and casts himself upon that, not pretending to any merit of his own (v. 6): "*Remember, O Lord! thy tender mercies, and, for the sake of those mercies, lead me, and teach me; for they have been ever of old.*" 1. "Thou always wast a merciful God; it is thy name, it is thy nature and property, to show mercy." 2. "Thy counsels and designs of mercy were from everlasting; the vessels of mercy were, before all worlds, ordained to glory." 3. "The instances of thy mercy to the church in general, and to me in particular, were early and ancient, and constant hitherto; they began of old, and never ceased. Thou hast taught me from my youth up, teach me now."

V. He is in a special manner earnest for the pardon of his sins (v. 7): "*O remember not the sins of my youth.* Lord, remember thy mercies (v. 6), which speak for me, and not my sins, which speak against me." Here is, 1. An implicit confession of sin; he specifies particularly the sins of his youth. Note, Our youthful faults and follies should be matter of our repentance and humiliation long after, because time does not wear out the guilt of sin. Old people should mourn for the sinful mirth and be in pain for the sinful pleasures of their youth. He aggravates his sins, calling them his *transgressions*; and the more holy, just, and good the law is, which sin is the transgression of, the more exceedingly sinful it ought to appear to us. 2. An express petition for mercy, (1.) That he might be acquitted from guilt: "*Remember not the sins of my youth;* that is, remember them not against me, lay them not to my charge, enter not into judgment with me for them." When God pardons sin he is said to *remember it no more*, which denotes a plenary remission; he forgives and forgets. (2.) That he might be accepted in God's sight: "*Remember thou me; think on me for good, and come in seasonably for my succour.*" We need desire no more to make us happy than for God to

remember us with favour. His plea is, "according to thy mercy, and for thy goodness-sake." Note, It is God's goodness and not ours, his mercy and not our own merit, that must be our plea for the pardon of sin and all the good we stand in need of. This plea we must always rely upon, as those that are sensible of our poverty and unworthiness and as those that are satisfied of the riches of God's mercy and grace.

8 Good and upright is the LORD : therefore will he teach sinners in the way. 9 The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way. 10 All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies. 11 For thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great. 12 What man is he that feareth the LORD? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose. 13 His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth. 14 The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant.

God's promises are here mixed with David's prayers. Many petitions there were in the former part of the psalm, and many we shall find in the latter; and here, in the middle of the psalm, he meditates upon the promises, and by a lively faith sucks and is satisfied from these breasts of consolation; for the promises of God are not only the best foundation of prayer, telling us what to pray for and encouraging our faith and hope in prayer, but they are a present answer to prayer. Let the prayer be made according to the promise, and then the promise may be read as a return to the prayer; and we are to believe the prayer is heard because the promise will be performed. But, in the midst of the promises, we find one petition which seems to come in somewhat abruptly, and should have followed upon v. 7. It is that (v. 11), *Pardon my iniquity*. But prayers for the pardon of sin are never impertinent; we mingle sin with all our actions, and therefore should mingle such prayers with all our devotions. He enforces this petition with a double plea. The former is very natural: "*For thy name's sake pardon my iniquity*, because thou hast proclaimed thy name gracious and merciful, pardoning iniquity, for thy glory-sake, for thy promise-sake, for thy own sake," Isa. xliii. 25. But the latter is very surprising: "*Pardon my iniquity, for it is great*, and the greater it is the more will divine mercy be magnified in the forgiveness of it." It is the glory of a great God to forgive great sins, to forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin, Exod. xxxiv. 7. "It is great, and therefore I am undone,

for ever undone, if infinite mercy do not interpose for the pardon of it. It is great; I see it to be so." The more we see of the heinousness of our sins the better qualified we are to find mercy with God. When we confess sin we must aggravate it.

Let us now take a view of the great and precious promises which we have in these verses, and observe,

I. To whom these promises belong and who may expect the benefit of them. We are all sinners; and can we hope for any advantage by them? Yes (v. 8), He will teach sinners, though they be sinners; for Christ came into the world to save sinners, and, in order to that, to teach sinners, to call sinners to repentance. These promises are sure to those who though they have been sinners, have gone astray, yet now keep God's word, 1. To such as keep his covenant and his testimonies (v. 10), such as take his precepts for their rule and his promises for their portion, such as, having taken God to be to them a God, live upon that, and, having given up themselves to be to him a people, live up to that. Though, through the infirmity of the flesh, they sometimes break the command, yet by a sincere repentance when at any time they do amiss, and a constant adherence by faith to God as their God, they keep the covenant and do not break that. 2. To such as fear him (v. 12 and again v. 14), such as stand in awe of his majesty and worship him with reverence, submit to his authority and obey him with cheerfulness, dread his wrath and are afraid of offending him.

II. Upon what these promises are grounded, and what encouragement we have to build upon them. Here are two things which ratify and confirm all the promises:—1. The perfections of God's nature. We value the promise by the character of him that makes it. We may therefore depend upon God's promises; for *good and upright is the Lord*, and therefore he will be as good as his word. He is so kind that he cannot deceive us, so true that he cannot break his promise. *Faithful is he who hath promised*, who also will do it. He was good in making the promise, and therefore will be upright in performing it. 2. The agreeableness of all he says and does with the perfections of his nature (v. 10): *All the paths of the Lord* (that is, all his promises and all his providences) *are mercy and truth*; they are, like himself, good and upright. All God's dealings with his people are according to the mercy of his purposes and the truth of his promises; all he does comes from love, covenant-love; and they may see in it his mercy displayed and his word fulfilled. What a rich satisfaction may this be to good people, that, whatever afflictions they are exercised with, *All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth*, and so it will appear when they come to their journey's end.

III. What these promises are.

1. That God will instruct and direct them

in the way of their duty. This is most insisted upon, because it is an answer to David's prayers (v. 4, 5), *Show me thy ways and lead me*. We should fix our thoughts, and act our faith, most on those promises which suit our present case. (1.) *He will teach sinners in the way*, because they are sinners, and therefore need teaching. When they see themselves sinners, and desire teaching, then he will teach them the way of reconciliation to God, the way to a well-grounded peace of conscience, and the way to eternal life. He does, by his gospel, make this way known to all, and, by his Spirit, open the understanding and guide penitent sinners that enquire after it. The devil leads men blindfold to hell, but God enlightens men's eyes, sets things before them in a true light, and so leads them to heaven. (2.) *The meek will he guide*, the meek will he teach, that is, those that are humble and low in their own eyes, that are distrustful of themselves, desirous to be taught, and honestly resolved to follow the divine guidance. *Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears*. These he will guide in judgment, that is, by the rule of the written word; he will guide them in that which is practical, which relates to sin and duty, so that they may keep conscience void of offence; and he will do it judiciously (so some), that is, he will suit his conduct to their case; he will teach sinners with wisdom, tenderness, and compassion, and as they are able to bear. He will teach them his way. All good people make God's way their way, and desire to be taught that; and those that do so shall be taught and led in that way. (3.) *Him that feareth the Lord he will teach in the way that he shall choose*, either in the way that God shall choose or that the good man shall choose. It comes all to one, for he that fears the Lord chooses the things that please him. If we choose the right way, he that directed our choice will direct our steps, and will lead us in it. If we choose wisely, God will give us grace to walk wisely.

2. That God will make them easy (v. 13): *His soul shall dwell at ease, shall lodge in goodness*, marg. Those that devote themselves to the fear of God, and give up themselves to be taught of God, will be easy, if it be not their own fault. The soul that is sanctified by the grace of God, and, much more, that is comforted by the peace of God, dwells at ease. Even when the body is sick and lies in pain, yet the soul may dwell at ease in God, may return to him, and repose in him as its rest. Many things occur to make us uneasy, but there is enough in the covenant of grace to counterbalance them all and to make us easy.

3. That he will give to them and theirs as much of this world as is good for them: *His seed shall inherit the earth*. Next to our care concerning our souls is our care concerning our seed, and God has a blessing in store for the generation of the upright. Those that fear God shall inherit the earth, shall have a competency in it and the comfort of it, and

their children shall fare the better for their prayers when they are gone.

4. That God will admit them into the secret of communion with himself (v. 14): *The secret of the Lord is with those that fear him*. They understand his word; for, *if any man do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God*. John vii. 17. Those that receive the truth in the love of it, and experience the power of it, best understand the mystery of it. They know the meaning of his providence, and what God is doing with them, better than others. *Shall I hide from Abraham the things that I do?* Gen. xviii. 17. He calls them not servants, but friends, as he called Abraham. They know by experience the blessings of the covenant and the pleasure of that fellowship which gracious souls have with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. This honour have all his saints.

15 Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net. 16 Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted. 17 The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring thou me out of my distresses. 18 Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins. 19 Consider mine enemies; for they are many; and they hate me with cruel hatred. 20 O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee. 21 Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee. 22 Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.

David, encouraged by the promises he had been meditating upon, here renews his addresses to God, and concludes the psalm, as he began, with professions of dependence upon God and desire towards him.

I. He lays open before God the calamitous condition he was in. His feet were in the net, held fast and entangled, so that he could not extricate himself out of his difficulties, v. 15. He was desolate and afflicted, v. 16. It is common for those that are afflicted to be desolate; their friends desert them then, and they are themselves disposed to sit alone and keep silence, Lam. iii. 28. David calls himself desolate and solitary because he depended not upon his servants and soldiers, but relied as entirely upon God as if he had no prospect at all of help and succour from any creature. Being in distress, in many distresses, *the troubles of his heart were enlarged* (v. 17), he grew more and more melancholy and troubled in mind. Sense of sin afflicted him more than any thing else: this it was that broke and wounded his spirit, and made his outward troubles lie heavily upon him. He was in affliction and pain, v. 18. His

enemies that persecuted him were many and malicious (they hated him), and very barbarous; it was *with a cruel hatred* that they hated him, v. 19. Such were Christ's enemies and the persecutors of his church.

II. He expresses the dependence he had upon God in these distresses (v. 15): *My eyes are ever towards the Lord*. Idolaters were for gods that they could see with their bodily eyes, and they had their eyes ever towards their idols, Isa. xvii. 7, 8. But it is an eye of faith that we must have towards God, who is a Spirit, Zech. ix. 1. Our meditation of him must be sweet, and we must always set him before us: in all our ways we must acknowledge him and do all to his glory. Thus we must live a life of communion with God, not only in ordinances, but in providences, not only in the acts of devotion, but in the whole course of our conversation. David had the comfort of this in his affliction; for, because his eyes were ever towards the Lord, he doubted not but he would pluck his feet out of the net, that he would deliver him from the corruptions of his own heart (so some), from the designs of his enemies against him, so others. Those that have their eye ever towards God shall not have their feet long in the net. He repeats his profession of dependence upon God (v. 20)—*Let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in thee*; and of expectation from him—I *wait on thee*, v. 21. It is good thus to hope and quietly to wait for the salvation of the Lord.

III. He prays earnestly to God for relief and succour,

1. For himself.

(1.) See how he begs, [1.] For the remission of sin (v. 18): *Forgive all my sins*. Those were his heaviest burdens, and which brought upon him all other burdens. He had begged (v. 7) for the pardon of the sins of his youth, and (v. 11) for the pardon of some one particular iniquity that was remarkably great, which, some think, was his sin in the matter of Uriah. But here he prays, Lord, *forgive all, take away all iniquity*. It is observable that, as to his affliction, he asks for no more than God's regard to it: "*Look upon my affliction and my pain*, and do with it as thou pleasest." But, as to his sin, he asks for no less than a full pardon: *Forgive all my sins*. When at any time we are in trouble we should be more concerned about our sins, to get them pardoned, than about our afflictions, to get them removed. Yet he prays, [2.] For the redress of his grievances. His mind was troubled for God's withdrawals from him and under the sense he had of his displeasure against him for his sin; and therefore he prays (v. 16), *Turn thou unto me*. And, if God turn to us, no matter who turns from us. His condition was troubled, and, in reference to that, he prays, "*O bring thou me out of my distresses*. I see no way of deliverance open; but thou canst either find one or make one." His enemies were spite-

ful; and, in reference to that, he prays, "*O keep my soul from falling into their hands, or else deliver me out of their hands*."

(2.) Four things he mentions by way of plea to enforce these petitions, and refers himself and them to God's consideration:— [1.] He pleads God's mercy: *Have mercy upon me*. Men of the greatest merits would be undone if they had not to do with a God of infinite mercies. [2.] He pleads his own misery; the distress he was in, his affliction and pain, especially the troubles of his heart, all which made him the proper object of divine mercy. [3.] He pleads the iniquity of his enemies: "*Lord, consider them, how cruel they are, and deliver me out of their hands*." [4.] He pleads his own integrity, v. 21. Though he had owned himself guilty before God, and had confessed his sins against him, yet, as to his enemies, he had the testimony of his conscience that he had done them no wrong, which was his comfort when they hated him with cruel hatred; and he prays that this might *preserve him*. This intimates that he did not expect to be safe any longer than he continued in his *integrity and uprightness*, and that, while he did continue in it, he did not doubt of being safe. Sincerity will be our best security in the worst of times. Integrity and uprightness will be a man's preservation more than the wealth and honour of the world can be. These will preserve us to the heavenly kingdom. We should therefore pray to God to preserve us in our integrity and then be assured that that will preserve us.

2. For the church of God (v. 22): *Redeem Israel, O God! out of all his troubles*. David was now in trouble himself, but he thinks it not strange, since trouble is the lot of all God's Israel. Why should any one member fare better than the whole body? David's troubles were enlarged, and very earnest he was with God to deliver him, yet he forgets not the distresses of God's church; for, when we have ever so much business of our own at the throne of grace, we must still remember to pray for the public. Good men have little comfort in their own safety while the church is in distress and danger. This prayer is a prophecy that God would, at length, give David rest, and therewith give Israel rest from all their enemies round about. It is a prophecy of the sending of the Messiah in due time to *redeem Israel from his iniquities* (cxxx. 8) and so to redeem them from their troubles. It refers also to the happiness of the future state. In heaven, and in heaven only, will God's Israel be perfectly redeemed from all troubles.

PSALM XXVI.

Holy David is in this psalm putting himself upon a solemn trial not by God and his country, but by God and his own conscience to both which he appeals touching his integrity (ver. 1, 2), for the proof of which he alleges, I. His constant regard to God as his grace, ver. 3. II. His rooted antipathy to sin and sinner ver. 4, 5. III. His sincere affection to the ordinances of God and his care about them, ver. 6–8. Having thus proved his integrity, 1. He deprecates the doom of the wicked, ver. 9. 2. He casts himself upon the mercy and grace of God, with

a resolution to hold fast his integrity, and his hope in God, ver. 11, 12. In singing this psalm we must teach and admonish ourselves, and one another, what we must be and do that we may have the favour of God, and comfort in our own consciences, and comfort ourselves with it, as David does, if we can say that in any measure we have, through grace, answered to these characters. The learned Amyraldus, in his argument of this psalm, suggests that David is here, by the spirit of prophecy, carried out to speak of himself as a type of Christ, of whom what he here says of his spotless innocence, was fully and eminently true, and of him only, and to him we may apply it in singing this psalm. "We are complete in him."

A psalm of David.

JUDGE me, O LORD; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD; therefore I shall not slide. 2 Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart. 3 For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth. 4 I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers. 5 I have hated the congregation of evil doers; and will not sit with the wicked.

It is probable that David penned this psalm when he was persecuted by Saul and his party, who, to give some colour to their unjust rage, represented him as a very bad man, and falsely accused him of many high crimes and misdemeanours, dressed him up in the skins of wild beasts that they might bait him. Innocency itself is no fence to the name, though it is to the bosom, against the darts of calumny. Herein he was a type of Christ, who was made a reproach of men, and foretold to his followers that they also must have all manner of evil said against them falsely. Now see what David does in this case.

I. He appeals to God's righteous sentence (v. 1): "*Judge me, O God! be thou Judge between me and my accusers, between the persecutor and the poor prisoner; bring me off with honour, and put those to shame that falsely accuse me.*" Saul, who was himself supreme judge in Israel, was his adversary, so that in a controversy with him he could appeal to no other than to God himself. As to his offences against God, he prays, *Lord, enter not into judgment with me* (cxliii. 2), *remember not my transgressions* (xxv. 7), in which he appeals to God's mercy; but, as to his offences against Saul, he appeals to God's justice and begs of him to judge for him, as cxliii. 1. Or thus: he cannot justify himself against the charge of sin; he owns his iniquity is great and he is undone if God, in his infinite mercy, do not forgive him; but he can justify himself against the charge of hypocrisy, and has reason to hope that, according to the tenour of the covenant of grace, he is one of those that may expect to find favour with God. Thus holy Job often owns he has sinned and yet he holds fast his integrity. Note, It is a comfort to those who are falsely accused that there is a righteous God, who, sooner or later, will clear up their innocency, and a comfort

to all who are sincere in religion that God himself is a witness to their sincerity.

II. He submits to his unerring search (v. 2): *Examine me, O Lord! and prove me, as gold is proved, whether it be standard.* God knows every man's true character, for he knows the thoughts and intents of the heart, and sees through every disguise. David prays, *Lord, examine me*, which intimates that he was well pleased that God did know him and truly desirous that he would discover him to himself and discover him to all the world. So sincere was he in his devotion to his God and his loyalty to his prince (in both which he was suspected to be a pretender) that he wished he had a window in his bosom, that whoever would might look into his heart.

III. He solemnly protests his sincerity (v. 1): "*I have walked in my integrity*; my conversation has agreed with my profession, and one part of it has been of a piece with another." It is vain to boast of our integrity unless we can make it out that by the grace of God we have walked in our integrity, and that our conversation in the world has been in simplicity and godly sincerity. He produces here several proofs of his integrity, which encouraged him to trust in the Lord as his righteous Judge, who would patronise and plead his righteous cause, with an assurance that he should come off with reputation (*therefore I shall not slide*), and that those should not prevail who consulted to cast him down from his excellency, to shake his faith, blemish his name, and prevent his coming to the crown, lxii. 4. Those that are sincere in religion may trust in God that they shall not slide, that is, that they shall not apostatize from their religion.

1. He had a constant regard to God and to his grace, v. 3. (1.) He aimed at God's favour as his end and chief good: *Thy loving-kindness is before my eyes.* This will be a good evidence of our sincerity, if what we do in religion we do from a principle of love to God, and good thoughts of him as the best of beings and the best of friends and benefactors, and from a grateful sense of God's goodness to us in particular, which we have had the experience of all our days. If we set God's loving-kindness before us as our pattern, to which we endeavour to conform ourselves, being followers of him that is good in his goodness (1 Pet. iii. 13),—if we set it before us as our great engagement and encouragement to our duty, and are afraid of doing any thing to forfeit God's favour and in care by all means to keep ourselves in his love,—this will not only be a good evidence of our integrity, but will have a great influence upon our perseverance in it. (2.) He governed himself by the word of God as his rule: "*I have walked in thy truth*, that is, according to thy law, for thy law is truth." Note, Those only may expect the benefit of God's loving-kindness that live up to his truths, and his laws that are grounded upon

them. Some understand it of his conforming himself to God's example in truth and faithfulness, as well as in goodness and loving-kindness. Those certainly walk well that are followers of God as dear children.

2. He had no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, nor with the workers of those works, v. 4, 5. By this it appeared he was truly loyal to his prince that he never associated with those that were disaffected to his government, with any of those *sons of Belial that despised him*, 1 Sam. x. 27. He was in none of their cabals, nor joined with them in any of their intrigues; he cursed not the king, no, not in his heart. And this also was an evidence of his faithfulness to his God, that he never associated with those who he had any reason to think were disaffected to religion, or were open enemies, or false friends, to its interests. Note, Great care to avoid bad company is both a good evidence of our integrity and a good means to preserve us in it. Now observe here, (1.) That this part of his protestation looks both backward upon the care he had hitherto taken in this matter, and forward upon the care he would still take: "*I have not sat with them, and I will not go in with them.*" Note, Our good practices hitherto are then evidences of our integrity when they are accompanied with resolutions, in God's strength, to persevere in them to the end, and not to draw back; and our good resolutions for the future we may then take the comfort of when they are the continuation of our good practices hitherto. (2.) That David shunned the company, not only of wicked persons, but of vain persons, that were wholly addicted to mirth and gaiety and had nothing solid or serious in them. The company of such may perhaps be the more pernicious of the two to a good man because he will not be so ready to stand upon his guard against the contagion of vanity as against that of downright wickedness. (3.) That the company of dissemblers is as dangerous company as any, and as much to be shunned, in prudence as well as piety. Evil-doers pretend friendship to those whom they would decoy into their snares, but they dissemble. *When they speak fair, believe them not.* (4.) Though sometimes he could not avoid being in the company of bad people, yet he would not *go in with them*, he would not choose such for his companions nor seek an opportunity of acquaintance and converse with them. He might fall in with them, but he would not, by appointment and assignation, go in with them. Or, if he happened to be with them, he would not sit with them; he would not continue with them; he would not be in their company no longer than his business made it necessary: he would not concur with them, not say as they said, nor do as they did, as those that *sit in the seat of the scornful*, l. 1. He would not sit in counsel with them upon ways and means to do mischief, nor sit in judgment with them to con-

demn the generation of the righteous (5). We must not only in our practice avoid bad company, but in our principles and affections we must have an aversion to it. David here says, not only "*I have shunned it,*" but, "*I have hated it,*" cxxxix. 21. (6.) The congregation of evil-doers, the club, the confederacy of them, is in a special manner hateful to good people. I have hated *ecclesiam malignantium—the church of the malignant*; so the vulgar Latin reads it. As good men, in concert, make one another better, and are enabled to do so much the more good, so bad men, in combination, make one another worse, and do so much the more mischief. In all this David was a type of Christ, who, though he received sinners and ate with them, to instruct them and do them good, yet, otherwise, was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, particularly from the Pharisees, those dissemblers. He was also an example to Christians, when they join themselves to Christ, to *save themselves from this untoward generation*, Acts ii. 40.

6 I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O LORD: 7 That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works. 8 LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth. 9 Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men: 10 In whose hands is mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes. 11 But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me. 12 My foot standeth in an even place: in the congregations will I bless the LORD.

In these verses,

1. David mentions, as a further evidence of his integrity, the sincere affection he had to the ordinances of God, the constant care he took about them, and the pleasure he took in them. Hypocrites and dissemblers may indeed be found attending on God's ordinances, as the proud Pharisee went up to the temple to pray with the penitent publican; but it is a good sign of sincerity if we attend upon them as David here tells us he did, v. 6—8.

1. He was very careful and conscientious in his preparation for holy ordinances: *I will wash my hands in innocency.* He not only refrained from the society of sinners, but kept himself clean from the pollutions of sin, and this with an eye to the place he had among those that compassed God's altar. "*I will wash, and so will I compass the altar, knowing that otherwise I shall not be welcome.*" This is like that (1 Cor. xi. 28), *Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat, so pre-*

pared. This denotes, (1.) Habitual preparation: "*I will wash my hands in innocency*; I will carefully watch against all sin, and keep my conscience pure from those dead works which defile it and forbid my drawing nigh to God." See xxiv. 3, 4. (2.) Actual preparation. It alludes to the ceremony of the priests' washing when they went in to minister, Exod. xxx. 20, 21. Though David was no priest, yet, as every worshipper ought, he would look to the substance of that which the priests were enjoined the shadow of. In our preparations for solemn ordinances we must not only be able to clear ourselves from the charge of reigning infidelity or hypocrisy, and to protest our innocency of that (which was signified by *washing the hands*, Deut. xxi. 6), but we must take pains to cleanse ourselves from the spots of remaining iniquity by renewing our repentance, and making a fresh application of the blood of Christ to our consciences for the purifying and pacifying of them. He that is washed (that is, is in a justified state) has need thus to *wash his feet* (John xiii. 10), to wash his hands, to wash them in innocency; he that is penitent is *pene innocens*—almost innocent; and he that is pardoned is so far innocent that his sins shall not be mentioned against him.

2. He was very diligent and serious in his attendance upon them: *I will compass thy altar*, alluding to the custom of the priests, who, while the sacrifice was in offering, walked round the altar, and probably the offerers likewise did so at some distance, denoting a diligent regard to what was done and a dutiful attendance in the service. "*I will compass it*; I will be among the crowds that do compass it, among the thickest of them." David, a man of honour, a man of business, a man of war, thought it not below him to attend with the multitude on God's altars and could find time for that attendance. Note, (1.) All God's people will be sure to wait on God's altar, in obedience to his commands and in pursuance of his favour. Christ is our altar, not as the altar in the Jewish church, which was fed by them, but an altar that we eat of and *live upon*, Heb. xiii. 10. (2.) It is a pleasant sight to see God's altar compassed and to see ourselves among those that compass it.

3. In all his attendance on God's ordinances he aimed at the glory of God and was much in the thankful praise and adoration of him. He had an eye to the place of worship as the place where God's honour dwelt (v. 8), and therefore made it his business there to honour God and to give him the glory due to his name, to publish with the voice of thanksgiving all God's wondrous works. God's gracious works, which call for our thanksgiving, are all wondrous works, which call for our admiration. We ought to publish them, and tell of them, for his glory, and the excitement of others to praise him; and we ought to do it with the voice of thanksgiving,

as those that are sensible of our obligations, by all ways possible, to acknowledge with gratitude the favours we have received from God.

4. He did this with delight and from a principle of true affection to God and his institutions. Touching this he appeals to God: "*Lord, thou knowest how dearly I have loved the habitation of thy house* (v. 8), the tabernacle where thou art pleased to manifest thy residence among thy people and receive their homage, *the place where thy honour dwells*." David was sometimes forced by persecution into the countries of idolaters and was hindered from attending God's altars, which perhaps his persecutors, that laid him under that restraint, did themselves upbraid him with as his crime. See 1 Sam. xx. 27. "But, Lord," says he, "though I cannot come to the habitation of thy house, I love it; my heart is there, and it is my greatest trouble that I am not there." Note, All that truly love God truly love the ordinances of God, and therefore love them because in them he manifests his honour and they have an opportunity of honouring him. Our Lord Jesus loved his Father's honour, and made it his business to glorify him; he loved the habitation of his house, his church among men, loved it and gave himself for it, that he might build and consecrate it. Those who love communion with God, and delight in approaching to him, find it to be a constant pleasure, a comfortable evidence of their integrity, and a comfortable earnest of their endless felicity.

II. David, having given proofs of his integrity, earnestly prays, with a humble confidence towards God (such as those have whose hearts condemn them not), that he might not fall under the doom of the wicked (v. 9, 10). *Gather not my soul with sinners*. Here, 1. David describes these sinners, whom he looked upon to be in a miserable condition, so miserable that he could not wish the worst enemy he had in the world to be in a worse. "*They are bloody men, that thirst after blood and lie under a great deal of the guilt of blood*. They do mischief, and mischief is always in their hands. Though they get by their wickedness (for *their right hand is full of bribes* which they have taken to pervert justice), yet that will make their case never the better; for *what is a man profited if he gain the world and lose his soul*?" 2. He dreads having his lot with them. He never loved them, nor associated with them, in this world, and therefore could in faith pray that he might not have his lot with them in the other world. Our souls must shortly be gathered, to return to God that gave them and will call for them again. See Job xxxiv. 14. It concerns us to consider whether our souls will then be gathered with saints or with sinners, whether bound in the bundle of life with the Lord for ever, as the souls of the faithful are (1 Sam. xxv. 29), or bound in the bundle of tares for the fire, Matt. xiii. 30. Death gathers

us to our people, to those that are our people while we live, whom we choose to associate with, and with whom we cast in our lot, to those death will gather us, and with them we must take our lot, to eternity. Balaam desired to die the death of the righteous; David dreaded dying the death of the wicked; so that both sides were of that mind, which if we be of, and will live up to it, we are happy for ever. Those that will not be companions with sinners in their mirth, nor eat of their dainties, may in faith pray not to be companions with them in their misery, nor to drink of their cup, their cup of trembling.

III. David, with a holy humble confidence, commits himself to the grace of God, v. 11, 12. 1. He promises that by the grace of God he would persevere in his duty: "*As for me, whatever others do, I will walk in my integrity.*" Note, When the testimony of our consciences for us that we have walked in our integrity is comfortable to us this should confirm our resolutions to continue therein. 2. He prays for the divine grace both to enable him to do so and to give him the comfort of it: "*Redeem me out of the hands of my enemies, and be merciful to me, living and dying.*" Be we ever so confident of our integrity, yet still we must rely upon God's mercy and the great redemption Christ has wrought out, and pray for the benefit of them. 3. He pleases himself with his steadiness: "*My foot stands in an even place, where I shall not stumble and whence I shall not fall.*" This he speaks as one that found his resolutions fixed for God and godliness, not to be shaken by the temptations of the world, and his comforts firm in God and his grace, not to be disturbed by the crosses and troubles of the world. 4. He promises himself that he should yet have occasion to praise the Lord, that he should be furnished with matter for praise, that he should have a heart for praises, and that, though he was now perhaps banished from public ordinances, yet he should again have an opportunity of blessing God in the congregation of his people. Those that hate the congregation of evil-doers shall be joined to the congregation of the righteous and join with them in praising God; and it is pleasant doing that in good company; the more the better: it is the more like heaven.

PSALM XXVII.

Some think David penned this psalm before his coming to the throne, when he was in the midst of his troubles, and perhaps upon occasion of the death of his parents; but the Jews think he penned it when he was old, upon occasion of the wonderful deliverance he had from the sword of the giant, when Abishai succoured him (2 Sam. xxi. 16, 17) and his people thereupon resolved he should never venture his life again in battle, lest he should quench the light of Israel. Perhaps it was not penned upon any particular occasion; but it is very expressive of the pious and devout affections with which gracious souls are carried out towards God at all times, especially in times of trouble. Here is, I. The courage and holy bravery of his faith, ver. 1—3. II. The complacency he took in communion with God and the benefit he experienced by it, ver. 4—6. III. His desire towards God, and his favour and grace, ver. 7—9, 11, 12. IV. His expectations from God, and the encouragement he gives to others to hope in him, ver. 10, 13, 14. And let our hearts be thus affected in singing this psalm.

A psalm of David.

THE LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? 2 When the wicked, *even* mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. 3 Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this *will* I be confident. 4 One *thing* have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple. 5 For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock. 6 And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.

We may observe here,

I. With what a lively faith David triumphs in God, glories in his holy name, and in the interest he had in him. 1. *The Lord is my light.* David's subjects called him *the light of Israel*, 2 Sam. xxi. 17. And he was indeed a burning and a shining light: but he owns that he shone, as the moon does, with a borrowed light; what light God darted upon him reflected upon them: *The Lord is my light.* God is a light to his people, to show them the way when they are in doubt, to comfort and rejoice their hearts when they are in sorrow. It is in his light that they now walk on in their way, and in his light they hope to see light for ever. 2. "*He is my salvation, in whom I am safe and by whom I shall be saved.*" 3. "*He is the strength of my life,* not only the protector of my exposed life, who keeps me from being slain, but the strength of my frail weak life, who keeps me from fainting, sinking, and dying away." God, who is a believer's light, is the strength of his life, not only by whom, but in whom, he lives and moves. In God therefore let us strengthen ourselves.

II. With what an undaunted courage he triumphs over his enemies; no fortitude like that of faith. If God be for him, who can be against him? *Whom shall I fear? Of whom shall I be afraid?* If Omnipotence be his guard, he has no cause to fear; if he knows it to be so, he has no disposition to fear. If God be his light, he fears no shades; if God be his salvation, he fears no colours. He triumphs over his enemies that were al-

ready routed, v. 2. His enemies came upon him, to eat up his flesh, aiming at no less and assured of that, but they fell; not, "He smote them and they fell," but, "*They stumbled and fell*;" they were so confounded and weakened that they could not go on with their enterprise. Thus those that came to take Christ with a word's speaking were made to stagger and fall to the ground, John xviii. 6. The ruin of some of the enemies of God's people is an earnest of the complete conquest of them all. And therefore, these having fallen, he is fearless of the rest: "Though they be numerous, a host of them,—though they be daring and their attempts threatening,—though they encamp against me, an army against one man,—though they wage war upon me, yet *my heart shall not fear*." Hosts cannot hurt us if the Lord of hosts protect us. Nay, in this assurance that God is for me *I will be confident*." Two things he will be confident of:—1. That he shall be safe. "If God is my salvation, in the time of trouble he shall hide me; he shall set me out of danger and above the fear of it." God will not only find out a shelter for his people in distress (as he did Jer. xxxvi. 26), but he will himself be their hiding-place, Ps. xxxii. 7. His providence will, it may be, keep them safe; at least his grace will make them easy. His name is the strong tower into which by faith they run, Prov. xviii. 10. "*He shall hide me*, not in the strongholds of En-gedi (1 Sam. xxiii. 29), but in the secret of his tabernacle." The gracious presence of God, his power, his promise, his readiness to hear prayer, the witness of his Spirit in the hearts of his people—these are the secret of his tabernacle, and in these the saints find cause for that holy security and serenity of mind in which they dwell at ease. This sets them upon a rock which will not sink under them, but on which they find firm footing for their hopes; nay, it sets them up upon a rock on high, where the raging threatening billows of a stormy sea cannot touch them; it is a rock that is *higher than we*, lxi. 2. 2. That he shall be victorious (v. 6): "*Now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies*, not only so as that they cannot reach it with their darts, but so as that I shall be exalted to bear rule over them." David here, by faith in the promise of God, triumphs before the victory, and is as sure, not only of the laurel, but of the crown, as if it were already upon his head.

III. With what a gracious earnestness he prays for a constant communion with God in holy ordinances, v. 4. It greatly encouraged his confidence in God that he was conscious to himself of an entire affection to God and to his ordinances, and that he was in his element when in the way of his duty and in the way of increasing his acquaintance with him. If our hearts can witness for us that we delight in God above any creature, that may encourage us to depend upon him; for it is

a sign we are of those whom he protects as his own. Or it may be taken thus: He desired to dwell in the house of the Lord that there he might be safe from the enemies that surrounded him. Finding himself surrounded by threatening hosts, he does not say, "*One thing have I desired*, in order to my safety, that I may have my army augmented to such a number," or that I may be master of such a city or such a castle, but "*that I may dwell in the house of the Lord*, and then I am well." Observe,

1. What it is he desires—to dwell in the house of the Lord. In the courts of God's house the priests had their lodgings, and David wished he had been one of them. Disdainfully as some look upon God's ministers, one of the greatest and best of kings that ever was would gladly have taken his lot, have taken his lodging, among them. Or, rather, he desires that he might duly and constantly attend on the public service of God, with other faithful Israelites, according as the duty of every day required. He longed to see an end of the wars in which he was now engaged, not that he might live at ease in his own palace, but that he might have leisure and liberty for a constant attendance in God's courts. Thus Hezekiah, a genuine son of David, wished for the recovery of his health, not that he might go up to the thrones of judgment, but that he might go up to the house of the Lord, Isa. xxxviii. 22. Note, All God's children desire to dwell in God's house; where should they dwell else? Not to sojourn there as a wayfaring man, that turns aside to tarry but for a night, nor to dwell there for a time only, as the servant that abides not in the house for ever, but to dwell there all the days of their life; for there the Son abides ever. Do we hope that praising God will be the blessedness of our eternity? Surely then we ought to make it the business of our time.

2. How earnestly he covets this: "This is the one thing I have desired of the Lord and which I will seek after." If he were to ask but one thing of God, this should be it; for this he had at heart more than any thing. He desired it as a good thing; he desired it of the Lord as his gift and a token of his favour. And, having fixed his desire upon this as the one thing needful, he sought after it; he continued to pray for it, and contrived his affairs so as that he might have this liberty and opportunity. Note, Those that truly desire communion with God will set themselves with all diligence to seek after it, Prov. xviii. 1.

3. What he had in his eye in it. He would dwell in God's house, not for the plenty of good entertainment that was there, in the feasts upon the sacrifices, nor for the music and good singing that were there, but to behold the beauty of the Lord and to enquire in his temple. He desired to attend in God's courts, (1.) That he might have the pleasure

of meditating upon God. He knew something of the beauty of the Lord, the infinite and transcendent amiableness of the divine being and perfections; his holiness is his beauty (cx. 3); his goodness is his beauty, Zech. ix. 17. The harmony of all his attributes is the beauty of his nature. With an eye of faith and holy love we with pleasure behold this beauty, and observe more and more in it that is amiable, that is admirable. When with fixedness of thought, and a holy flame of devout affections, we contemplate God's glorious excellencies, and entertain ourselves with the tokens of his peculiar favour to us, this is that view of the beauty of the Lord which David here covets, and it is to be had in his ordinances, for there he manifests himself. (2.) That he might have the satisfaction of being instructed in his duty; for concerning this he would *enquire in God's temple*. Lord, *what wilt thou have me to do?* For the sake of these two things he desired that one thing, to *dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life*; for blessed are those that do so; they will be still praising him (lxxxiv. 4), both in speaking to him and in hearing from him. Mary's sitting at Christ's feet to hear his word Christ calls the *one thing needful, and the good part*.

4. What advantage he promised himself by it. Could he but have a place in God's nouse, (1.) There he should be quiet and easy: there troubles would not find him, for he should be hid in secret; there troubles would not reach him, for he should be set on high, v. 5. Joash, one of David's seed, was hidden in the house of the Lord six years, and there not only preserved from the sword, but reserved to the crown, 2 Kings xi. 3. The temple was thought a safe place for Nehemiah to abscond in, Neh. vi. 10. The safety of believers however is not in the walls of the temple, but in the God of the temple and their comfort in communion with him. (2.) There he should be pleasant and cheerful: there he would offer sacrifices of joy, v. 6. For God's work is its own wages. There *he would sing, yea, he would sing praises to the Lord*. Note, Whatever is the matter of our joy ought to be the matter of our praise; and, when we attend upon God in holy ordinances, we ought to be much in joy and praise. It is for the glory of our God that we should sing in his ways; and, whenever God lifts us up above our enemies, we ought to exalt him in our praises. *Thanks be to God, who always causeth us to triumph*, 2 Cor. ii. 14.

7 Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me. 8 *When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek.* 9 Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, nei-

ther forsake me, O God of my salvation. 10 When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up. 11 Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies. 12 Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty. 13 *I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.* 14 Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.

David in these verses expresses,

I. His desire towards God, in many petitions. If he cannot now go up to the house of the Lord, yet, wherever he is, he can find a way to the throne of grace by prayer.

1. He humbly bespeaks, because he firmly believes he shall have, a gracious audience: "*Hear, O Lord, when I cry*, not only with my heart, but, as one in earnest, *with my voice too*." He bespeaks also an answer of peace, which he expects, not from his own merit, but God's goodness: *Have mercy upon me, and answer me*, v. 7. If we pray and believe, God will graciously hear and answer.

2. He takes hold of the kind invitation God had given him to this duty, v. 8. It is presumption for us to come into the presence of the King of kings uncalled, nor can we draw near with any assurance unless he *hold forth to us the golden sceptre*. David therefore going to pray fastens, in his thoughts, upon the call God had given him to the throne of his grace, and reverently touches, as it were, the top of the golden sceptre which was thereby held out to him. *My heart said unto thee* (so it begins in the original) or *of thee, Seek you my face*; he first revolved that, and preached that over again to himself (and that is the best preaching; it is hearing twice what God speaks once)—*Thou saidst* (so it may be supplied), *Seek you my face*; and then he returns what he had so meditated upon, in this pious resolution, *Thy face, Lord, will I seek*. Observe here, (1.) The true nature of religious worship; it is seeking the face of God. This it is in God's precept: *Seek you my face*; he would have us seek him for himself, and make his favour our chief good; and this it is in the saint's purpose and desire: "*Thy face, Lord, will I seek*, and nothing less will I take up with." The opening of his hand will satisfy the desire of other living things (cxlv. 16), but it is only the shining of his face that will satisfy the desire of a living soul, iv. 6, 7. (2.) The kind invitation of a gracious God to this duty: *Thou saidst, Seek you my face*; it is not only a permission, but a precept; and his commanding us to seek implies a promise

of finding; for he is too kind to say, *Seek you me in an.* God calls us to seek his face in our conversion to him and in our converse with him. He calls us, by the whispers of his Spirit to and with our spirits, to seek his face; he calls us by his word, by the stated returns of opportunities for his worship, and by special providences, merciful and afflictive. When we are foolishly making our court to lying vanities God is, in love to us, calling us in him to seek our own mercies. (3.) The ready compliance of a gracious soul with this invitation. The call is immediately returned: *My heart answered, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.* The call was general: "*Seek you my face;*" but, like David, we must apply it to ourselves, "*I will seek it.*" The word does us no good when we transfer it to others, and do not ourselves accept the exhortation. The call was, *Seek you my face;* the answer is express, *Thy face, Lord, will I seek;* like that (Jer. iii. 22), *Behold, we come unto thee.* A gracious heart readily echoes to the call of a gracious God, being made willing in the day of his power.

3. He is very particular in his requests.

(1.) For the favour of God, that he might not be shut out from that (v. 9): "*Thy face, Lord, will I seek,* in obedience to thy command; therefore *hide not thy face from me;* let me never want the reviving sense of thy favour; love me, and let me know that thou lovest me; *put not thy servant away in anger.*" He owns he had deserved God's displeasure, but begs that, however God might correct him, he would not cast him away from his presence; for what is hell but that? (2.) For the continuance of his presence with him: "*Thou hast been my help formerly, and thou art the God of my salvation;* and therefore whither shall I go but to thee? *O leave me not, neither forsake me;* withdraw not the operations of thy power from me, for then I am helpless; withdraw not the tokens of thy good-will to me, for then I am comfortless." (3.) For the benefit of a divine guidance (v. 11): "*Teach me thy way, O Lord!* give me to understand the meaning of thy providences towards me and make them plain to me; and give me to know my duty in every doubtful case, that I may not mistake it, but may walk rightly, and that I may not do it with hesitation, but may walk surely." It is not policy, but plainness (that is, downright honesty) that will direct us into and keep us in the way of our duty. He begs to be guided in *a plain path, because of his enemies,* or (as the margin reads it) his *observers.* His enemies watched for his halting, that they might find occasion against him. Saul eyed David, 1 Sam. xviii. 9. This quickened him to pray, "*Lord, lead me in a plain path,* that they may have nothing ill, or nothing that looks ill, to lay to my charge." (4.) For the benefit of a divine protection (v. 12): "*Deliver me not over to the will of my enemies.* Lord, let them not gain their point, for it aims at my life, and no less, and in such

a way as that I have no fence against them, but thy power over their consciences; for *false witnesses have risen up against me,* that aim further than to take away my reputation or estate, for they *breathe out cruelty;* it is the blood, the precious blood, they thirst after." Herein David was a type of Christ; for false witnesses rose up against him, and such as breathed out cruelty; but, though he was delivered into their wicked hands, he was not delivered over to their will, for they could not prevent his exaltation.

II. He expresses his dependence upon God, 1. That he would help and succour him when all other helps and succours failed him (v. 10): "*When my father and my mother forsake me,* the nearest and dearest friends I have in the world, from whom I may expect most relief and with most reason, when they die, or are at a distance from me, or are disabled to help me in the time of need, or are unkind to me or unmindful of me, and will not help me, when I am as helpless as ever poor orphan was that was left fatherless and motherless, then I know the Lord will take me up, as a poor wandering sheep is taken up, and saved from perishing." His time to help those that trust in him is when all other helpers fail, when it is most for his honour and their comfort. With him *the fatherless find mercy.* This promise has often been fulfilled in the letter of it. Forsaken orphans have been taken under the special care of the divine Providence, which has raised up relief and friends for them in a way that one would not have expected. God is a surer and better friend than our earthly parents are or can be.

2. That in due time he should see the displays of his goodness, v. 13. He believed he should see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living; and, if he had not done so, he would have fainted under his afflictions. Even the best saints are subject to faint when their troubles become grievous and tedious, their spirits are overwhelmed, and their flesh and heart fail. But then faith is a sovereign cordial; it keeps them from desponding under their burden and from despairing of relief, keeps them hoping, and praying, and waiting, and keeps up in them good thoughts of God, and the comfortable enjoyment of themselves. But what was it the belief of which kept David from fainting?—*that he should see the goodness of the Lord,* which now seemed at a distance. Those that walk by faith in the goodness of the Lord shall in due time walk in the sight of that goodness. This he hopes to see in the land of the living, that is, (1.) In this world, that he should outlive his troubles and not perish under them. It is his comfort, not so much that he shall see the land of the living as that he shall see the goodness of God in it; for that is the comfort of all creature-comforts to a gracious soul. (2.) In the land of Canaan, and in Jerusalem where the lively oracles were. In comparison with the heathen, that were dead in sin, the land

of Israel might fitly be called *the land of the living*; there God was known, and there David hoped to see his goodness; see 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26 Or, (3.) In heaven. It is that land alone that may truly be called *the land of the living*, where there is no more death. This earth is the land of the dying. There is nothing like the believing hope of eternal life, the foresights of that glory, and foretastes of those pleasures, to keep us from fainting under all the calamities of this present time.

3. That in the mean time he should be strengthened to bear up under his burdens (v. 14); whether he says it to himself, or to his friends, it comes all to one; this is that which encourages him: *He shall strengthen thy heart*, shall sustain the spirit, and then the spirit shall sustain the infirmity. In that strength, (1.) Keep close to God and to your duty. *Wait on the Lord* by faith, and prayer, and a humble resignation to his will; *wait, I say, on the Lord*; whatever you do, grow not remiss in your attendance upon God. (2.) Keep up your spirits in the midst of the greatest dangers and difficulties: *Be of good courage*; let your hearts be fixed, trusting in God, and your minds stayed upon him, and then let none of these things move you. Those that wait upon the Lord have reason to be of good courage.

PSALM XXVIII.

The former part of this psalm is the prayer of a saint militant and now in distress (ver. 1—3), to which is added the doom of God's implacable enemies, ver. 4, 5. The latter part of the psalm is the thanksgiving of a saint triumphant, and delivered out of his distresses (ver. 6—8), to which is added a prophetic prayer for all God's faithful loyal subjects, ver. 9. So that it is hard to say which of these two conditions David was in when he penned it. Some think he was now in trouble seeking God, but at the same time preparing to praise him for his deliverance; and by faith giving him thanks for it, before it was wrought. Others think he was now in triumph, but remembered, and recorded for his own and others' benefit, the prayers he made when he was in affliction, that the mercy might relish the better, when it appeared to be an answer to them.

A psalm of David.

UNTO thee will I cry, O LORD my rock; be not silent to me: lest, if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit. 2 Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee, when I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle. 3 Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity, which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts. 4 Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavours: give them after the work of their hands; render to them their desert. 5 Because they regard not the works of the LORD, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up.

In these verses David is very earnest in prayer.

I. He prays that God would graciously hear and answer him, now that, in his distress, he called upon him, v. 1, 2. Observe his faith in prayer: *O Lord, my rock*, denoting his belief of God's power (he is a rock) and his dependence upon that power—"He is *my rock*, on whom I build my hope." Observe his fervency in prayer: "*To thee will I cry*, as one in earnest, being ready to sink, unless thou come in with seasonable succour." And observe how solicitous he is to obtain an answer: "*Be not silent to me*, as one angry at my prayers, lxxx. 4. Lord, speak to me, answer me *with good words and comfortable words* (Zech. i. 13); though the thing I pray for be not given me, yet let God speak to me joy and gladness, and make me to hear them. Lord, speak for me, in answer to my prayers, plead my cause, command deliverances for me, and thus hear and answer the voice of my supplications." Two things he pleads:—1. The sad despair he should be in if God slighted him: "*If thou be silent to me*, and I have not the tokens of thy favour, I am *like those that go down into the pit* (that is, I am a dead man, lost and undone); if God be not my friend, appear not to me and appear not for me, my hope and my help will have perished." Nothing can be so cutting, so killing, to a gracious soul, as the want of God's favour and the sense of his displeasure. *I shall be like those that go down to hell* (so some understand it); for what is the misery of the damned but this, that God is for ever silent to them and deaf to their cry? Those are in some measure qualified for God's favour, and may expect it, who are thus possessed with a dread of his wrath, and to whom his frowns are worse than death. 2. The good hopes he had that God would favour him: *I lift up my hands towards thy holy oracle*, which denotes, not only an earnest desire, but an earnest expectation, thence to receive an answer of peace. The most holy place within the veil is here, as elsewhere, called the *oracle*; there the ark and the mercy-seat were, there God was said to *dwell between the cherubim*, and thence he spoke to his people, Num. vii. 89. That was a type of Christ, and it is to him that we must lift up our eyes and hands, for through him all good comes from God to us. It was also a figure of heaven (Heb. ix. 24); and from God as our Father in heaven we are taught to expect an answer to our prayers. The scriptures are called the *oracles of God*, and to them we must have an eye in our prayers and expectations. There is the word on which God hath caused and encouraged us to hope.

II. He deprecates the doom of wicked people, as before (xxvi. 9, "*Gather not my soul with sinners*): Lord, I attend thy holy oracle, *draw me not away from that with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity*," v. 3. 1. "Save me from being entangled in the snares they have laid for me. They flatter and cajole me, and speak peace to me; but they have a de-

sign upon me, for mischief is in their heart; they aim to disturb me, nay, to destroy me. Lord, suffer me not to be drawn away and ruined by their cursed plots; for they have, can have, no power, no success, against me, except it be given them from above." 2.

"Save me from being infected with their sins and from doing as they do. Let me not be drawn away by their fallacious arguments, or their allurements, from thy holy oracle (where I desire to dwell all the days of my life), to practise any wicked works;" see cxli. 4. "Lord, never leave me to myself, to use such arts of deceit and treachery for my safety as they use for my ruin. Let no event of Providence be an invincible temptation to me, to draw me either into the imitation or into the interest of wicked people." Good men dread the way of sinners; the best are sensible of the danger they are in of being drawn aside into it; and therefore we should all pray earnestly to God for his grace to keep us in our integrity. 3. "Save me from being involved in their doom; let me not be led forth with the workers of iniquity, for I am not one of those that speak peace while war is in their hearts." Note, Those that are careful not to partake with sinners in their sins have reason to hope that they shall not partake with them in their plagues, Rev. xviii. 4.

III. He imprecates the just judgments of God upon the workers of iniquity (v. 4): *Give them according to their deeds.* This is not the language of passion or revenge, nor is it inconsistent with the duty of praying for our enemies. But, 1. Thus he would show how far he was from complying with the workers of iniquity, and with what good reason he had begged not to be drawn away with them, because he was convinced that they could not be made more miserable than to be dealt with according to their deeds. 2. Thus he would express his zeal for the honour of God's justice in governing the world. "Lord, they think all well that they do, and justify themselves in their wicked practices. Lord, give them after the work of their hands, and so undeceive those about them, who think there is no harm in what they do because it goes unpunished," xciv. 1, 2. 3. This prayer is a prophecy that God will, sooner or later, render to all impenitent sinners according to their deserts. If what has been done amiss be not undone by repentance, there will certainly come a reckoning day, when God will render to every man who persists in his evil deeds according to them. It is a prophecy particularly of the destruction of destroyers: "*They speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts; Lord, give them according to their deeds, let the spoilers be spoiled, and let those be treacherously dealt with who have thus dealt treacherously;*" see Isa. xxxiii. 1; Rev. xviii. 6; xiii. 10. Observe, He foretels that God will reward them, not only according to their deeds, but according to the wickedness of their endeavours; for sinners shall be

reckoned with, not only for the mischief they have done, but for the mischief they would have done, which they designed, and did what they could to effect. And, if God go by this rule in dealing with the wicked, surely he will do so in dealing with the righteous, and will reward them, not only for the good they have done, but for the good they have endeavoured to do, though they could not accomplish it.

IV. He foretels their destruction for their contempt of God and his hand (v. 5): "*Because they regard not the works of the Lord and the operations of his hands, by which he manifests himself and speaks to the children of men, he will destroy them in this world and in the other, and not build them up.*" Note, A stupid regardlessness of the works of God is the cause of the sin of sinners, and so becomes the cause of their ruin. Why do men question the being or attributes of God, but because they do not duly regard his handy-works, which declare his glory, and in which the invisible things of him are clearly seen? Why do men forget God, and live without him, nay, affront God, and live in rebellion against him, but because they consider not the instances of that wrath of his which is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men? Why do the enemies of God's people hate and persecute them, and devise mischief against them, but because they regard not the works God has wrought for his church, by which he has made it appear how dear it is to him? See Isa. v. 12.

In singing this we must arm ourselves against all temptations to join with the workers of iniquity, and animate ourselves against all the troubles we may be threatened with by the workers of iniquity.

6 Blessed be the LORD, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications. 7 The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him. 8 The LORD is their strength, and he is the saving strength of his anointed. 9 Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance: feed them also, and lift them up for ever.

In these verses,

I. David gives God thanks for the audience of his prayers as affectionately as a few verses before he had begged it: *Blessed be the Lord, v. 6.* How soon are the saints' sorrows turned into songs and their prayers into praises! It was in faith that David prayed (v. 2), *Hear the voice of my supplications;* and by the same faith he gives thanks (v. 6) that *God has heard the voice of his supplications.* Note, 1. Those that pray in faith may rejoice in hope. "He hath heard me (graciously accepted me) and I am as sure of a real answer as if I had it already." 2. What we win by

prayer we must wear with praise. Has God heard our supplications? Let us then bless his name.

II. He encourages himself to hope in God for the perfecting of every thing that concerned him. Having given to God the glory of his grace (v. 6), he is humbly bold to take the comfort of it, v. 7. This is the method of attaining peace: let us begin with praise that it is attainable. Let us first bless God and then bless ourselves. Observe, 1. His dependence upon God: "*The Lord is my strength, to support me, and carry me on, through all my services and sufferings. He is my shield, to protect me from all the malicious designs of my enemies against me. I have chosen him to be so, I have always found him so, and I expect he will still be so.*" 2. His experience of the benefit of that dependence: "*My heart trusted in him, and in his power and promise; and it has not been in vain to do so, for I am helped, I have been often helped; not only God has given to me, in his due time, the help I trusted to him for, but my very trusting in him has helped me, in the mean time, and kept me from fainting.*" xxvii. 13. The very actings of faith are present aids to a drooping spirit, and often help it at a dead lift. 3. His improvement of this experience. (1.) He had the pleasure of it: "*Therefore my heart greatly rejoices. The joy of a believer is seated in the heart, while, in the laughter of the fool, the heart is sorrowful. It is great joy, joy unspeakable and full of glory.*" The heart that truly believes shall in due time greatly rejoice; it is *joy and peace in believing* that we are to expect. (2.) God shall have the praise of it: *when my heart greatly rejoices, with my song will I praise him.* Thus must we express our gratitude; it is the least we can do; and others will hereby be invited and encouraged to trust in him too.

III. He pleases himself with the interest which all good people, through Christ, have in God (v. 8): "*The Lord is their strength; not mine only, but the strength of every believer.*" Note, The saints rejoice in their friends' comforts as well as their own; for, as we have not the less benefit from the light of the sun, so neither from the light of God's countenance, for others' sharing therein; for we are sure there is enough for all and enough for each. This is our communion with all saints, that God is their strength and ours, Christ their Lord and ours, 1 Cor. i. 2. He is their strength, the strength of all Israel, because he is *the saving strength of his anointed*, that is, 1. Of David in the type. God, in strengthening him that was their king and fought their battles, strengthened the whole kingdom. He calls himself God's *anointed* because it was the unction he had received that exposed him to the envy of his enemies, and therefore entitled him to the divine protection. 2. Of Christ, his anointed, his Messiah, in the anti-type. God was his saving strength, qualified him for his undertaking

and carried him through it; see lxxxix. 21; Isa. xlix. 5; 1. 7, 9. And so he becomes their strength, the strength of all the saints; he strengthened him that is the church's head, and from him diffuses strength to all the members, has commanded his strength, and so *strengthens what he has wrought for us*, lxviii. 28; lxxx. 17, 18.

IV. He concludes with a short but comprehensive prayer for the church of God, v. 9. He prays for Israel, not as his people ("save my people, and bless my inheritance"), though they were so, but, "*thine.*" God's interest in them lay nearer his heart than his own. *We are thy people* is a good plea, Isa. lxiv. 9; lxiii. 19. *I am thine, save me.* God's people are his inheritance, dear to him, and precious in his eyes; what little glory he has from this world he has from them. *The Lord's portion is his people.* That which he begs of God for them is, 1. That he would save them from their enemies and the dangers they were exposed to. 2. That he would bless them with all good, flowing from his favour, in performance of his promise, and amounting to a happiness for them. 3. That he would *feed them*, bless them with plenty, and especially the plenty of his ordinances, which are food to the soul. *Rule them;* so the margin. "Direct their counsels and actions aright, and overrule their affairs for good. Feed them, and rule them; set pastors, set rulers, over them, that shall do their office with wisdom and understanding." 4. That he would *lift them up for ever*, lift them up out of their troubles and distresses, and do this, not only for those of that age, but for his people in every age to come, even to the end. "Lift them up into thy glorious kingdom, lift them up as high as heaven." There, and there only, will the saints be lifted up for ever, never more to sink or be depressed. Observe, Those, and those only, whom God feeds and rules, who are willing to be taught, and guided, and governed, by him, shall be saved, and blessed, and lifted up for ever.

PSALM XXIX.

It is the probable conjecture of some very good interpreters that David penned this psalm upon occasion, and just at the time, of a great storm of thunder, lightning, and rain, as the eighth psalm was his meditation in a moon-light night and the nineteenth in a sunny morning. It is good to take occasion from the sensible operations of God's power in the kingdom of nature to give glory to him. So composed was David, and so cheerful, even in a dreadful tempest, when others trembled, that then he penned this psalm; for, "though the earth be removed, yet will we not fear." 1. He calls upon the great ones of the world to give glory to God, ver. 1, 2. 2. To convince them of the goodness of that God whom they were to adore, he takes notice of his power and terror in the thunder, and lightning, and thunder-showers (ver. 3-9), his sovereign dominion over the world (ver. 10), and his special favour to his church, ver. 11. Great and high thoughts of God should fill us in singing this psalm.

A psalm of David.

GIVE unto the LORD, O ye mighty, give unto the LORD glory and strength. 2 Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. 3 The voice of the LORD is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth:

the LORD is upon many waters. 4 The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty. 5 The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars; yea, the LORD breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. 6 He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn. 7 The voice of the LORD divideth the flames of fire. 8 The voice of the LORD shaketh the wilderness; the LORD shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh. 9 The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests: and in his temple doth every one speak of his glory. 10 The LORD sitteth upon the flood; yea, the LORD sitteth King for ever. 11 The LORD will give strength unto his people; the LORD will bless his people with peace.

In this psalm we have,

I. A demand of the homage of the great men of the earth to be paid to the great God. Every clap of thunder David interpreted as a call to himself and other princes to give glory to the great God. Observe, 1. Who they are that are called to this duty: "*O you mighty* (v. 1), you sons of the mighty, who have power, and on whom that power is devolved by succession and inheritance, who have royal blood running in your veins!" It is much for the honour of the great God that the great men of this world should pay their homage to him; and they are bound to do it, not only because, high as they are, he is infinitely above them, and therefore they must bow to him, but because they have their power from him, and are to use it for him, and this tribute of acknowledgment they owe to him for it. 2. How often this call is repeated: *Give unto the Lord*, and again, and a third time, *Give unto the Lord*. This intimates that the mighty men are backward to this duty and are with difficulty persuaded to it, but that it is of great consequence to the interests of God's kingdom among men that princes should heartily espouse them. Jerusalem flourishes when the *kings of the earth bring their glory and honour into it*, Rev. xxi. 24. 3. What they are called to—to *give unto the Lord*, not as if he needed any thing, or could be benefited by any gifts of ours, nor as if we had any thing to give him that is not his own already (*Who hath first given to him?*), but the recognition of his glory, and of his dominion over us, he is pleased to interpret as a gift to him: "*Give unto the Lord your own selves, in the first place, and then your services. Give unto the Lord glory and strength*"; acknowledge his glory and strength, and give praise to him as a God of infinite majesty and irre-

sistible power; and whatever glory or strength he has by his providence entrusted you with offer it to him, to be used for his honour, in his service. Give him your crowns; let them be laid at his feet; give him your sceptres, your swords, your keys; put all into his hand, that you, in the use of them, may be to him for a name and a praise." Princes value themselves by their glory and strength; these they must ascribe to God, owning him to be infinitely more glorious and powerful than they. This demand of homage from the mighty may be looked upon as directed either to the grandees of David's own kingdom, the peers of the realm, the princes of the tribes (and it is to excite them to a more diligent and constant attendance at God's altars, in which he had observed them very remiss), or to the neighbouring kings whom he by his sword had made tributaries to Israel and now would persuade to become tributaries to the God of Israel. Crowned heads must bow before the King of kings. What is here said to the mighty is said to all: *Worship God*; it is the sum and substance of the everlasting gospel, Rev. xiv. 6, 7. Now we have here, (1.) The nature of religious worship; it is *giving to the Lord the glory due to his name*, v. 2. God's name is that whereby he has made himself known. There is a glory due to his name. It is impossible that we should give him all the glory due to his name; when we have said and done our best for the honour of God's name, still we come infinitely short of the merit of the subject; but when we answer that revelation which he has made of himself, with suitable affections and adorations, then we give him some of that glory which is due to his name. If we would, in hearing and praying, and other acts of devotion, receive grace from God, we must make it our business to give glory to God. (2.) The rule of the performance of religious exercises: *Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness*, which denotes, [1.] The object of our worship; the glorious majesty of God is called *the beauty of holiness*, 2 Chron. xx. 21. In the worship of God we must have an eye to his beauty, and adore him, not only as infinitely awful and therefore to be feared above all, but as infinitely amiable and therefore to be loved and delighted in above all; especially we must have an eye to the beauty of his holiness; this the angels fasten upon in their praises, Rev. iv. 8. Or, [2.] The place of worship. The sanctuary then was the *beauty of holiness*, xlviii. 1, 2; Jer. xvii. 12. The beauty of the sanctuary was the exact agreement of the worship there performed with the divine appointment—the pattern in the mount. Now, under the gospel, solemn assemblies of Christians (which purity is the beauty of) are the places where God is to be worshipped. Or, [3.] The manner of worship. We must be holy in all our religious performances, devoted to God, and to his will and glory. There is a beauty in holiness, and it is that

which puts an acceptable beauty upon all the acts of worship.

II. Good reason given for this demand. We shall see ourselves bound to give glory to God if we consider,

1. His sufficiency in himself, intimated in his name *Jehovah—I am that I am*, which is repeated here no fewer than eighteen times in this short psalm, twice in every verse but three, and once in two of those three; I do not recollect that there is the like in all the book of psalms. Let the mighty ones of the earth know him by this name and give him the glory due to it.

2. His sovereignty over all things. Let those that rule over men know there is a God that rules over them, that rules over all. The psalmist here sets forth God's dominion,

(1.) In the kingdom of nature. In the wonderful effects of natural causes, and the operations of the powers of nature, we ought to take notice of God's glory and strength, which we are called upon to ascribe to him; in the thunder, and lightning, and rain, we may see, [1.] His glory. It is the God of glory that thunders, v. 3. It is God that thunders (thunder is the *noise of his voice*, Job. xxxvii. 2), and it declares him a God of glory, so awful is the sound of the thunder, and so bright the flash of its companion, the lightning; to the hearing and to the sight nothing is more affecting than these, as if by those two learning senses God would give such proofs of his glory to the minds of men as should leave the most stupid inexcusable. Some observe that there were then some particular reasons why thunder should be called the *voice of the Lord*, not only because it comes from above, is not under the direction or foresight of any man, speaks aloud, and reaches far, but because God often spoke in thunder, particularly at Mount Sinai, and by thunder discomfited the enemies of Israel. To speak it the voice of the God of glory, it is here said to be *upon the waters*, upon many waters (v. 3); it reaches over the vast ocean, the waters under the firmament; it rattles among the thick clouds, the waters above the firmament. Every one that hears the thunder (his ears being made to tingle with it) will own that the *voice of the Lord is full of majesty* (xxix. 4), enough to make the highest humble (for none can *thunder with a voice like him*) and the proudest tremble—for, if his voice be so terrible, what is his arm? Every time we hear it thunder, let our hearts be thereby filled with great, and high, and honourable thoughts of God, in the holy adorings and admirings of whom the power of godliness does so much consist. O Lord our God! thou art very great. [2.] His power (v. 4): *The voice of the Lord is powerful*, as appears by the effects of it; for it works wonders. Those that write natural histories relate the prodigious effects of thunder and lightning, even out of the ordinary course of natural causes, which must be resolved into the omnipotence of the God of nature.

First, Trees have been rent and split by thunderbolts, v. 5, 6. *The voice of the Lord*, in the thunder, often *broke the cedars*, even those of Lebanon, the strongest, the stateliest. Some understand it of the violent winds which shook the cedars, and sometimes tore off their aspiring tops. Earthquakes also shook the ground itself on which the trees grew, and made Lebanon and Sirion to dance; the wilderness of Kadesh also was in like manner shaken (v. 8), the trees by winds, the ground by earthquakes, and both by thunders, of which I incline rather to understand it. The learned Dr. Hammond understands it of the consternation and conquest of the neighbouring kingdoms that warred with Israel and opposed David, as the Syrians, whose country lay near the forest of Lebanon, the Amorites that bordered on Mount Hermon, and the Moabites and Ammonites that lay about the wilderness of Kadesh. *Secondly*, Fires have been kindled by lightnings and houses and churches thereby consumed; hence we read of hot thunderbolts (lxxviii. 48); accordingly the voice of the Lord, in the thunder, is here said to *divide the flames of fire* (v. 7), that is, to scatter them upon the earth, as God sees fit to direct them and do execution by them. *Thirdly*, The terror of thunder makes the hinds to calve sooner, and some think more easily, than otherwise they would. The hind is a timorous creature, and much affected with the noise of thunder; and no marvel, when sometimes proud and stout men have been made to tremble at it. The emperor Caligula would hide himself under his bed when it thundered. Horace, the poet, owns that he was reclaimed from atheism by the terror of thunder and lightning, which he describes somewhat like this of David, lib. 1, ode 34. The thunder is said here to *discover the forest*, that is, it so terrifies the wild beasts, of the forest that they quit the dens and thickets in which they hid themselves and so are discovered. Or it throws down the trees, and so discovers the ground that was shaded by them. Whenever it thunders let us think of this psalm; and, whenever we sing this psalm, let us think of the dreadful thunder-claps we have sometimes heard, and thus bring God's word and his works together, that by both we may be directed and quickened to give unto him the glory due unto his name; and let us bless him that there is another voice of his besides this dreadful one, by which God now speaks to us, even the still small voice of his gospel, the terror of which shall not make us afraid.

(2.) In the kingdom of providence, v. 10. God is to be praised as the governor of the world of mankind. He *sits upon the flood*; he *sits King for ever*. He not only sits at rest in the enjoyment of himself, but he sits as King in the throne which he has *prepared in the heavens* (ciii. 19), where he takes cognizance of, and gives orders about, all the affairs of the children of men, and does all accord

ing to his will, according to the counsel of his will. Observe, [1.] The power of his kingdom: *He sits upon the flood.* As he has founded the earth, so he has founded his own throne, upon the floods, xxiv. 2. The ebbings and flowings of this lower world, and the agitations and revolutions of the affairs in it, give not the least shake to the repose nor to the counsels of the Eternal Mind. The opposition of his enemies is compared to the floods (xciii. 3, 4); but the Lord sits upon it; he crushes it, conquers it, and completes his own purposes in despite of all the devices that are in men's hearts. The word here translated *the flood* is never used but concerning Noah's flood; and therefore some think it is that which is here spoken of. God did sit upon that flood as a Judge executing the sentence of his justice upon the world of the ungodly that was swept away by it. And he still sits upon the flood, restraining the waters of Noah, that they turn not again to cover the earth, according to his promise never to *destroy the earth any more by a flood*, Gen. ix. 11; Isa. liv. 9. [2.] The perpetuity of his kingdom: *He sits King for ever*; no period can, or shall, be put to his government. The administration of his kingdom is consonant to his counsels from eternity and pursuant to his designs for eternity.

(3.) In the kingdom of grace. Here his glory shines most brightly, [1.] In the adorations he receives from the subjects of that kingdom, v. 9. *In his temple*, where his people attend his discoveries of himself and his mind and attend him with their praises, *every one speaks of his glory*. In the world every man sees it, or at least *may behold it afar off* (Job xxxvi. 25); but it is only in the temple, in the church, that it is spoken of to his honour. *All his works do praise him* (that is, they minister matter for praise), but his saints only do bless him, and speak of his glory in his works, cxlv. 10. [2.] In the favours he bestows upon the subjects of that kingdom, v. 11. *First*, He will qualify them for his service: *He will give strength to his people*, to fortify them against every evil work and to furnish them for every good work; out of weakness they shall be made strong; nay, he will perfect strength in weakness. *Secondly*, He will encourage them in his service: *He will bless his people with peace*. Peace is a blessing of inestimable value, which God designs for all his people. *The work of righteousness is peace* (*great peace have those that love thy law*); but much more the crown of righteousness: the end of the righteous is peace; it is endless peace. When the thunder of God's wrath shall make sinners tremble the saints shall lift up their heads with joy.

PSALM XXX.

This is a psalm of thanksgiving for the great deliverances which God had wrought for David, penned upon occasion of the dedicating of his house of cedar, and sung in that pious solemnity, though there is not any thing in it that has particular reference to that occasion. Some collect from diverse passages in the psalm itself that it was penned upon his recovery from a dangerous fit of sickness, which might happen to be about the time of the dedication of his house. 1. He here praises God for the deliverances

he had wrought for him, ver. 1-3. 11. He calls upon others to praise him too, and encourages them to trust in him, ver. 4, 5. 111. He blames himself for his former security, ver. 6, 7. 1V. He recollects the prayers and complaints he had made in his distress, ver. 8-10. With them he stirs up himself to be very thankful to God for the present comfortable change, ver. 11, 12. In singing this psalm we ought to remember with thankfulness any like deliverances wrought for us, for which we must stir up ourselves to praise him and by which we must be engaged to depend upon him.

A psalm and song at the dedication of the house of David.

I WILL extol thee, O LORD; for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me. 2 O LORD my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me. 3 O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit. 4 Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. 5 For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

It was the laudable practice of the pious Jews, and, though not expressly appointed, yet allowed and accepted, when they had built a new house, to *dedicate it to God*, Deut. xx. 5. David did so when his house was built, and he took possession of it (2 Sam. v. 11); for royal palaces do as much need God's protection, and are as much bound to be at his service, as ordinary houses. Note, The houses we dwell in should, at our first entrance upon them, be dedicated to God, as little sanctuaries. We must solemnly commit ourselves, our families, and all our family affairs, to God's guidance and care, must pray for his presence and blessing, must devote ourselves and all ours to his glory, and must resolve both that we will put away iniquity far from our tabernacles and that we and our houses will serve the Lord both in the duties of family worship and in all instances of gospel obedience. Some conjecture that this psalm was sung at the re-dedication of David's house, after he had been driven out of it by Absalom, who had defiled it with his incest, and that it is a thanksgiving for the crushing of that dangerous rebellion. In these verses,

I. David does himself give God thanks for the great deliverances he had wrought for him (v. 1): "*I will extol thee, O Lord! I will exalt thy name, will praise thee as one high and lifted up. I will do what I can to advance the interests of thy kingdom among men. I will extol thee, for thou hast lifted me up, not only up out of the pit in which I was sinking, but up to the throne of Israel.*" He *raiseth up the poor out of the dust*. In consideration of the great things God has done to exalt us, both by his providence and by his grace, we are bound, in gratitude, to do all we can to extol his name, though the most we can do is but little. Three things mag-

nify David's deliverance:—1. That it was the defeat of his enemies. They were not suffered to triumph over him, as they would have done (though it is a barbarous thing) if he had died of this sickness or perished in this distress: see xli. 11. 2. That it was an answer to his prayers (v. 2): *I cried unto thee*. All the expressions of the sense we have of our troubles should be directed to God, and every cry be a cry to him; and giving way, in this manner, to our grief, will ease a burdened spirit. "*I cried to thee, and thou hast not only heard me, but healed me, healed the distempered body, healed the disturbed and disquieted mind, healed the disordered distracted affairs of the kingdom.*" This is what God glories in, *I am the Lord that healeth thee* (Exod. xv. 26), and we must give him the glory of it. 3. That it was the saving of his life; for he was brought to the last extremity, dropping into the grave, and ready to go down into the pit, and yet rescued and kept alive, v. 3. The more imminent our dangers have been, the more eminent our deliverances have been, the more comfortable are they to ourselves and the more illustrious proofs of the power and goodness of God. A life from the dead ought to be spent in extolling the God of our life.

II. He calls upon others to join with him in praise, not only for the particular favours God had bestowed upon him, but for the general tokens of his good-will to all his saints (v. 4): *Sing unto the Lord, O you saints of his!* All that are truly saints he owns for his. There is a remnant of such in this world, and from them it is expected that they sing unto him; for they are created and sanctified, made and made saints, that they may be to him for a name and a praise. His saints in heaven sing to him; why should not those on earth be doing the same work, as well as they can, in concert with them? 1. They believe him to be a God of unspotted purity; and therefore let them sing to him: "*Let them give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness*; let them praise his holy name, for holiness is his memorial throughout all generations." God is a holy God; his holiness is his glory; that is the attribute which the holy angels, in their praises, fasten most upon, Isa. vi. 3; Rev. iv. 8. We ought to be much in the mention and remembrance of God's holiness; and holy souls can give thanks at the mention of God's holiness. It is matter of joy to the saints that God is a holy God; for then they hope he will make them holy, more holy. None of all God's perfections carries in it more terror to the wicked, nor more comfort to the godly, than his holiness. It is a good sign that we are in some measure partakers of his holiness if we can heartily rejoice and give thanks at the remembrance of it. 2. They have experienced him to be a God gracious and merciful; and therefore let them sing to him. (1.) We have found his frowns very short. Though we have deserved that they

should be everlasting, and that he should be angry with us till he had consumed us, and should never be reconciled, yet *his anger endureth but for a moment*, v. 5. When we offend him he is angry; but, as he is slow to anger and not soon provoked, so, when he is angry, upon our repentance and humiliation his anger is soon turned away and he is willing to be at peace with us. If he hide his face from his own children, and suspend the wonted tokens of his favour, it is but *in a little wrath and for a small moment*; but he will gather them with everlasting kindness, Isa. liv. 7, 8. If *weeping endureth for a night*, and it be a wearisome night, yet, as sure as the light of the morning returns after the darkness of the night, so sure will joy and comfort return in a short time, in due time, to the people of God; for the covenant of grace is as firm as the covenant of the day. This word has often been fulfilled to us in the letter. Weeping has endured for a night, but the grief has been soon over and the grievance gone. Observe, As long as God's anger continues so long the saints' weeping continues; but, if that be but for a moment, the affliction is but for a moment, and when the light of God's countenance is restored the affliction is easily pronounced light and momentary. (2.) We have found his smiles very sweet: *In his favour is life*, that is, all good. The return of his favour to an afflicted soul is as life from the dead; nothing can be more reviving. Our happiness is bound up in God's favour; if we have that, we have enough, whatever else we want. It is the life of the soul, it is spiritual life, the earnest of life eternal.

6 And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. 7 LORD, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled. 8 I cried to thee, O LORD; and unto the LORD I made supplication. 9 What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth? 10 Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me: LORD, be thou my helper. 11 Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; 12 To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.

We have, in these verses, an account of three several states that David was in successively, and of the workings of his heart towards God in each of those states—what he said and did, and how his heart stood affected; in the first of these we may see what

we are too apt to be, and in the other two what we should be.

1. He had long enjoyed prosperity, and then he grew secure and over-confident of the continuance of it (v. 6, 7): "*In my prosperity, when I was in health of body and God had given me rest from all my enemies, I said I shall never be moved; I never thought either of having my body distempered or my government disturbed, nor had any apprehensions of danger upon any account.*" Such complete victories had he obtained over those that opposed him, and such a confirmed interest had he in the hearts of his people, such a firmness of mind and such a strong constitution of body, that he thought his prosperity fixed like a mountain; yet this he ascribes, not to his own wisdom or fortitude, but to the divine goodness. *Thou, through thy favour, hast made my mountain to stand strong*, v. 7. He does not look upon it as his heaven (as worldly people do, who make their prosperity their felicity), only his *mountain*; it is earth still, only raised a little higher than the common level. This he thought, by the favour of God, would be perpetuated to him, imagining perhaps that, having had so many troubles in the beginning of his days, he had had his whole share and should have none in his latter end, or that God, who had given him such tokens of his favour, would never frown upon him. Note, 1. We are very apt to dream, when things are well with us, that they will always be so, and never otherwise. *To-morrow shall be as this day*. As if we should think, when the weather is once fair, that it will be ever fair; whereas nothing is more certain than that it will change. 2. When we see ourselves deceived in our expectations, it becomes us to reflect, with shame, upon our security, as our folly, as David does here, that we may be wiser another time and may rejoice in our prosperity as though we rejoiced not, because the fashion of it passes away.

II. On a sudden he fell into trouble, and then he prayed to God, and pleaded earnestly for relief and succour.

1. His mountain was shaken and he with it; it proved, when he grew secure, that he was least safe: "*Thou didst hide thy face and I was troubled*, in mind, body, or estate." In every change of his condition he still kept his eye upon God, and, as he ascribed his prosperity to God's favour, so in his adversity he observed the hiding of God's face to be the cause of it. If God hide his face, a good man is certainly troubled, though no other calamity befall him; when the sun sets night certainly follows, and the moon and all the stars cannot make day.

2. When his mountain was shaken he lifted up his eyes above the hills. Prayer is a salve for every sore; he made use of it accordingly. *Is any afflicted? Is any troubled? Let him pray*. Though God hid his face from him, yet he prayed. If God, in wisdom

and justice, turn from us, yet it will be in us the greatest folly and injustice imaginable is we turn from him. No; let us learn to pray in the dark (v. 8): *I cried to thee, O Lord!* It seems God's withdrawals made his prayers the more vehement. We are here told, for it seems he kept account of it,

(1.) What he pleaded, v. 9. [1.] That God would be no gainer by his death: *What profit is there in my blood?* implying that he would willingly die if he could thereby do any real service to God or his country (Phil. ii. 17), but he saw not what good could be done by his dying in the bed of sickness, as might be if he had died in the bed of honour. "Lord," says he, "wilt thou sell one of thy own people for nought and not increase thy wealth by the price?" xlv. 12. Nay, [2.] That, in his honour, God would seem to be a loser by his death: *Shall the dust praise thee?* The sanctified spirit, which returns to God, shall praise him, shall be still praising him; but the dust, which returns to the earth, shall not praise him, nor declare his truth. The services of God's house cannot be performed by the dust; it cannot praise him; there is none of that device or working in the grave, for it is the land of silence. The promises of God's covenant cannot be performed to the dust. "Lord," says David, "if I die now, what will become of the promise made to me? Who shall declare the truth of that?" The best pleas in prayer are those that are taken from God's honour; and then we ask aright for life when we have that in view, that we may live and praise him.

(2.) What he prayed for, v. 10. He prayed for mercy to pardon (*Have mercy upon me*), and for grace to help in time of need—*Lord, be thou my helper*. On these two errands we also may come boldly to the throne of grace, Heb. iv. 16.

III. In due time God delivered him out of his troubles and restored him to his former prosperity. His prayers were answered and his mourning was turned into dancing, v. 11. God's anger now endured but for a moment, and David's weeping but for a night. The sackcloth with which, in a humble compliancy with the divine Providence, he had clad himself, was loosed; his griefs were balanced; his fears were silenced; his comforts returned; and he was girded with gladness: joy was made his ornament, was made his strength, and seemed to cleave to him, as the girdle cleaves to the loins of a man. As David's plunge into trouble from the height of prosperity, and then when he least expected it, teaches us to rejoice as though we rejoiced not, because we know not how near trouble may be, so his sudden return to a prosperous condition teaches us to weep as though we wept not, because we know not how soon the storm may become a calm and the formidable blast may become a favourable gale. But what temper of mind was he

in upon this happy change of the face of his affairs? What does he say now? He tells us, v. 12. 1. His complaints were turned into praises. He looked upon it that God girded him with gladness to the end that he might be the *sweet psalmist of Israel* (2 Sam. xxiii. 1), that his *glory might sing praise to God*, that is, his tongue (for our tongue is our glory, and never more so than when it is employed in praising God) or his soul, for that is our glory above the beasts, that must be employed in blessing the Lord, and with that we must make melody to him in singing psalms. Those that are kept from being silent in the pit must not be silent in the land of the living, but fervent, and constant, and public, in praising God. 2. These praises were likely to be everlasting: *I will give thanks unto thee for ever*. This bespeaks a gracious resolution that he would persevere to the end in praising God and a gracious hope that he should never want fresh matter for praise and that he should shortly be where this would be the everlasting work. *Blessed are those that dwell in God's house; they will be still praising him*. Thus must we learn to accommodate ourselves to the various providences of God that concern us, to want and to abound, to sing of mercy and judgment, and to sing unto God for both.

PSALM XXXI.

It is probable that David penned this psalm when he was persecuted by Saul; some passages in it agree particularly to the narrow escapes he had, at Keilah (1 Sam. xxiii. 13), then in the wilderness of Maon, when Saul marched on one side of the hill and he on the other, and, soon after, in the cave in the wilderness of Engedi; but that it was penned upon any of those occasions we are not told. It is a mixture of prayers, and praises, and professions of confidence in God, all which do well together and are helpful to one another. I. David professes his cheerful confidence in God, and, in that confidence, prays for deliverance out of his present troubles, ver. 1-5. II. He complains of the very deplorable condition he was in, and, in the sense of his calamities, still prays that God would graciously appear for him against his persecutors, ver. 9-13. III. He concludes the psalm with praise and triumph, giving glory to God, and encouraging himself and others to trust in him, ver. 19-24.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

IN thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness. 2 Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for a house of defence to save me. 3 For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me. 4 Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for thou art my strength. 5 Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth. 6 I have hated them that regard lying vanities: but I trust in the LORD. 7 I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities; 8 And hast not shut me up into

the hand of the enemy: thou hast set my feet in a large room.

Faith and prayer must go together. He that believes, let him pray—I believe, therefore have I spoken: and he that prays, let him believe, for the prayer of faith is the prevailing prayer. We have both here.

I. David, in distress, is very earnest with God in prayer for succour and relief. This eases a burdened spirit, fetches in promised mercies, and wonderfully supports and comforts the soul in the expectation of them. He prays, 1. That God would deliver him (v. 1), that his life might be preserved from the malice of his enemies, and that an end might be put to their persecutions of him, that God, not only in mercy, but in righteousness, would deliver him, as a righteous Judge betwixt him and his unrighteous persecutors, that he would bow down his ear to his petitions, to his appeals, and deliver him, v. 2. It is condescension in God to take cognizance of the case of the greatest and best of men; he humbles himself to do it. The psalmist prays also that he would deliver him speedily, lest, if the deliverance were long deferred, his faith should fail. 2. That, if he did not immediately deliver him out of his troubles, yet he would protect and shelter him in his troubles: "*Be thou my strong rock*, immovable, impregnable, as a fastness framed by nature, and my *house of defence*, a fortress framed by art, and all to save me." Thus may we pray that God's providence would secure to us our lives and comforts and that by his grace we may be enabled to think ourselves safe in him, Prov. xviii. 10. 3. That his case having much in it of difficulty, both in respect of duty and in respect of prudence, he might be under the divine guidance: "*Lord, lead me and guide me* (v. 3), so order my steps, so order my spirit, that I may never do any thing unlawful and unjustifiable—against my conscience, nor unwise and indiscreet—against my interest." Those that resolve to follow God's direction may in faith pray for it. 4. That his enemies being very crafty, as well as very spiteful, God would frustrate and baffle their designs against him (v. 4): "*Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me*, and keep me from the sin, the trouble, the death, they aim to entrap me in."

II. In this prayer he gives glory to God by a repeated profession of his confidence in him and dependence on him. This encouraged his prayers and qualified him for the mercies he prayed for (v. 1): "*In thee, O Lord! do I put my trust*, and not in myself, or any sufficiency of my own, or in any creature; let me never be ashamed, let me not be disappointed of any of that good which thou hast promised me and which therefore I have promised myself in thee." 1. He had chosen God for his protector, and God had, by his promise, undertaken to be so (v. 3): "*Thou*

art my rock and my fortress, by thy covenant with me and my believing consent to that covenant; therefore be my strong rock," v. 2. Those that have in sincerity avouched the Lord for theirs may expect the benefit of his being so; for God's relations to us carry with them both name and thing. *Thou art my strength, v. 4.* If God be our strength, we may hope that he will both put his strength in us and put forth his strength for us. 2. He gave up his soul in a special manner to him (v. 5): *Into thy hands I commit my spirit.*

(1.) If David here looks upon himself as a dying man, by these words he resigns his departing soul to God who gave it, and to whom, at death, the spirit returns. "Men can but kill the body, but I trust in God to redeem my soul from the power of the grave," xlix. 15. He is willing to die if God will have it so; but let my soul fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercies are great. With these words our Lord Jesus yielded up the ghost upon the cross, and made his soul an offering, a free-will offering, for sin, voluntarily laying down his life a ransom. By Stephen's example we are taught, in our dying moments, to eye Christ at God's right hand, and to commit our spirits to him: *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.* But, (2.) David is here to be looked upon as a man in distress and trouble. And, [1.] His great care is about his soul, his spirit, his better part. Note, Our outward afflictions should increase our concern for our souls. Many think that while they are perplexed about their worldly affairs, and Providence multiplies their cares about them, they may be excused if they neglect their souls; whereas the greater hazard our lives and secular interests lie at the more we are concerned to look to our souls, that, though the outward man perish, the inward man may suffer no damage (2 Cor. iv. 16), and that we may keep possession of our souls when we can keep possession of nothing else, Luke xxi. 19. [2.] He thinks the best he can do for his soul is to commit it into the hand of God, and lodge that great trust with him. He had prayed (v. 4) to be plucked out of the net of outward trouble, but, as not insisting upon that (God's will be done), he immediately lets fall that petition, and commits the spirit, the inward man, into God's hand. "Lord, however it goes with me, as to my body, let it go well with my soul," Note, It is the wisdom and duty of every one of us solemnly to commit our spirits into the hands of God, to be sanctified by his grace, devoted to his honour, employed in his service, and fitted for his kingdom. That which encourages us to commit our spirits into the hand of God is that he has not only created, but redeemed, them; the particular redemptions of the Old-Testament church and the Old-Testament saints were typical of our redemption by Jesus Christ, Gen. xlviii. 16. The redemption of the soul is so precious that it must have ceased for

ever if Christ had not undertaken it; but, by redeeming our souls, he has not only acquired an additional right and title to them, which obliges us to commit them to him as his own, but has shown the extraordinary kindness and concern he has for them, which encourages us to commit them to him, to be preserved to his heavenly kingdom (2 Tim. i. 12): *"Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth!"* redeemed me according to a promise which thou wilt be true to."

III. He disclaimed all confederacy with those that made an arm of flesh their confidence (v. 6): *I have hated those that regard lying vanities*—idolaters (so some), who expect aid from false gods, which are vanity and a lie—astrologers, and those that give heed to them, so others. David abhorred the use of enchantments and divinations; he consulted not, nor ever took notice of, the flight of birds or entrails of beasts, good omens or bad omens; they are lying vanities, and he not only did not regard them himself, but hated the wickedness of those that did. He trusted in God only, and not in any creature. His interest in the court or country, his retreats or strongholds, even Goliath's sword itself—these were lying vanities, which he could not depend upon, but trusted in the Lord only. See xl. 4; Jer. xvii. 5.

IV. He comforted himself with his hope in God, and made himself, not only easy, but cheerful, with it, v. 7. Having relied on God's mercy, he will be glad and rejoice in it; and those know not how to value their hope in God who cannot find joy enough in that hope to counterbalance their grievances and silence their griefs.

V. He encouraged himself in this hope with the experiences he had had of late, and formerly, of God's goodness to him, which he mentions to the glory of God; he that has delivered doth and will. 1. God had taken notice of his afflictions and all the circumstances of them: *"Thou hast considered my trouble, with wisdom to suit relief to it, with condescension and compassion regarding the low estate of thy servant."* 2. He had observed the temper of his spirit and the workings of his heart under his afflictions: *"Thou hast known my soul in adversities, with a tender concern and care for it."* God's eye is upon our souls when we are in trouble, to see whether they be humbled for sin, submissive to the will of God, and bettered by the affliction. If the soul, when cast down under affliction, has been lifted up to him in true devotion, he knows it. 3. He had rescued him out of the hands of Saul when he had him safe enough in Keilah (1 Sam. xxiii. 7): *"Thou hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy, but set me at liberty, in a large room, where I may shift for my own safety."* v. 8. Christ's using those words (v. 5) upon the cross may warrant us to apply all this to Christ, who trusted in his Father and was

supported and delivered by him, and (because he humbled himself) highly exalted, which it is proper to think of when we sing these verses, as also therein to acknowledge the experience we have had of God's gracious presence with us in our troubles and to encourage ourselves to trust in him for the future.

9 Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble : mine eye is consumed with grief, *yea*, my soul and my belly. 10 For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing : my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed. 11 I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours, and a fear to mine acquaintance : they that did see me without fled from me. 12 I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind : I am like a broken vessel. 13 For I have heard the slander of many : fear *was* on every side : while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life. 14 But I trusted in thee, O LORD : I said, Thou *art* my God. 15 My times *are* in thy hand : deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me. 16 Make thy face to shine upon thy servant : save me for thy mercies' sake. 17 Let me not be ashamed, O LORD ; for I have called upon thee : let the wicked be ashamed, *and* let them be silent in the grave. 18 Let the lying lips be put to silence ; which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.

In the foregoing verses David had appealed to God's righteousness, and pleaded his relation to him and dependence on him ; here he appeals to his mercy, and pleads the greatness of his own misery, which made his case the proper object of that mercy. Observe,

I. The complaint he makes of his trouble and distress (v. 9) : "*Have mercy upon me, O Lord ! for I am in trouble, and need thy mercy.*" The remembrance he makes of his condition is not much unlike some even of Job's complaints. 1. His troubles had fixed a very deep impression upon his mind and made him a man of sorrows. So great was his grief that his very soul was consumed with it, and his life spent with it, and he was continually sighing, v. 9, 10. Herein he was a type of Christ, who was intimately acquainted with grief and often in tears. We may guess by David's complexion, which was ruddy and sanguine, by his genius for music,

and by his daring enterprises in his early days, that his natural disposition was both cheerful and firm, that he was apt to be cheerful, and not to lay trouble to his heart ; yet here we see what he is brought to : he has almost wept out his eyes, and sighed away his breath. Let those that are airy and gay take heed of running into extremes, and never set sorrow at defiance ; God can find out ways to make them melancholy if they will not otherwise learn to be serious. 2. His body was affected with the sorrows of his mind (v. 10) : *My strength fails, my bones are consumed, and all because of my iniquity.* As to Saul, and the quarrel he had with him, he could confidently insist upon his righteousness ; but, as it was an affliction God laid upon him, he owns he had deserved it, and freely confesses his iniquity to have been the procuring cause of all his trouble ; and the sense of sin touched him to the quick and wasted him more than all his calamities. 3. His friends were unkind and became shy of him. He was *a fear to his acquaintance*, when they saw him they *fled from him*, v. 11. They durst not harbour him nor give him any assistance, durst not show him any countenance, nor so much as be seen in his company, for fear of being brought into trouble by it, now that Saul had proclaimed him a traitor and outlawed him. They saw how dearly Ahimelech the priest had paid for aiding and abetting him, though ignorantly ; and therefore, though they could not but own he had a great deal of wrong done him, yet they had not the courage to appear for him. He was forgotten by them, *as a dead man out of mind* (v. 12), and looked upon with contempt *as a broken vessel*. Those that showed him all possible respect when he was in honour at court, now that he had fallen into disgrace, though unjustly, were strange to him. Such swallow^d friends the world is full of, that are gone in winter. Let those that fall on the losing side not think it strange if they be thus deserted, but make sure a friend in heaven, that will not fail them, and make use of him. 4. His enemies were unjust in their censures of him. They would not have persecuted him as they did if they had not first represented him as a bad man ; he was *a reproach among all his enemies, but especially among his neighbours*, v. 11. Those that had been the witnesses of his integrity, and could not but be convinced in their consciences that he was an honest man, were the most forward to represent him quite otherwise, that they might curry favour with Saul. Thus he *heard the slander of many* ; every one had a stone to throw at him, because *fear was on every side* ; that is, they durst not do otherwise, for he that would not join with his neighbours to abuse David was looked upon as disaffected to Saul. Thus the best of men have been represented under the worst characters by those that resolved to give them the worst treatment. 5. His life was aimed

at and he went in continual peril of it. Fear was on every side, and he knew that, whatever counsel his enemies took against him, the design was not to take away his liberty, but to take away his life (v. 13), a life so valuable, so useful, to the good services of which all Israel owed so much, and which was never forfeited. Thus, in all the plots of the Pharisees and Herodians against Christ, still the design was to take away his life; such are the enmity and cruelty of the serpent's seed.

II. His confidence in God in the midst of these troubles. Every thing looked black and dismal round about him, and threatened to drive him to despair: "*But I trusted in thee, O Lord!*" (v. 14) and was thereby kept from sinking." His enemies robbed him of his reputation among men, but they could not rob him of his comfort in God, because they could not drive him from his confidence in God. Two things he comforted himself with in his straits, and he went to God and pleaded them with him:—1. "*Thou art my God; I have chosen thee for mine, and thou hast promised to be mine;*" and, if he be ours and we can by faith call him so, it is enough, when we can call nothing else ours. "*Thou art my God; and therefore to whom shall I go for relief but to thee?*" Those need not be straitened in their prayers who can plead this; for, if God undertake to be our God, he will do that for us which will answer the compass and vast extent of that engagement. 2. *My times are in thy hand.* Join this with the former and it makes the comfort complete. If God have our times in his hand, he can help us; and, if he be our God, he will help us; and then what can discourage us? It is a great support to those who have God for their God that their times are in his hand and he will be sure to order and dispose of them for the best, to all those who commit their spirits also into his hand, to suit them to their times, as David here, v. 5. The time of life is in God's hands, to lengthen or shorten, embitter or sweeten, as he pleases, according to the counsel of his will. Our times (all events that concern us, and the timing of them) are at God's disposal; they are not in our own hands, for the way of man is not in himself, not in our friends' hands, nor in our enemies' hands, but in God's; *every man's judgment proceedeth from him.* David does not, in his prayers, prescribe to God, but subscribe to him. "Lord, my times are in thy hand, and I am well pleased that they are so: they could not be in a better hand. Thy will be done."

III. His petitions to God, in this faith and confidence, 1. He prays that God would deliver him out of the hand of his enemies (v. 15), and save him (v. 16), and this for his mercies' sake, and not for any merit of his own. Our opportunities are in God's hand (so some read it), and therefore he knows how to choose the best and fittest time for

our deliverance, and we must be willing to wait that time. When David had Saul at his mercy in the cave those about him said, "*This is the time in which God will deliver thee,*" 1 Sam. xxiv. 4. "No," says David, "the time has not come for my deliverance till it can be wrought without sin; and I will wait for that time; for it is God's time, and that is the best time." 2. That God would give him the comfort of his favour in the mean time (v. 16): "*Make thy face to shine upon thy servant;* let me have the comfortable tokens and evidences of thy favour to me, and that shall put gladness in my heart in the midst of all my griefs." 3. That his prayers to God might be answered and his hopes in God accomplished (v. 17): "*Let me not be ashamed of my hopes and prayers, for I have called upon thee, who never saidst to thy people, Seek in vain, and hope in vain.*" 4. That shame and silence might be the portion of wicked people, and particularly of his enemies. They were confident of their success against David, and that they should run him down and ruin him. "Lord," says he, "let them be made ashamed of that confidence by the disappointment of their expectations," as those that opposed the building of the wall about Jerusalem, when it was finished, were much cast down in their own eyes, Neh. vi. 16. *Let them be silent in the grave.* Note, Death will silence the rage and clamour of cruel persecutors, whom reason would not silence. In the grave the wicked cease from troubling. Particularly, he prays for (that is, he prophesies) the silencing of those that reproach and calumniate the people of God (v. 18): *Let lying lips be put to silence, that speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.* This is a very good prayer which, (1.) We have often occasion to put up to God; for those that set their mouth against the heavens commonly revile the heirs of heaven. Religion, and the strict and serious professors of it, are every where spoken against, [1.] With a great deal of malice: *They speak grievous things, on purpose to vex them, and hoping, with what they say, to do them a real mischief.* They speak *hard things* (so the word is), which bear hard upon them, and by which they hope to fasten indelible characters of infamy upon them. [2.] With a great deal of falsehood: *They are lying lips, taught by the father of lies and serving his interest.* [3.] With a great deal of scorn and disdain: *They speak proudly and contemptuously, as if the righteous, whom God has honoured, were the most despicable people in the world, and not worthy to be set with the dogs of their flock.* One would think they thought it no sin to tell a deliberate lie if it might but serve to expose a good man either to hatred or contempt. *Hear, O our God! for we are despised.* (2.) We may pray in faith; for these lying lips shall be put to silence. God has many ways of doing it. Sometimes he

convince the consciences of those that reproach his people, and turns their hearts. Sometimes by his providence he visibly confutes their calumnies, and brings forth the righteousness of his people as the light. However, there is a day coming when God will convince ungodly sinners of the falsehood of all the hard speeches they have spoken against his people and will execute judgment upon them, Jude 14, 15. Then shall this prayer be fully answered, and to that day we should have an eye in the singing of it, engaging ourselves likewise by well-doing, if possible, *to silence the ignorance of foolish men*, 1 Pet. ii. 15.

19 *Oh* how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; *which* thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men! 20 Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues. 21 Blessed be the LORD: for he hath showed me his marvellous kindness in a strong city. 22 For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee. 23 O love the LORD, all ye his saints: *for* the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer. 24 Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD.

We have three things in these verses:—

I. The believing acknowledgment which David makes of God's goodness to his people in general, v. 19, 20.

1. God is good to all, but he is, in a special manner, good to Israel. His goodness to them is wonderful, and will be, to eternity, matter of admiration: *O how great is thy goodness!* How profound are the counsels of it! how rich are the treasures of it! how free and extensive are the communications of it! Those very persons whom men load with slanders God loads with benefits and honours. Those who are interested in this goodness are described to be such as fear God and trust in him, as stand in awe of his greatness and rely on his grace. This goodness is said to be *laid up for them and wrought for them*. (1.) There is a goodness laid up for them in the other world, an inheritance reserved in heaven (1 Pet. i. 4), and there is a goodness wrought for them in this world, goodness wrought in them. There is enough in God's goodness both for the portion and inheritance of all his children when they come to their full age, and for their maintenance and education dur-

ing their minority. There is enough in bank and enough in hand. (2.) This goodness is laid up in his promise for all that fear God, to whom assurance is given that they shall want no good thing. But it is wrought, in the actual performance of the promise, for those that trust in him—that by faith take hold of the promise, put it in suit, and draw out to themselves the benefit and comfort of it. If what is laid up for us in the treasures of the everlasting covenant be not wrought for us, it is our own fault, because we do not believe. But those that trust in God, as they have the comfort of his goodness in their own bosoms, so they have the credit of it (and the credit of an estate goes far with some); it is wrought for them *before the sons of men*. God's goodness to them puts an honour upon them and rolls away their reproach; *for all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed*, Isa. lxi. 9.

2. God preserves man and beast; but he is, in a special manner, the protector of his own people (v. 20): *Thou shalt hide them*. As his goodness is hid and reserved for them, so they are hid and preserved for it. The saints are God's hidden ones. See here, (1.) The danger they are in, which arises from the pride of man and from the strife of tongues; proud men insult over them and would trample on them and tread them down; contentious men pick quarrels with them; and, when tongues are at strife, good people often go by the worst. The pride of men endangers their liberty; the strife of tongues in perverse disputings endangers truth. But, (2.) See the defence they are under: *Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence, in a pavilion*. God's providence shall keep them safe from the malice of their enemies. He has many ways of sheltering them. When Baruch and Jeremiah were sought for *the Lord hid them*, Jer. xxxvi. 26. God's grace shall keep them safe from the evil of the judgments that are abroad; to them they have no sting; and they shall be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger, for there is no anger at them. His comforts shall keep them easy and cheerful; his sanctuary, where they have communion with him, shelters them from the fiery darts of terror and temptation; and the mansions in his house above shall be shortly, shall be eternally, their hiding-place from all danger and fear.

II. The thankful returns which David makes for God's goodness to him in particular, v. 21, 22. Having admired God's goodness to all the saints, he here owns how good he had found him. 1. Without were fightings; but God had wonderfully preserved his life: "*He has shown me his marvellous loving-kindness*, he has given me an instance of his care of me and favour to me, beyond what I could have expected." God's loving-kindness to his people, all things considered, is wonderful; but some instances of it, even in

this world, are in a special manner marvellous in their eyes; as this here, when God preserved David from the sword of Saul, in caves and woods, as safe as if he had been in a strong city. In Keilah, that strong city, God showed him great mercy, both in making him an instrument to rescue the inhabitants out of the hands of the Philistines and then in rescuing him from the same men who would have ungratefully delivered him up into the hand of Saul, 1 Sam. xxiii. 5, 12. This was marvellous loving-kindness indeed, upon which he writes, with wonder and thankfulness, *Blessed be the Lord.* Special preservations call for particular thanksgivings. 2. Within were fears; but God was better to him than his fears, v. 22. He here keeps an account, (1.) Of his own folly, in distrusting God, which he acknowledges, to his shame. Though he had express promises to build upon, and great experience of God's care concerning him in many straits, yet he had entertained this hard and jealous thought of God, and could not forbear telling it him to his face. "*I am cut off from before thy eyes; thou hast quite forsaken me, and I must not expect to be looked upon or regarded by thee any more. I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul,* and so be cut off before thy eyes, be ruined while thou lookest on," 1 Sam. xxvii. 1. This he said in his *flight* (so some read it), which denotes the distress of his affairs. Saul was just at his back, and ready to seize him, which made the temptation strong. *In my haste* (so we read it), which denotes the disturbance and discomposure of his mind, which made the temptation surprising, so that it found him off his guard. Note, It is a common thing to speak amiss when we speak in haste and without consideration; but what we speak amiss in haste we must repent of at leisure, particularly that which we have spoken distrustfully of God. (2.) Of God's wonderful goodness to him notwithstanding. Though his faith failed, God's promise did not: *Thou heardest the voice of my supplication*, for all this. He mentions his own unbelief as a foil to God's fidelity, serving to make his loving-kindness the more marvellous, the more illustrious. When we have thus distrusted God he might justly take us at our word, and bring our fears upon us, as he did on Israel, Num. xiv. 28; Isa. lxvi. 4. But he has pitied and pardoned us, and our unbelief has not made his promise and grace of no effect; for he knows our frame.

III. The exhortation and encouragement which he hereupon gives to all the saints, v. 23, 24. 1. He would have them set their love on God (v. 23): *O love the Lord! all you his saints.* Those that have their own hearts full of love to God cannot but desire that others also may be in love with him; for in his favour there is no need to fear a rival. It is the character of the saints that they do love God; and yet they must be still called

upon to love him, to love him more and love him better, and give proofs of their love. We must love him, not only for his goodness, because *he preserves the faithful*, but for his justice, because *he plentifully rewards the proud doer* (who would ruin those whom he preserves), according to their pride. Some take it in a good sense; he plentifully rewards the magnificent (or excellent) doer, that is daringly good, whose heart, like Jehoshaphat's, is lifted up in the ways of the Lord. He rewards him that does well, but plentifully rewards him that does excellently well. 2. He would have them set their hope in God (v. 24): "*Be of good courage: have a good heart on it; whatever difficulties or dangers you may meet with, the God you trust in shall by that trust strengthen your heart.*" Those that hope in God have reason to be of good courage, and let their hearts be strong, for, as nothing truly evil can befall them, so nothing truly good for them shall be wanting to them.

In singing this we should animate ourselves and one another to proceed and persevere in our Christian course, whatever threatens us, and whoever frowns upon us.

PSALM XXXII.

This psalm, though it speaks not of Christ, as many of the psalms we have hitherto met with have done, has yet a great deal of gospel in it. The apostle tells us that David, in this psalm, describes "the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputes righteousness without works," Rom. iv. 6. We have here a summary, 1. Of gospel grace in the pardon of sin (ver. 1, 2), in divine protection (ver. 7), and divine guidance, ver. 8. II. Of gospel duty. To confess sin (ver. 3—5), to pray (ver. 6), to govern ourselves well (ver. 9, 10), and to rejoice in God, ver. 11. The way to obtain these privileges is to make conscience of these duties, which we ought to think of—of the former for our comfort, of the latter for our quickening, when we sing this psalm. Grotius thinks it was designed to be sung on the day of atonement.

A psalm of David, Maschil.

BLESSED is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. 2 Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. 3 When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. 4 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. 5 I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah. 6 For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.

This psalm is entitled *Maschil*, which some take to be only the name of the tune to which it was set and was to be sung. But others think it is significant; our margin reads it,

A psalm of David giving instruction, and there is nothing in which we have more need of instruction than in the nature of true blessedness, wherein it consists and the way that leads to it—what we must do that we may be happy. There are several things in which these verses instruct us. In general, we are here taught that our happiness consists in the favour of God, and not in the wealth of this world—in spiritual blessings, and not the good things of this world. When David says (i. 1), *Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly*, and (cxix. 1), *Blessed are the undefiled in the way*, the meaning is, “This is the character of the blessed man; and he that has not this character cannot expect to be happy:” but when it is here said, *Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven*, the meaning is, “This is the ground of his blessedness: this is that fundamental privilege from which all the other ingredients of his blessedness flow.” In particular, we are here instructed,

I. Concerning the nature of the pardon of sin. This is that which we all need and are undone without; we are therefore concerned to be very solicitous and inquisitive about it. 1. It is the forgiving of transgression. *Sin is the transgression of the law*. Upon our repentance, the transgression is forgiven; that is, the obligation to punishment which we lay under, by virtue of the sentence of the law, is vacated and cancelled; it is *lifted off* (so some read it), that by the pardon of it we may be eased of a burden, a heavy burden, like a load on the back, that makes us stoop, or a load on the stomach, that makes us sick, or a load on the spirits, that makes us sink. The remission of sins gives rest and relief to those that were *weary and heavily laden*, Matt. xi. 28. 2. It is the covering of sin, as nakedness is covered, that it may not appear to our shame, Rev. iii. 18. One of the first symptoms of guilt in our first parents was blushing at their own nakedness. Sin makes us loathsome in the sight of God and utterly unfit for communion with him, and, when conscience is awakened, it makes us loathsome to ourselves too; but, when sin is pardoned, it is covered with the robe of Christ's righteousness, like the coats of skins where-with God clothed Adam and Eve (an emblem of the remission of sins), so that God is no longer displeased with us, but perfectly reconciled. They are not covered from us (no; *My sin is ever before me*) nor covered from God's omniscience, but from his vindictive justice. When he pardons sin he *remembers it no more*, he *casts it behind his back*, it *shall be sought for and not found*, and the sinner, being thus reconciled to God, begins to be reconciled to himself. 3. It is the not imputing of iniquity, not laying it to the sinner's charge, not proceeding against him for it according to the strictness of the law, not dealing with him as he deserves. The righteousness of Christ being imputed to us, and we

being made the righteousness of God in him, our iniquity is not imputed, God having *laid upon him the iniquity of us all* and made him *sin for us*. Observe, Not to impute iniquity is God's act, for he is the Judge. *It is God that justifies*.

II. Concerning the character of those whose sins are pardoned: *in whose spirit there is no guile*. He does not say, “There is no guilt” (for who is there that lives and sins not?), but *no guile*; the pardoned sinner is one that does not dissemble with God in his professions of repentance and faith, nor in his prayers for peace or pardon, but in all these is sincere and means as he says—that does not repent with a purpose to sin again, and then sin with a purpose to repent again, as a learned interpreter glosses upon it. Those that design honestly, that are really what they profess to be, are the Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile.

III. Concerning the happiness of a justified state: *Blessednesses are to the man whose iniquity is forgiven*, all manner of blessings, sufficient to make him completely blessed. That is taken away which incurred the curse and obstructed the blessing; and then God will pour out blessings till there be no room to receive them. The forgiveness of sin is that article of the covenant which is the reason and ground of all the rest. *For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness*, Heb. viii. 12.

IV. Concerning the uncomfortable condition of an unhumiliated sinner, that sees his guilt, but is not yet brought to make a penitent confession of it. This David describes very pathetically, from his own sad experience (v. 3, 4): *While I kept silence my bones waxed old*. Those may be said to keep silence who stifle their convictions, who, when they cannot but see the evil of sin and their danger by reason of it, ease themselves by not thinking of it and diverting their minds to something else, as Cain to the building of a city,—*who cry not when God binds them*,—who will not unburden their consciences by a penitent confession, nor seek for peace, as they ought, by faithful and fervent prayer,—and who choose rather to pine away in their iniquities than to take the method which God has appointed of finding rest for their souls. Let such expect that their smothered convictions will be a fire in their bones, and the wounds of sin, not opened, will fester, and grow intolerably painful. If conscience be seared, the case is so much the more dangerous; but, if it be startled and awake, it will be heard. The hand of divine wrath will be felt lying heavily upon the soul, and the anguish of the spirit will affect the body; to that degree David experienced it, so that when he was young his bones waxed old; and even his silence made him *roar all the day long*, as if he had been under some grievous pain and distemper of body, when really the cause of all his uneasiness was the struggle he felt in his own bosom between his con-

victions and his corruptions. Note, *He that covers his sin shall not prosper*; some inward trouble is required in repentance, but there is much worse in impenitency.

V. Concerning the true and only way to peace of conscience. We are here taught to confess our sins, that they may be forgiven, to declare them, that we may be justified. This course David took: *I acknowledged my sin unto thee*, and no longer hid my iniquity, v. 5. Note, Those that would have the comfort of the pardon of their sins must take shame to themselves by a penitent confession of them. We must confess the fact of sin, and be particular in it (*Thus and thus have I done*), confess the fault of sin, aggravate it, and lay a load upon ourselves for it (*I have done very wickedly*), confess the justice of the punishment we have been under for it (*The Lord is just in all that is brought upon us*), and that we deserve much worse—*I am no more worthy to be called thy son*. We must confess sin with shame and holy blushing, with fear and holy trembling.

VI. Concerning God's readiness to pardon sin to those who truly repent of it: *"I said, I will confess* (I sincerely resolved upon it, hesitated no longer, but came to a point, that I would make a free and ingenuous confession of my sins) *and immediately thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin*, and gavest me the comfort of the pardon in my own conscience; immediately I found rest to my soul." Note, God is more ready to pardon sin, upon our repentance, than we are to repent in order to the obtaining of pardon. It was with much ado that David was here brought to confess his sins; he was put to the rack before he was brought to do it (v. 3, 4), he held out long, and would not surrender till it came to the last extremity; but, when he did offer to surrender, see how quickly, how easily, he obtained good terms: *"I did but say, I will confess, and thou forgavest."* Thus the father of the prodigal saw his returning son *when he was yet afar off*, and ran to meet him with the kiss that sealed his pardon. What an encouragement is this to poor penitents, and what an assurance does it give us that, *if we confess our sins*, we shall find God, not only faithful and just, but gracious and kind, to forgive us our sins!

VII. Concerning the good use that we are to make of the experience David had had of God's readiness to forgive his sins (v. 6): *For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee*. Note, 1. All godly people are praying people. As soon as ever Paul was converted, *Behold, he prays*, Acts ix. 11. You may as soon find a living man without breath as a living Christian without prayer. 2. The instructions given us concerning the happiness of those whose sins are pardoned, and the easiness of obtaining the pardon, should engage and encourage us to pray, and particularly to pray, *God be merciful to us sinners*. For this shall every one that is well inclined

be earnest with God in prayer, and *come boldly to the throne of grace*, with hopes to obtain mercy, Heb. iv. 16. 3. Those that would speed in prayer must seek the Lord in a time when he will be found. When, by his providence, he calls them to seek him, and by his Spirit stirs them up to seek him, they must go speedily to seek the Lord (Zech. viii. 21) and lose no time, lest death cut them off, and then it will be too late to seek him, Isa. lv. 6. *Behold, now is the accepted time*, 2 Cor. vi. 2. 4. Those that are sincere and abundant in prayer will find the benefit of it when they are in trouble: *Surely in the floods of great waters, which are very threatening, they shall not come nigh them*, to terrify them, or create them any uneasiness, much less shall they overwhelm them. Those that have God nigh unto them in all that which they call upon him for, as all upright, penitent, praying people have, are so guarded, so advanced, that no waters—no, not great waters—no, not floods of them, can come nigh them, to hurt them. As the temptations of the wicked one touch them not (1 John v. 18), so neither do the troubles of this evil world; these fiery darts, of both kinds, drop short of them.

7 Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah. 8 I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. 9 Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee. 10 Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about. 11 Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.

David is here improving the experience he had had of the comfort of pardoning mercy.

I. He speaks to God, and professes his confidence in him and expectation from him, v. 7. Having tasted the sweetness of divine grace to a penitent sinner, he cannot doubt of the continuance of that grace to a praying saint, and that in that grace he should find both safety and joy. 1. Safety: *"Thou art my hiding-place"*; when by faith I have recourse to thee I see all the reason in the world to be easy, and to think myself out of the reach of any real evil. *Thou shalt preserve me from trouble*, from the sting of it, and from the strokes of it as far as is good for me. *Thou shalt preserve me from such trouble as I was in while I kept silence*," v. 3. When God has pardoned our sins, if he leave us to ourselves, we shall soon run as far in debt again as ever and plunge ourselves again into the same

gulf; and therefore, when we have received the comfort of our remission, we must fly to the grace of God to be preserved from returning to folly again, and having our hearts again hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. God keeps his people from trouble by keeping them from sin. 2. Joy: "Thou shalt not only deliver me, but *compass me about with songs of deliverance*: which way soever I look I shall see occasion to rejoice and to praise God; and my friends also shall compass me about in the great congregation, to join with me in songs of praise: they shall join their songs of deliverance with mine. *As every one that is godly shall pray with me, so they shall give thanks with me.*"

II. He turns his speech to the children of men. Being himself converted, he does what he can to *strengthen his brethren* (Luke xxii. 32): *I will instruct thee, whoever thou art that desirest instruction, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go, v. 8.* Thus, in another of his penitential psalms, he resolves that when God should have restored to him the joy of his salvation he would teach transgressors his ways, and do what he could to convert sinners to God, as well as to comfort those that were converted, li. 12, 13. When Solomon became a penitent he immediately became a preacher, Eccl. i. 1. Those are best able to teach others the grace of God who have themselves had the experience of it: and those who are themselves taught of God ought to *tell others what he has done for their souls* (xvi. 16) and so teach them. *I will guide thee with my eye.* Some apply this to God's conduct and direction. He teaches us by his word and guides us with his eye, by the secret intimations of his will in the hints and turns of Providence, which he enables his people to understand and take direction from, as a master makes a servant know his mind by a wink of his eye. When Christ turned and looked upon Peter he guided him with his eye. But it is rather to be taken as David's promise to those who sat under his instruction, his own children and family especially: *"I will counsel thee; my eye shall be upon thee"* (so the margin reads it); *"I will give thee the best counsel I can and then observe whether thou takest it or no."* Those that are taught in the word should be under the constant inspection of those that teach them; spiritual guides must be overseers. In this application of the foregoing doctrine concerning the blessedness of those whose sins are pardoned we have a word to sinners and a word to saints; and this is rightly dividing the word of truth and giving to each their portion.

1. Here is a word of caution to sinners, and a good reason is given for it. (1.) The caution is, not to be unruly and ungovernable: *Be you not as the horse and the mule, which have no understanding, v. 9.* When the psalmist would reproach himself for the sins he repented of he compared himself to a *beast before God* (so foolish have I been and

ignorant, lxxiii. 22) and therefore warns others not to be so. It is our honour and happiness that we have understanding, that we are capable of being governed by reason and of reasoning with ourselves. Let us therefore use the faculties we have, and act rationally. The horse and mule must be managed *with bit and bridle, lest they come near us*, to do us a mischief, or (as some read it) that they may come near to us, to do us service, that they may *obey us*, Jam. iii. 3. Let us not be like them; let us not be hurried by appetite and passion, at any time, to go contrary to the dictates of right reason and to our true interest. If sinners would be governed and determined by these, they would soon become saints and would not go a step further in their sinful courses; where there is renewing grace there is no need of the bit and bridle of restraining grace. (2.) The reason for this caution is because the way of sin which we would persuade you to forsake will certainly end in sorrow (v. 10): *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked, which will not only spoil their vain and carnal mirth, and put an end to it, but will make them pay dearly for it.* Sin will have sorrow, if not repented of, everlasting sorrow. It was part of the sentence, *I will greatly multiply thy sorrows.* "Be wise for yourselves therefore, and turn from your wickedness, that you may prevent those sorrows, those many sorrows."

2. Here is a word of comfort to saints, and a good reason is given for that too. (1.) They are assured that if they will but trust in the Lord, and keep closely to him, *mercy shall compass them about on every side* (v. 10), so that they shall not depart from God, for that mercy shall keep them in, nor shall any real evil break in upon them, for that mercy shall keep it out. (2.) They are therefore commanded to *be glad in the Lord, and to rejoice in him*, to such a degree as even to *shout for joy, v. 11.* Let them be so transported with this holy joy as not to be able to contain themselves; and let them affect others with it, that they also may see that a life of communion with God is the most pleasant and comfortable life we can live in this world. This is that present bliss which the upright in heart, and they only, are entitled to and qualified for.

PSALM XXXIII.

This is a psalm of praise; it is probable that David was the penman of it, but we are not told so, because God would have us look above the penmen of sacred writ, to that blessed Spirit that moved and guided them. The psalmist, in this psalm, 1. Calls upon the righteous to praise God, ver. 1-3. 2. Furnishes us with matter for praise. We must praise God, 1. For his justice, goodness, and truth, appearing in his word, and in all his works, ver. 4, 5. 2. For his power appearing in the work of creation, ver. 6-9. 3. For the sovereignty of his providence in the government of the world, ver. 10, 11, and again ver. 13-17. 4. For the peculiar favour which he bears to his own chosen people, which encourages them to trust in him, ver. 12 and again ver. 18-22. We need not be at a loss for proper thoughts in singing this psalm, which so naturally expresses the pious affections of a devout soul towards God.

REJOICE in the LORD, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright, 2 Praise the LORD with

harp : sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. 3 Sing unto him a new song ; play skillfully with a loud noise. 4 For the word of the LORD is right ; and all his works are done in truth. 5 He loveth righteousness and judgment : the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD. 6 By the word of the LORD were the heavens made ; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. 7 He gathereth the waters of the sea together as a heap : he layeth up the depth in storehouses. 8 Let all the earth fear the LORD : let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. 9 For he spake, and it was done ; he commanded, and it stood fast. 10 The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought : he maketh the devices of the people of none effect. 11 The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.

Four things the psalmist expresses in these verses :—

I. The great desire he had that God might be praised. He did not think he did it so well himself, but that he wished others also might be employed in this work ; the more the better, in this concert : it is the more like heaven. 1. Holy joy is the heart and soul of praise, and that is here pressed upon all good people (v. 1) : *Rejoice in the Lord, you righteous* ; so the foregoing psalm concluded and so this begins ; for all our religious exercises should both begin and end with a holy complacency and triumph in God as the best of beings and best of friends. 2. Thankful praise is the breath and language of holy joy ; and that also is here required of us (v. 2) : *"Praise the Lord ; speak well of him, and give him the glory due to his name."* 3. Religious songs are the proper expressions of thankful praise ; those are here required (v. 3) : *"Sing unto him a new song, the best you have, not that which by frequent use is worn thread-bare, but that which, being new, is most likely to move the affections, a new song for new mercies and upon every new occasion, for those compassions which are new every morning."* Music was then used, by the appointment of David, with the temple-songs, that they might be the better sung ; and this also is here called for (v. 2) : *Sing unto him with the psaltery.* Here is, (1.) A good rule for this duty : *"Do it skillfully, and with a loud noise ; let it have the best both of head and heart ; let it be done intelligently and with a clear head, affectionately and with a warm heart."* (2.) A good reason

for this duty : *For praise is comely for the upright.* It is well pleasing to God (the garments of praise add much to the comeliness which God puts upon his people) and it is an excellent ornament to our profession. *It becomes the upright, whom God has put so much honour upon, to give honour to him.* The upright praise God in a comely manner, for they praise him with their hearts, that is praising him with their glory ; whereas the praises of hypocrites are awkward and uncomely, like a *parable in the mouth of fools*, Prov. xxvi. 7.

II. The high thoughts he had of God, and of his infinite perfections, v. 4, 5. God makes himself known to us, 1. In his word, here put for all divine revelation, all that which God at sundry times and in divers manners spoke to the children of men, and that is all right, there is nothing amiss in it ; his commands exactly agree with the rules of equity and the eternal reasons of good and evil. His promises are all wise and good and inviolably sure, and there is no iniquity in his threatenings, but even those are designed for our good, by deterring us from evil. God's word is right, and therefore all our deviations from it are wrong, and we are then in the right when we agree with it. 2. In his works, and those are all done in truth, all according to his counsels, which are called the *scriptures of truth*, Dan. x. 21. The copy in all God's works agrees exactly with the great original, the plan laid in the Eternal Mind, and varies not in the least jot. God has made it to appear in his works, (1.) That he is a God of inflexible justice : *He loveth righteousness and judgment.* There is nothing but righteousness in the sentence he passes and judgment in the execution of it. He never did nor can do wrong to any of his creatures, but is always ready to give redress to those that are wronged, and does it with delight. He takes pleasure in those that are righteous. He is himself the righteous Lord, and therefore loveth righteousness. (2.) That he is a God of inexhaustible bounty : *The earth is full of his goodness*, that is, of the proofs and instances of it. The benign influences which the earth receives from above, and the fruits it is thereby enabled to produce, the provision that is made both for man and beast, and the common blessings with which all the nations of the earth are blessed, plainly declare that *the earth is full of his goodness*—the darkest, the coldest, the hottest, and the most dry and desert part of it not excepted. What a pity is it that this earth, which is so full of God's goodness, should be so empty of his praises, and that of the multitudes that live upon his bounty there are so few that live to his glory !

III. The conviction he was under of the almighty power of God, evidenced in the creation of the world. We "believe in God," and therefore we praise him as "the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth," so

we are here taught to praise him. Observe,

1. How God made the world, and brought all things into being. (1.) How easily: All things were made *by the word of the Lord and by the breath of his mouth*. Christ is the Word, the Spirit is the breath, so that God the Father made the world, as he rules it and redeems it, by his Son and Spirit. *He spoke, and he commanded* (v. 9), and that was enough; there needed no more. With men saying and doing are two things, but it is not so with God. By the Word and Spirit of God as the world was made, so was man, that little world. God said, *Let us make man*, and he *breathed into him the breath of life*. By the Word and Spirit the church is built, that new world, and grace wrought in the soul, that new man, that new creation. What cannot that power do which with a word made a world! (2.) How effectually it was done: *And it stood fast*. What God does he does to purpose; he does it and it stands fast. *Whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever*, Eccl. iii. 14. It is by virtue of that command to stand fast that things *continue to this day according to God's ordinance*, cxix. 91.

2. What he made. He made all things, but notice is here taken, (1.) *Of the heavens, and the host of them*, v. 6. The visible heavens, and the sun, moon, and stars, their hosts—the highest heavens, and the angels, their hosts. (2.) *Of the waters, and the treasures of them*, v. 7. The earth was at first covered with the water, and, being heavier, must of course subside and sink under it; but, to show from the very first that the God of nature is not tied to the ordinary method of nature and the usual operations of his powers, with a word's speaking *he gathered the waters together on a heap*, that the dry land might appear, yet left them not to continue on a heap, but *laid up the depth in store-houses*, not only in the flats where the seas make their beds, and in which they are locked up by the sand on the shore as in store-houses, but in secret subterraneous caverns, where they are hidden from the eyes of all living, but were reserved as in a store-house for that day when those fountains of the great deep were to be broken up; and they are still laid up there in store, for what use the great Master of the house knows best.

3. What use is to be made of this (v. 8): *Let all the earth fear the Lord, and stand in awe of him*; that is, let all the children of men worship him and give glory to him, xcvi. 5, 6. The everlasting gospel gives this as the reason why we must worship God, because he made the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, Rev. xiv. 6, 7. Let us all fear him, that is, dread his wrath and displeasure, and be afraid of having him our enemy and of standing it out against him. Let us not dare to offend him who having this power no doubt has all power in his hand. It is dangerous being at war with him who has the host of

heaven for his armies and the depths of the sea for his magazines, and therefore it is wisdom to desire conditions of peace, see Jer. v. 22.

IV. The satisfaction he had of God's sovereignty and dominion, v. 10, 11. He overrules all the counsels of men, and makes them, contrary to their intention, serviceable to his counsels. Come and see with an eye of faith God in the throne, 1. Frustrating the devices of his enemies: *He bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought*, so that what they imagine against him and his kingdom proves *a vain thing* (ii. 1); the counsel of Ahithophel is turned into foolishness; Haman's plot is baffled. Though the design he laid ever so deep, and the hopes raised upon it ever so high, yet, if God says *it shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass*; it is all to no purpose. 2. Fulfilling his own decrees: *The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever*. It is immutable in itself, *for he is in one mind, and who can turn him?* The execution of it may be opposed, but cannot in the least be obstructed by any created power. Through all the revolutions of time God never changed his measures, but in every event, even that which to us is most surprising, the eternal counsel of God is fulfilled, nor can any thing prevent its being accomplished in its time. With what pleasure to ourselves may we in singing this give praise to God! How easy may this thought make us at all times, that God governs the world, that he did it in infinite wisdom before we were born, and will do it when we are silent in the dust!

12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance. 13 The LORD looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men. 14 From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth. 15 He fashioneth their hearts alike; he considereth all their works. 16 There is no king saved by the multitude of a host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. 17 A horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver *any* by his great strength. 18 Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; 19 To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine. 20 Our soul waiteth for the LORD: he is our help and our shield. 21 For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name. 22 Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.

We are here taught to give to God the glory,

I. Of his common providence towards all the children of men. Though he has endued man with understanding and freedom of will, yet he reserves to himself the government of him, and even of those very faculties by which he is qualified to govern himself.

1. The children of men are all under his eye, even their hearts are so; and all the motions and operations of their souls, which none know but they themselves, he knows better than they themselves, *v. 13, 14*. Though the residence of God's glory is in the highest heavens, yet thence he not only has a prospect of all the earth, but a particular inspection of all the inhabitants of the earth. He not only beholds them, but he *looks upon them*; he looks narrowly upon them (so the word here used is sometimes rendered), so narrowly that not the least thought can escape his observation. Atheists think that, because he dwells above in heaven, he cannot, or will not, take notice of what is done here in this lower world; but thence, high as it is, he sees us all, and all persons and things are naked and open before him. 2. Their hearts, as well as their times, are all in his hand: *He fashions their hearts*. He made them at first, formed the spirit of each man within him, then when he brought him into being. Hence he is called *the Father of spirits*: and this is a good argument to prove that he perfectly knows them. The artist that made the clock, can account for the motions of every wheel. David uses this argument with application to himself, *cxix. 1, 14*. He still moulds the hearts of men, turns them as the rivers of water, which way soever he pleases, to serve his own purposes, darkens or enlightens men's understandings, stiffens or bows their wills, according as he is pleased to make use of them. He that fashions men's hearts fashions them alike. It is in hearts as in faces, though there is a great difference, and such a variety as that no two faces are exactly of the same features, nor any two hearts exactly of the same temper, yet there is such a similitude that, in some things, all faces and all hearts agree, *as in water face answers to face*, Prov. xxvii. 19. *He fashions them together* (so some read it); as the wheels of a watch, though of different shapes, sizes, and motions, are yet all put together, to serve one and the same purpose, so the hearts of men and their dispositions, however varying from each other and seeming to contradict one another, are yet all overruled to serve the divine purpose, which is one. 3. They, and all they do, are obnoxious to his judgment; for he considers all their works, not only knows them, but weighs them, that he may render to every man according to his works, in the day, in the world, of retribution, in the judgment, and to eternity. 4. All the powers of the creature have a dependence upon him, and are of no account, of no avail at all, without him, *v. 16, 17*. It is much

for the honour of God that not only no force can prevail in opposition to him, but that no force can act but in dependence on him and by a power derived from him. (1.) The strength of a king is nothing without God. No king is sacred by his royal prerogatives, or the authority with which he is invested; for the powers that are, of that kind, are ordained of God, and are what he makes them, and no more. David was a king, and a man of war from his youth, and yet acknowledged God to be his only protector and Saviour. (2.) The strength of an army is nothing without God. *The multitude of a host* cannot secure those under whose command they act, unless God make them a security to them. A great army cannot be sure of victory; for, when God pleases, one shall chase a thousand. (3.) The strength of a giant is nothing without God. *A mighty man*, such as Goliath was, *is not delivered by his much strength*, when his day comes to fall. Neither the firmness and activity of his body nor the stoutness and resolution of his mind will stand him in any stead, any further than God is pleased to give him success. *Let not the strong man then glory in his strength*, but let us all strengthen ourselves in the Lord our God, go forth, and go on, in his strength. (4.) The strength of a horse is nothing without God (*v. 17*): *A horse is a vain thing for safety*. In war horses were then so highly accounted of, and so much depended on, that God forbade the kings of Israel to multiply horses (Deut. xvii. 16), lest they should be tempted to trust to them and their confidence should thereby be taken off from God. David houghed the horses of the Syrians (2 Sam. viii. 4); here he houghs all the horses in the world, by pronouncing a horse a vain thing for safety in the day of battle. If the war-horse be unruly and ill-managed, he may hurry his rider into danger instead of carrying him out of danger. If he be killed under him, he may be his death, instead of saving his life. It is therefore our interest to make sure God's favour towards us, and then we may be sure of his power engaged for us, and need not fear whatever is against us.

II. We are to give God the glory of his special grace. In the midst of his acknowledgments of God's providence he pronounces those blessed that have Jehovah for their God, who governs the world, and has wherewithal to help them in every time of need, while those were miserable who had this and the other Baal for their god, which was so far from being able to hear and help them that it was itself senseless and helpless (*v. 12*): *Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord*, even Israel, who had the knowledge of the true God and were taken into covenant with him, and all others who own God for theirs and are owned by him; for they also, whatever nation they are of, are of the spiritual seed of Abraham. 1. It is their wisdom that they take the Lord for their God, that they direct

their homage and adoration there where it is due and where the payment of it will not be in vain. 2. It is their happiness that they are the people whom God has chosen for his own inheritance, whom he is pleased with, and honoured in, and whom he protects and takes care of, whom he cultivates and improves as a man does his inheritance, Deut. xxxii. 9. Now let us observe here, to the honour of divine grace, (1.) The regard which God has to his people, v. 18, 19. God beholds all the sons of men with an eye of observation, but his eye of favour and complacency is upon those that fear him. He looks upon them with delight, as the father on his children, as the bridegroom on his spouse, Isa. lxii. 5. While those that depend on arms and armies, on chariots and horses, perish in the disappointment of their expectations, God's people, under his protection, are safe, for he shall deliver their soul from death when there seems to be but a step between them and it. If he do not deliver the body from temporal death, yet he will deliver the soul from spiritual and eternal death. Their souls, whatever happens, shall live and praise him, either in this world or in a better. From his bounty they shall be supplied with all necessities. He shall *keep them alive in famine*; when others die for want, they shall live, which shall make it a distinguishing mercy. When visible means fail, God will find out some way or other to supply them. He does not say that he will give them abundance (they have no reason either to desire it or to expect it), but he will keep them alive; they shall not starve; and, when destroying judgments are abroad, it ought to be reckoned a great favour, for it is a very striking one, and lays us under peculiar obligations, to have our lives given us for a prey. Those that have the Lord for their God shall find him their help and their shield, v. 20. In their difficulties he will assist them; they shall be helped over them, helped through them. In their dangers he will secure them, so that they shall not receive any real damage. (2.) The regard which God's people have to him and which we ought to have in consideration of this. [1.] We must wait for God. We must attend the motions of his providence, and accommodate ourselves to them, and patiently expect the issue of them. Our souls must wait for him, v. 20. We must not only in word and tongue profess a believing regard to God, but it must be inward and sincere, a secret and silent attendance on him. [2.] We must rely on God, *hope in his mercy*, in the goodness of his nature, though we have not an express promise to depend upon. Those that fear God and his wrath must hope in God and his mercy; for there is no flying from God, but by flying to him. These pious dispositions will not only consist together, but befriend each other, a holy fear of God and yet at the same time a hope in his mercy. This is *trusting in his holy name* (v. 21), in all

that whereby he has made known himself to us, for our encouragement to serve him. [3.] We must rejoice in God, v. 21. Those do not truly rest in God, or do not know the unspeakable advantage they have by so doing, who do not rejoice in him at all times; because those that hope in God hope for an eternal fulness of joy in his presence. [4.] We must seek to him for that mercy which we hope in, v. 22. Our expectations from God are not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage, our applications to him; he will be sought unto for that which he has promised, and therefore the psalm concludes with a short but comprehensive prayer, "*Let thy mercy, O Lord! be upon us*; let us always have the comfort and benefit of it, not according as we merit from thee, but *according as we hope in thee*, that is, according to the promise which thou hast in thy word given to us and according to the faith which thou hast by thy Spirit and grace wrought in us." If, in singing these verses, we put forth a dependence upon God, and let out our desires towards him, we make melody with our hearts to the Lord.

PSALM XXXIV.

This psalm was penned upon a particular occasion, as appears by the title, and yet there is little in it peculiar to that occasion, but that which is general, both by way of thanksgiving to God and instruction to us. I. He praises God for the experience which he and others had of his goodness, ver. 1—5. II. He encourages all good people to trust in God and to seek to him, ver. 7—10. III. He gives good counsel to us all, as unto children, to take heed of sin, and to make conscience of our duty both to God and man, ver. 11—14. IV. To enforce this good counsel he shows God's favour to the righteous and his displeasure against the wicked, in which he sets before us good and evil, the blessing and the curse, ver. 15—22. So that, in singing this psalm, we are both to give glory to God and to teach and admonish ourselves and one another.

A psalm of David when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he departed.

I WILL bless the Lord at all times: his praise *shall* continually be in my mouth. 2 My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear *thereof*, and be glad. 3 O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together. 4 I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. 5 They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. 6 This poor man cried, and the LORD heard *him*, and saved him out of all his troubles. 7 The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. 8 O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man *that* trusteth in him. 9 O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for *there* is no want to them that fear him. 10 The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good *thing*.

The title of this psalm tells us both who penned it and upon what occasion it was penned. David, being forced to flee from his country, which was made too hot for him by the rage of Saul, sought shelter as near it as he could, in the land of the Philistines. There it was soon discovered who he was, and he was brought before the king, who, in the narrative, is called *Achish* (his proper name), here *Abimelech* (his title); and lest he should be treated as a spy, or one that came thither upon design, he feigned himself to be a mad-man (such there have been in every age, that even by idiots men might be taught to give God thanks for the use of their reason), that *Achish* might dismiss him as a contemptible man, rather than take cognizance of him as a dangerous man. And it had the effect he desired; by this stratagem he escaped the hand that otherwise would have handled him roughly. Now, 1. We cannot justify David in this dissimulation. It ill became an honest man to feign himself to be what he was not, and a man of honour to feign himself to be a fool and a mad-man. If, in sport, we mimic those who have not so good an understanding as we think we have, we forget that God might have made their case ours. 2. Yet we cannot but wonder at the composure of his spirit, and how far he was from any change of that, when he changed his behaviour. Even when he was in that fright, or rather in that danger only, his heart was so fixed, trusting in God, that even then he penned this excellent psalm, which has as much in it of the marks of a calm sedate spirit as any psalm in all the book; and there is something curious too in the composition, for it is what is called an alphabetical psalm, that is, a psalm in which every verse begins with each letter in its order as it stands in the Hebrew alphabet. Happy are those who can thus keep their temper, and keep their graces in exercise, even when they are tempted to change their behaviour. In this former part of the psalm,

1. David engages and excites himself to praise God. Though it was his fault that he changed his behaviour, yet it was God's mercy that he escaped, and the mercy was so much the greater in that God did not deal with him according to the desert of his dissimulation, and we must in every thing give thanks. He resolves, 1. That he will praise God constantly: *I will bless the Lord at all times*, upon all occasions. He resolves to keep up stated times for this duty, to lay hold of all opportunities for it, and to renew his praises upon every fresh occurrence that furnished him with matter. If we hope to spend our eternity in praising God, it is fit that we should spend as much as may be of our time in this work. 2. That he will praise him openly: *His praise shall continually be in my mouth*. Thus he would show how forward he was to own his obligations to the mercy of God and how desirous to make others also sensible of theirs. 3. That he will praise him

heartily: *"My soul shall make her boast in the Lord, in my relation to him, my interest in him, and expectations from him."* It is not vainglory to glory in the Lord.

II. He calls upon others to join with him herein. He expects they will (v. 2): *"The humble shall hear thereof, both of my deliverance and of my thankfulness, and be glad that a good man has so much favour shown him and a good God so much honour done him."* Those have most comfort in God's mercies, both to others and to themselves, that are humble, and have the least confidence in their own merit and sufficiency. It pleased David to think that God's favours to him would rejoice the heart of every Israelite. Three things he would have us all to concur with him in:—

1. In great and high thoughts of God, which we should express in magnifying him and exalting his name, v. 3. We cannot make God greater or higher than he is; but if we adore him as infinitely great, and higher than the highest, he is pleased to reckon this magnifying and exalting him. This we must do together. God's praises sound best in concert, for so we praise him as the angels do in heaven. Those that share in God's favour, as all the saints do, should concur in his praises; and we should be as desirous of the assistance of our friends in returning thanks for mercies as in praying for them. We have reason to join in thanksgiving to God,

(1.) For his readiness to hear prayer, which all the saints have had the comfort of; for he never said to any of them, *Seek you me in vain*.

[1.] David, for his part, will give it under his hand that he has found him a prayer-hearing God (v. 4): *"I sought the Lord, in my distress, entreated his favour, begged his help, and he heard me, answered my request immediately, and delivered me from all my fears, both from the death I feared and from the disquietude and disturbance produced by my fear of it."* The former he does by his providence working for us, the latter by his grace working in us, to silence our fears and still the tumult of the spirits; this latter is the greater mercy of the two, because the thing we fear is our trouble only, but our unbelieving distrustful fear of it is our sin; nay, it is often more our torment too than the thing itself would be, which perhaps would only touch the bone and the flesh, while the fear would prey upon the spirits and put us out of the possession of our own soul. David's prayers helped to silence his fears; having sought the Lord, and left his case with him, he could wait the event with great composure.

"But David was a great and eminent man, we may not expect to be favoured as he was; have any others ever experienced the like benefit by prayer?" Yes, [2.] Many besides him have looked unto God by faith and prayer, and have been lightened by it, v. 5. It has wonderfully revived and comforted them; witness *Hannah*, who, when she had prayed, *went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was*

no more sad. When we look to the world we are darkened, we are perplexed, and at a loss; but, when we look to God, from him we have the light both of direction and joy, and our way is made both plain and pleasant. These here spoken of, that looked unto God, had their expectations raised, and the event did not frustrate them: *Their faces were not ashamed of their confidence.* "But perhaps these also were persons of great eminence, like David himself, and upon that account were highly favoured, or their numbers made them considerable;" nay, [3.] *This poor man cried,* a single person, mean and inconsiderable, whom no man looked upon with any respect or looked after with any concern; yet he was as welcome to the throne of grace as David or any of his worthies: *The Lord heard him,* took cognizance of his case and of his prayers, and *saved him out of all his troubles,* v. 6. *God will regard the prayer of the destitute,* cii. 17. See Isa. lvii. 15.

(2.) For the ministration of the good angels about us (v. 7): *The angel of the Lord,* a guard of angels (so some), but as unanimous in their service as if they were but one, or a guardian angel, *encamps round about those that fear God,* as the life-guard about the prince, and *delivers them.* God makes use of the attendance of the good spirits for the protection of his people from the malice and power of evil spirits; and the holy angels do us more good offices every day than we are aware of. Though in dignity and in capacity of nature they are very much superior to us,—though they retain their primitive rectitude, which we have lost,—though they have constant employment in the upper world, the employment of praising God, and are entitled to a constant rest and bliss there,—yet in obedience to their Maker, and in love to those that bear his image, they condescend to minister to the saints, and stand up for them against the powers of darkness; they not only visit them, but encamp round about them, acting for their good as really, though not as sensibly, as for Jacob's (Gen. xxxii. 1), and Elisha's, 2 Kings vi. 17. All the glory be to the God of the angels.

2. He would have us to join with him in kind and good thoughts of God (v. 8): *O taste and see that the Lord is good!* The goodness of God includes both the beauty and amiableness of his being and the bounty and beneficence of his providence and grace; and accordingly, (1.) We must taste that he is a bountiful benefactor, relish the goodness of God in all his gifts to us, and reckon that the savour and sweetness of them. Let God's goodness be rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel. (2.) We must see that he is a beautiful being, and delight in the contemplation of his infinite perfections. By taste and sight we both make discoveries and take complacency. Taste and see God's goodness, that is, take notice of it and take the comfort of it, 1 Pet. ii. 3. He is good, for he makes all those that trust in him truly blessed; let

us therefore be so convinced of his goodness as thereby to be encouraged in the worst of times to trust in him.

3. He would have us join with him in a resolution to seek God and serve him, and continue in his fear (v. 9): *O fear the Lord! you his saints.* When we taste and see that he is good we must not forget that he is great and greatly to be feared; nay, even his goodness is the proper object of a filial reverence and awe. *They shall fear the Lord and his goodness,* Hos. iii. 5. *Fear the Lord;* that is, worship him, and make conscience of your duty to him in every thing, not fear him and shun him, but fear him and seek him (v. 10) as a people seek unto their God; address yourselves to him and portion yourselves in him. To encourage us to fear God and seek him, it is here promised that those that do so, even in this wanting world, *shall want no good thing* (Heb. *They shall not want all good things*); they shall so have all good things that they shall have no reason to complain of the want of any. As to the things of the other world, they shall have grace sufficient for the support of the spiritual life (2 Cor. xii. 9; Ps. lxxxiv. 11); and, as to this life, they shall have what is necessary to the support of it from the hand of God: as a Father, he will feed them with food convenient. What further comforts they desire they shall have, as far as Infinite Wisdom sees good, and what they want in one thing shall be made up in another. What God denies them he will give them grace to be content without and then they do not want it, Deut. iii. 26. Paul had all and abounded, because he was content, Phil. iv. 11, 18. Those that live by faith in God's all-sufficiency want nothing; for in him they have enough. *The young lions often lack and suffer hunger*—those that live upon common providence, as the lions do, shall want that satisfaction which those have that live by faith in the promise; those that trust to themselves, and think their own hands sufficient for them, shall want (for *bread is not always to the wise*)—but verily those shall be fed that trust in God and desire to be at his finding. Those that are ravenous, and prey upon all about them, shall want; but *the meek shall inherit the earth.* Those shall not want who with quietness work and mind their own business; plain-hearted Jacob has pottage enough, when Esau, the cunning hunter, is ready to perish for hunger.

11 Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD. 12 What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? 13 Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. 14 Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. 15 The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto

their cry. 16 The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. 17 The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. 18 The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. 19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all. 20 He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken. 21 Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate. 22 The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.

David, in this latter part of the psalm, undertakes to teach children. Though a man of war, and anointed to be king, he did not think it below him; though now he had his head so full of cares and his hands of business, yet he could find heart and time to give good counsel to young people, from his own experience. It does not appear that he had now any children of his own, at least any that were grown up to a capacity of being taught; but, by divine inspiration, he instructs the children of his people. Those that were in years would not be taught by him, though he had offered them his service (xxxii. 8); but he has hopes that the tender branches will be more easily bent and that children and young people will be more tractable, and therefore he calls together a congregation of them (v. 11): "Come, you children, that are now in your learning age, and are now to lay up a stock of knowledge which you must live upon all your days, you children that are foolish and ignorant, and need to be taught." Perhaps he intends especially those children whose parents neglected to instruct and catechise them; and it is as great a piece of charity to put those children to school whose parents are not in a capacity to teach them as to feed those children whose parents have not bread for them. Observe, 1. What he expects from them: "Hearken unto me, leave your play, lay by your toys, and hear what I have to say to you; not only give me the hearing, but observe and obey me." 2. What he undertakes to teach them—the fear of the Lord, inclusive of all the duties of religion. David was a famous musician, a statesman, a soldier; but he does not say to the children, "I will teach you to play on the harp, or to handle the sword or spear, or to draw the bow, or I will teach you the maxims of state-policy;" but I will teach you the fear of the Lord, which is better than all arts and sciences, better than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices. That is it which we should be so-

licitious both to learn ourselves and to teach our children.

I. He supposes that we all aim to be happy (v. 12): *What man is he that desireth life?* that is, as it follows, not only to see many days, but to see good comfortable days. *Non est vivere, sed valere, vita—It is not being, but well being, that constitutes life.* It is asked, "Who wishes to live a long and pleasant life?" and it is easily answered, *Who does not?* Surely this must look further than time and this present world; for man's life on earth at best consists but of few days and those full of trouble. What man is he that would be eternally happy, that would see many days, as many as the days of heaven, that would see good in that world where all bliss is in perfection, without the least alloy? Who would see the good before him now, by faith and hope, and enjoy it shortly? Who would? Alas! very few have that in their thoughts. Most ask, *Who will show us any good?* But few ask, *What shall we do to inherit eternal life?* This question implies that there are some such.

II. He prescribes the true and only way to happiness both in this world and that to come, v. 13, 14. Would we pass comfortably through the world, and out of the world, our constant care must be to keep a good conscience; and, in order to that, 1. We must learn to bridle our tongues, and be careful what we say, that we never speak amiss, to God's dishonour or our neighbour's prejudice: *Keep thy tongue from evil speaking, lying, and slandering.* So great a way does this go in religion that, if any offend not in word, the same is a perfect man; and so little a way does religion go without this that of him who bridles not his tongue it is declared, *His religion is vain.* 2. We must be upright and sincere in every thing we say, and not double-tongued. Our words must be the indications of our minds; our lips must be kept from speaking guile either to God or man. 3. We must leave all our sins, and resolve we will have no more to do with them. We must depart from evil, from evil works and evil workers; from the sins others commit and which we have formerly allowed ourselves in. 4. It is not enough not to do hurt in the world, but we must study to be useful, and live to some purpose. We must not only depart from evil, but we must do good, good for ourselves, especially for our own souls, employing them well, furnishing them with a good treasure, and fitting them for another world; and, as we have ability and opportunity, we must do good to others also. 5. Since nothing is more contrary to that love which never fails (which is the summary both of law and gospel, both of grace and glory) than strife and contention, which bring confusion and every evil work, we must seek peace and pursue it; we must show a peaceable disposition, study the things that make for peace, do nothing to break the peace and to make mischief. If peace seem to flee from us, we must pursue it; follow peace with

all men, spare no pains, no expense, to preserve and recover peace; be willing to deny ourselves a great deal, both in honour and interest, for peace' sake. These excellent directions in the way to life and good are transcribed into the New Testament and made part of our gospel duty, 1 Pet. iii. 10, 11. And perhaps David, in warning us that we speak no guile, reflects upon his own sin in changing his behaviour. Those that truly repent of what they have done amiss will warn others to take heed of doing likewise.

III. He enforces these directions by setting before us the happiness of the godly in the love and favour of God and the miserable state of the wicked under his displeasure. Here are life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse, plainly stated before us, that we may choose life and live. See Isa. iii. 10, 11.

1. *Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with them*, however they may bless themselves in their own way. (1.) God is against them, and then they cannot but be miserable. Sad is the case of that man who by his sin has made his Maker his enemy, his destroyer. *The face of the Lord is against those that do evil*, v. 16. Sometimes God is said to *turn his face from them* (Jer. xviii. 17), because they have forsaken him; here he is said to *set his face against them*, because they have fought against him; and most certainly God is able to out-face the most proud and daring sinners and can frown them into hell. (2.) Ruin is before them; this will follow of course if God be against them, for he is able both to kill and to cast into hell. [1.] The land of the living shall be no place for them nor theirs. When God sets his face against them he will not only cut them off, but *cut off the remembrance of them*; when they are alive he will bury them in obscurity, when they are dead he will bury them in oblivion. He will root out their posterity, by whom they would be remembered. He will pour disgrace upon their achievements, which they gloried in and for which they thought they should be remembered. It is certain that there is no lasting honour but that which comes from God. [2.] There shall be a sting in their death: *Evil shall slay the wicked*, v. 21. Their death shall be miserable; and so it will certainly be, though they die on a bed of down or on the bed of honour. Death, to them, has a curse in it, and is the king of terrors; to them it is evil, only evil. It is very well observed by Dr. Hammond that the *evil* here, which slays the wicked, is the same word, in the singular number, that is used (v. 19) for the afflictions of the righteous, to intimate that godly people have many troubles, and yet they do them no hurt, but are made to work for good to them, for God will deliver them out of them all; whereas wicked people have fewer troubles, fewer evils befall them, perhaps but one, and yet that one may prove their utter ruin. One trouble with a curse in it kills

and slays, and does execution; but many, with a blessing in them, are harmless, never, gainful. [3.] Desolation will be their everlasting portion. Those that are wicked themselves often hate the righteous, name and thing, have an implacable enmity to them and their righteousness; but they *shall be desolate*, shall be condemned as guilty, and laid waste for ever, shall be for ever forsaken and abandoned of God and all good angels and men; and those that are so are desolate indeed.

2. Yet say to the righteous, *It shall be well with them*. All good people are under God's special favour and protection. We are here assured of this under a great variety of instances and expressions.

(1.) God takes special notice of good people, and takes notice who have their eyes ever to him and who make conscience of their duty to him: *The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous* (v. 15), to direct and guide them, to protect and keep them. Parents that are very fond of a child will not let it be out of their sight; none of God's children are ever from under his eye, but on them he looks with a singular complacency, as well as with a watchful and tender concern.

(2.) They are sure of an answer of peace to their prayers. All God's people are a praying people, and they cry in prayer, which denotes great importunity; but is it to any purpose? Yes, [1.] God takes notice of what we say (v. 17): *They cry, and the Lord hears them*, and hears them so as to make it appear he has a regard to them. *His ears are open to their prayers*, to receive them all, and to receive them readily and with delight. Though he has been a God hearing prayer ever since men began to call upon the name of the Lord, yet his ear is not heavy. There is no rhetoric, nothing charming, in a cry, yet God's ears are open to it, as the tender mother's to the cry of her sucking child, which another would take no notice of: *The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth*, v. 17. This intimates that it is the constant practice of good people, when they are in distress, to cry unto God, and it is their constant comfort that God hears them. [2.] He not only takes notice of what we say, but is ready to us for our relief (v. 18): *He is nigh to those that are of a broken heart, and saves them*. Note, First, It is the character of the righteous, whose prayers God will hear, that they are of a broken heart and a contrite spirit (that is, humbled for sin and emptied of self); they are low in their own eyes, and have no confidence in their own merit and sufficiency, but in God only. Secondly, Those who are so have God nigh unto them, to comfort and support them, that the spirit may not be broken more than is meet, lest it should fail before him. See Isa. lvii. 15. Though God is high, and dwells on high, yet he is near to those who, being of a contrite spirit, know how to value his favour, and will save them from sinking under their burdens; he is near them to good purpose.

(3.) They are taken under the special protection of the divine government (v. 20): *He keepeth all his bones; not only his soul, but his body; not only his body in general, but every bone in it: Not one of them is broken.* He that has a broken heart shall not have a broken bone; for David himself had found that, when he had a contrite heart, the *broken bones were made to rejoice*, li. 8, 17. One would not expect to meet with any thing of Christ here, and yet this scripture is said to be fulfilled in him (John xix. 36) when the soldiers broke the legs of the two thieves that were crucified with him, but did not break his, they being under the protection of this promise as well as of the type, even the paschal-lamb (*a bone of him shall not be broken*); the promises, being made good to Christ, through him are sure to all the seed. It does not follow but that a good man may have a broken bone; but, by the watchful providence of God concerning him, such a calamity is often wonderfully prevented, and the preservation of his bones is the effect of this promise; and, if he have a broken bone, sooner or later it shall be made whole, at furthest at the resurrection, when that which is sown in weakness shall be raised in power.

(4.) They are, and shall be, delivered out of their troubles: [1.] It is supposed that they have their share of crosses in this world, perhaps a greater share than others. In the world they must have tribulation, that they may be conformed both to the will of God and to the example of Christ (v. 19): *Many are the afflictions of the righteous*, witness David and his afflictions, cxxxii. 1. There are those that hate them (v. 21) and they are continually aiming to do them a mischief; their God loves them, and therefore corrects them; so that, between the mercy of heaven and the malice of hell, the afflictions of the righteous must needs be many. [2.] God has engaged for their deliverance and salvation: *He delivers them out of all their troubles* (v. 17, 19); he saves them (v. 18), so that, though they may fall into trouble, it shall not be their ruin. This promise of their deliverance is explained, v. 22. Whatever troubles befall them, *First*, They shall not hurt their better part. *The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants* from the power of the grave (xlix. 15) and from the sting of every affliction. He keeps them from sinning in their troubles, which is the only thing that would do them a mischief, and keeps them from despair, and from being put out of the possession of their own souls. *Secondly*, They shall not hinder their everlasting bliss. *None of those that trust in him shall be desolate*; that is, they shall not be comfortless, for they shall not be cut off from their communion with God. No man is desolate but he whom God has forsaken, nor is any man undone till he is in hell. Those that are God's faithful servants, that make it their care to please him, and their business to honour him,

and in doing so trust him to protect and reward them, and, with good thoughts of him, refer themselves to him, have reason to be easy whatever befalls them, for they are safe and shall be happy.

In singing these verses let us be confirmed in the choice we have made of the ways of God; let us be quickened in his service, and greatly encouraged by the assurances he has given of the particular care he takes of all those that faithfully adhere to him.

PSALM XXXV.

David, in this psalm, appeals to the righteous Judge of heaven and earth against his enemies that had and persecuted him. It is supposed that Saul and his party are the persons he means, for with them he had the greatest struggles. I. He complains to God of the injuries they did him; they strove with him, fought against him (ver. 1), persecuted him (ver. 3), sought his ruin (ver. 4, 7), accused him falsely (ver. 11), abused him basely (ver. 15, 16), and all his friends (ver. 20), and triumphed over him, ver. 21, 25, 26. II. He pleads his own innocence, that he never gave them any provocation (ver. 7, 19), but, on the contrary, had studied to oblige them, ver. 13-14. III. He prays to God to protect and deliver him, and appear for him (ver. 1, 2), to comfort him (ver. 3), to be nigh to him and rescue him (ver. 17, 22), to plead his cause (ver. 22, 24), to defeat all the designs of his enemies against him (ver. 3, 4), to disappoint their expectations of his fall (ver. 19, 25, 26), and, lastly, to countenance all his friends, and encourage them, ver. 27. IV. He prophesies the destruction of his persecutors, ver. 4-6, 8. V. He promises himself that he shall yet see better days (ver. 9, 10), and promises God that he will then attend him with his praises, ver. 18, 23. In singing this psalm, and praying over it, we must take heed of applying it to any little peevish quarrels and enmities of our own, and of expressing by it any uncharitable revengeful resentments of injuries done to us; for Christ has taught us to forgive our enemies and not to pray against them, but to pray for them, as he did; but, 1. We may comfort ourselves with the testimony of our conscience, concerning our innocence, with reference to those that are any way injurious to us, and with hopes that God will, in his own way and time, right us, and, in the mean time, support us. 2. We ought to apply it to the public enemies of Christ and his kingdom, typified by David and his kingdom, to resent the indignities done to Christ's honour, to pray to God to plead the just and injured cause of Christianity and serious godliness, and to believe that God will, in due time, glorify his own name in the ruin of all the irreconcilable enemies of his church; that will not repent to give him glory.

A psalm of David.

PLEAD my cause, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me. 2 Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help. 3 Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I am thy salvation. 4 Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt. 5 Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the LORD chase them. 6 Let their way be dark and slippery: and let the angel of the LORD persecute them. 7 For without cause have they hid for me their net in a pit, which without cause they have digged for my soul. 8 Let destruction come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall. 9 And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD: it shall rejoice in his salvation. 10

All my bones shall say, LORD, who *is* like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him?

In these verses we have,

I. David's representation of his case to God, setting forth the restless rage and malice of his persecutors. He was God's servant, expressly appointed by him to be what he was, followed his guidance, and aimed at his glory in the way of duty, had lived (as St. Paul speaks) *in all good conscience before God unto this day*; and yet there were those that strove with him, that did their utmost to oppose his advancement, and made all the interest they could against him; they fought against him (v. 1), not only undermined him closely and secretly, but openly avowed their opposition to him and set themselves to do him all the mischief they could. They persecuted him with an unwearied enmity, *sought after his soul* (v. 4), that is, his life, no less would satisfy their bloody minds; they aimed to disquiet his spirit and put that into disorder. Nor was it a sudden passion against him that they harboured, but inveterate malice: They *devised his hurt*, laid their heads together, and set their wits on work, not only to do him a mischief, but to find out ways and means to ruin him. They treated him, who was the greatest blessing of his country, as if he had been the curse and plague of it; they hunted him as a dangerous beast of prey; they digged a pit for him and laid a net in it, that they might have him at their mercy, v. 7. They took a great deal of pains in persecuting him, for they digged a pit (vii. 15); and very close and crafty they were in carrying on their designs; the old serpent taught them subtlety: they hid their net from David and his friends; but in vain, for they could not hide it from God. And, *lastly*, he found himself an unequal match for them. His enemy, especially Saul, was *too strong for him* (v. 10), for he had the army at his command, and assumed to himself the sole power of making laws and giving judgment, attainted and condemned whom he pleased, carried not a sceptre, but a javelin, in his hand, to cast at any man that stood in his way; such was the manner of the king, and all about him were compelled to do as he bade them, right or wrong. The king's word is a law, and every thing must be carried with a high hand; he has fields, and vineyards, and preferments, at his disposal, 1 Sam. xxii. 7. But David is poor and needy, has nothing to make friends with, and therefore has none to take his part but men (as we say) of broken fortunes (1 Sam. xxii. 2); and therefore no marvel that Saul spoiled him of what little he had got and the interest he had made. If the kings of the earth set themselves against the Lord and his anointed, who can contend with them? Note, It is no new thing for the

most righteous men, and the most righteous cause, to meet with many mighty and malicious enemies: Christ himself is striven with and fought against, and war is made upon the holy seed; and we are not to marvel at the matter: it is a fruit of the old enmity in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman.

II. His appeal to God concerning his integrity and the justice of his cause. If a fellow-subject had wronged him, he might have appealed to his prince, as St. Paul did to Cæsar; but, when his prince wronged him, he appealed to his God, who is prince and Judge of the kings of the earth: *Plead my cause, O Lord!* v. 1. Note, A righteous cause may, with the greatest satisfaction imaginable, be laid before a righteous God, and referred to him to give judgment upon it; for he perfectly knows the merits of it, holds the balance exactly even, and with him there is no respect of persons. God knew that they were, without cause, his enemies, and that they had, without cause, digged pits for him, v. 7. Note, It will be a comfort to us, when men do us wrong, if our consciences can witness for us that we have never done them any. It was so to St. Paul. Acts xxv. 10, *To the Jews have I done no wrong*. We are apt to justify our uneasiness at the injuries men do us by this, That we never gave them any cause to use us so; whereas this should, more than any thing, make us easy, for then we may the more confidently expect that God will plead our cause.

III. His prayer to God to manifest himself both for him and to him, in this trial. 1. For him. He prays that God would *fight against* his enemies, so as to disable them to hurt him, and defeat their designs against him (v. 1), that he would *take hold of shield and buckler*, for the Lord is a man of war (Exod. xv. 3), and that he would *stand up for his help* (v. 2), for he had few that would stand up for him, and, if he had ever so many, they would stand him in no stead without God. He prays that God would *stop their way* (v. 3), that they might not overtake him when he fled from them. This prayer we may put up against our persecutors, that God would restrain them and stop their way. 2. To him: *"Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation; let me have inward comfort under all these outward troubles, to support my soul which they strike at. Let God be my salvation, not only my Saviour out of my present troubles, but my everlasting bliss. Let me have that salvation not only which he is the author of, but which consists in his favour; and let me know my interest in it; let me have the comfortable assurance of it in my own breast."* If God, by his Spirit, witness to our spirits that he is our salvation, we have enough, we need desire no more to make us happy; and this is a powerful support when men persecute us. If God be our friend, no matter who is our enemy.

IV. His prospect of the destruction of his enemies, which he prays for, not in malice or revenge. We find how patiently he bore Shimei's curses (*so let him curse, for the Lord has bidden him*); and we cannot suppose that he who was so meek in his conversation would give vent to any intemperate heat or passion in his devotion; but, by the spirit of prophecy, he foretels the just judgments of God that would come upon them for their great wickedness, their malice, cruelty, and perfidiousness, and especially their enmity to the counsels of God, the interests of religion, and that reformation which they knew David, if ever he had power in his hand, would be an instrument of. They seemed to be hardened in their sins, and to be of the number of those who have sinned unto death and are not to be prayed for, Jer. vii. 16; xi. 14; xiv. 11; 1 John v. 16. As for Saul himself, David, it is probable, knew that God had rejected him and had forbidden Samuel to mourn for him, 1 Sam. xvi. 1. And these predictions look further, and read the doom of the enemies of Christ and his kingdom, as appears by comparing Rom. xi. 9, 10. David here prays, 1. Against his many enemies (v. 4—6): *Let them be confounded, &c.* Or, as Dr. Hammond reads it, *They shall be confounded, they shall be turned back.* This may be taken as a prayer for their repentance, for all penitents are put to shame for their sins and turned back from them. Or, if they were not brought to repentance, David prays that they might be defeated and disappointed in their designs against him and so put to shame. Though they should in some degree prevail, yet he foresees that it would be to their own ruin at last: *They shall be as chaff before the wind*, so unable will wicked men be to stand before the judgments of God and so certainly will they be driven away by them, i. 4. Their way shall be *dark and slippery, darkness and slipperiness* (so the margin reads it); the way of sinners is so, for they walk in darkness and in continual danger of falling into sin, into hell; and it will prove so at last, for *their foot shall slide in due time*, Deut. xxxii. 35. But this is not the worst of it. Even chaff before the wind may perhaps be stopped, and find a place of rest, and, though the way be dark and slippery, it is possible that a man may keep his footing; but it is here foretold that the *angel of the Lord shall chase them* (v. 5) so that they shall find no rest, *shall persecute them* (v. 6) so that they cannot possibly escape the pit of destruction. As God's angels encamp about those that fear him, so they encamp against those that fight against him. They are the ministers of his justice, as well as of his mercy. Those that make God their enemy make all the holy angels their enemies. 2. Against his one mighty enemy (v. 8): *Let destruction come upon him.* It is probable that he means Saul, who laid snares for him and aimed at his destruction. David vowed

that his hand should not be upon him; he would not be judge in his own cause. But, at the same time, he foretold that *the Lord would smite him* (1 Sam. xxvi. 10), and here that the net he had hidden should catch himself, and into *that very destruction he should fall.* This was remarkably fulfilled in the ruin of Saul; for he had laid a plot to make David *fall by the hand of the Philistines* (1 Sam. xviii. 25), that was the net which he hid for him under pretence of doing him honour, and in that very net was he himself taken, for he fell by the hand of the Philistines when his day came to fall.

V. His prospect of his own deliverance, which, having committed his cause to God, he did not doubt of, v. 9, 10. 1. He hoped that he should have the comfort of it: *"My soul shall be joyful, not in my own ease and safety, but in the Lord and in his favour, in his promise and in his salvation according to the promise."* Joy in God and in his salvation is the only true, solid, satisfying joy. Those whose souls are sorrowful in the Lord, who sow in tears and sorrow after a godly sort, need not question but that in due time their souls shall be joyful in the Lord; for gladness is sown for them, and they shall at last *enter into the joy of their Lord.* 2. He promised that then God should have the glory of it (v. 10): *All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee?* (1.) He will praise God with the whole man, with all that is within him, and with all the strength and vigour of his soul, intimated by his bones, which are within the body and are the strength of it. (2.) He will praise him as one of peerless and unparalleled perfection. We cannot express how great and good God is, and therefore must praise him by acknowledging him to be a non-such. *Lord, who is like unto thee?* No such patron of oppressed innocency, no such punisher of triumphant tyranny. The formation of our bones so wonderfully, so curiously (Eccl. xi. 5, Ps. cxxxix. 16), the serviceableness of our bones, and the preservation of them, and especially the life which, at the resurrection, shall be breathed upon the dry bones and make them flourish as a herb, oblige every bone in our bodies, if it could speak, to say, *Lord, who is like unto thee?* and willingly to undergo any services or sufferings for him.

11 False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge *things* that I knew not. 12 They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul. 13 But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing *was* sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. 14 I behaved myself as though *he had been* my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily as one that mourneth

for his mother. 15 But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together: *yea*, the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not; they did tear me, and ceased not: 16 With hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth.

Two very wicked things David here lays to the charge of his enemies, to make good his appeal to God against them—perjury and ingratitude.

I. Perjury. v. 11. When Saul would have David attainted of treason, in order to his being outlawed, perhaps he did it with the formalities of a legal prosecution, produced witnesses who swore some treasonable words or overt acts against him, and he being not present to clear himself (or, if he was, it was all the same), Saul adjudged him a traitor. This he complains of here as the highest piece of injustice imaginable: *False witnesses did rise up, who would swear any thing; they laid to my charge things that I knew not*, nor ever thought of. See how much the honours, estates, liberties, and lives, even of the best men, lie at the mercy of the worst, against whose false oaths innocency itself is no fence; and what reason we have to acknowledge with thankfulness the hold God has of the consciences even of bad men, to which it is owing that there is not more mischief done in that way than is. This instance of the wrong done to David was typical, and had its accomplishment in the Son of David, against whom false witnesses did arise, Matt. xxvi. 60. If we be at any time charged with what we are innocent of let us not think it strange, as though some new thing happened to us; so persecuted they the prophets, even the great prophet.

II. Ingratitude. Call a man ungrateful and you can call him no worse. This was the character of David's enemies (v. 12): *They rewarded me evil for good*. A great deal of good service he had done to his king, witness his harp, witness Goliath's sword, witness the foreskins of the Philistines; and yet his king vowed his death, and his country was made too hot for him. This is to the spoiling of his soul; this base unkind usage robs him of his comfort, and cuts him to the heart, more than any thing else. Nay, he had deserved well not only of the public in general, but of those particular persons that were now most bitter against him. Probably it was then well known whom he meant; it may be Saul himself for one, whom he was sent for to attend upon when he was melancholy and ill, and to whom he was serviceable to drive away the evil spirit, not with his harp, but with his prayers; to others of the courtiers, it is likely, he had shown this respect, while he lived at court, who now were, of all others, most abusive to him. Herein he was a type

of Christ, to whom this wicked world was very ungrateful. John x. 32, *Many good works have I shown you from my Father; for which of those do you stone me?* David here shows,

1. How tenderly, and with what a cordial affection, he had behaved towards them in their afflictions (v. 13, 14): *They were sick*. Note, Even the palaces and courts of princes are not exempt from the jurisdiction of death and the visitation of sickness. Now when these people were sick, (1.) David mourned for them and sympathized with them in their grief. They were not related to him; he was under no obligations to them; he would lose nothing by their death, but perhaps he a gainer by it; and yet he behaved himself as though they had been his nearest relations, purely from a principle of compassion and humanity. David was a man of war, and of a bold stout spirit, and yet was thus susceptible of the impressions of sympathy, forgot the bravery of the hero, and seemed wholly made up of love and pity; it was a rare composition of hardness and tenderness, courage and compassion, in the same breast. Observe, He mourned as for a brother or mother, which intimates that it is our duty, and well becomes us, to lay to heart the sickness, and sorrow, and death of our near relations. Those that do not are justly stigmatized as without natural affection. (2.) He prayed for them. He discovered not only the tender affection of a man, but the pious affection of a saint. He was concerned for their precious souls, and, since he could not otherwise be helpful to them, he helped them with his prayers to God for mercy and grace; and the prayers of one who had so great an interest in heaven were of more value than perhaps they knew and considered. With his prayers he joined humiliation and self-affliction, both in his diet (he fasted, at least from pleasant bread) and in his dress; he clothed himself with sackcloth, thus expressing his grief, not only for their affliction, but for their sin; for this was the guise and practice of a penitent. We ought to mourn for the sins of those that do not mourn for them themselves. His fasting also put an edge upon his praying, and was an expression of the fervour of it; he was so intent in his devotions that he had no appetite to meat, nor would allow himself time for eating: *"My prayer returned into my own bosom"*; I had the comfort of having done my duty, and of having approved myself a loving neighbour, though I could not thereby win upon them nor make them my friends." We shall not lose by the good offices we have done to any, how ungrateful soever they are; for our rejoicing will be this, *the testimony of our conscience*.

2. How basely and insolently and with what a brutish enmity, and worse than brutish, they had behaved towards him (v. 15, 16): *In my adversity they rejoiced*. When he fell under the frowns of Saul, was banished the court, and persecuted as a criminal, they were

pleased, were glad at his calamities, and got together in their drunken clubs to make themselves and one another merry with the disgrace of this great favourite. Well might he call them *objects*, for nothing could be more vile and sordid than to triumph in the fall of a man of such unstained honour and consummate virtue. But this was not all. (1.) They tore him, rent his good name without mercy, said all the ill they could of him and fastened upon him all the reproach their cursed wit and malice could reach to. (2.) *They gnashed upon him with their teeth*; they never spoke of him but with the greatest indignation imaginable, as those that would have eaten him up if they could. David was the fool in the play, and his disappointment all the table-talk of the hypocritical mockers at feasts; it was the song of the drunkards. The comedians, who may fitly be called *hypocritical mockers* (for what does a hypocrite signify but a stage-player?) and whose comedies, it is likely, were acted at feasts and balls, chose David for their subject, bantered and abused him, while the auditory, in token of their agreement with the plot, hummed, and *gnashed upon him with their teeth*. Such has often been the hard fate of the best of men. The apostles were made a spectacle to the world. David was looked upon with ill-will for no other reason than because he was caressed by the people. It is a vexation of spirit which attends even a right work that *for this a man is envied of his neighbour*, Eccl. iv. 4. And who can stand before envy? Prov. xxvii. 4.

17 Lord, how long wilt thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions. 18 I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people. 19 Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me: *neither* let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause. 20 For they speak not peace: but they devise deceitful matters against *them that are quiet* in the land. 21 Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me, and said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen it. 22 *This* thou hast seen, O Lord: keep not silence: O LORD, be not far from me. 23 Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, *even* unto my cause, my God and my Lord. 24 Judge me, O LORD my God, according to thy righteousness; and let them not rejoice over me. 25 Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it: let them not say, We have swallowed him up. 26 Let

them be ashamed and brought to confusion together that rejoice at mine hurt: let them be clothed with shame and dishonour that magnify *themselves* against me. 27 Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant. 28 And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness and of thy praise all the day long.

In these verses, as before,

I. David describes the great injustice, malice, and insolence, of his persecutors, pleading this with God as a reason why he should protect him from them and appear against them. 1. They were very unrighteous; they were his enemies wrongfully, for he never gave them any provocation: *They hated him without a cause*; nay, for that for which they ought rather to have loved and honoured him. This is quoted, with application to Christ, and is said to be fulfilled in him. John xv. 25, *They hated me without cause*. 2. They were very rude; they could not find in their hearts to show him common civility: *They speak not peace*; if they met him, they had not the good manners to give him the time of the day; like Joseph's brethren, that could not *speak peaceably to him*, Gen xxxvii. 4. 3. They were very proud and scornful (v. 21): *They opened their mouth wide against me*; they shouted and huzzaed when they saw his fall; they bawled after him when he was forced to quit the court, "Aha! aha! this is the day we longed to see." 4. They were very barbarous and base, for they trampled upon him when he was down, rejoiced at his hurt, and *magnified themselves against him*, v. 26. *Turba Remi sequitur fortunam, ut semper, et odit damnatos*—The Roman crowd, varying their opinions with every turn of fortune, are sure to execrate the fallen. Thus, when the Son of David was run upon by the rulers, the people cried, *Crucify him, crucify him*. 5. They set themselves against all the sober good people that adhered to David (v. 20): *They devised deceitful matters*, to trepan and ruin those that were quiet in the land. Note, (1.) It is the character of the godly in the land that they are the quiet in the land, that they live in all dutiful subjection to government and governors, in the Lord, and endeavour, as much as in them lies, to live peaceably with all men, however they may have been misrepresented as enemies to Cæsar and hurtful to kings and provinces. *I am for peace*, cxx. 7. (2.) Though the people of God are, and study to be, a quiet people, yet it has been the common practice of their enemies to devise deceitful matters against them. All the hellish arts of malice and falsehood are made use of to render them

odious or despicable; their words and actions are misconstrued, even that which they ascribe is fathered upon them, laws are made to ensnare them (Dan. vi. 4, &c.), and all to ruin them and root them out. Those that hated David thought scorn, like Haman, to lay hands on him alone, but contrived to involve all the religious people of the land in the same ruin with him.

2. He appeals to God against them, the God to whom vengeance belongs, appeals to his knowledge (v. 22): *This thou hast seen*. They had falsely accused him, but God, who knows all things, knew that he did not falsely accuse them, nor make them worse than really they were. They had carried on their plots against him with a great degree of secrecy (v. 15): "I knew it not, till long after, when they themselves gloried in it; but thy eye was upon them in their close cabals and thou art a witness of all they have said and done against me and thy people." He appeals to God's justice: *Awake to my judgment, even to my cause*, and let it have a hearing at thy bar, v. 23. "Judge me, O Lord my God! pass sentence upon this appeal, according to the righteousness of thy nature and government," v. 24. See this explained by Solomon, 1 Kings viii. 31, 32. When thou art appealed to, *hear in heaven, and judge, by condemning the wicked and justifying the righteous*.

III. He prays earnestly to God to appear graciously for him and his friends, against his and their enemies, that by his providence the struggle might issue to the honour and comfort of David and to the conviction and confusion of his persecutors. 1. He prays that God would act for him, and not stand by as a spectator (v. 17): "Lord, how long wilt thou look on? How long wilt thou connive at the wickedness of the wicked? Rescue my soul from the destructions they are plotting against it; rescue my darling, my only one, from the lions. My soul is my only one, and therefore the greater is the shame if I neglect it and the greater the loss if I lose it: it is my only one, and therefore ought to be my darling, ought to be carefully protected and provided for. It is my soul that is in danger; Lord, rescue it. It does, in a peculiar manner, belong to the Father of spirits, therefore claim thy own; it is thine, save it. Lord, keep not silence, as if thou didst consent to what is done against me! Lord, be not far from me (v. 22), as if I were a stranger that thou wert not concerned for; let not me be beheld afar off, as the proud are." 2. He prays that his enemies might not have cause to rejoice (v. 19): *Let them not rejoice over me* (and again, v. 24); not so much because it would be a mortification to him to be trampled upon by the objects, as because it would turn to the dishonour of God and the reproach of his confidence in God. It would harden the hearts of his enemies in their wickedness and confirm them

in their enmity to him, and would be a great discouragement to all the pious Jews that were friends to his righteous cause. He prays that he might never be in such imminent danger as that they should say in their hearts, *Ah! so would we have it* (v. 25), much more that he might not be reduced to such extremity that they should say, *We have swallowed him up*; for then they will reflect upon God himself. But, on the contrary, that they might be ashamed and brought to confusion together (v. 26, as before, v. 4); he desires that his innocence might be so cleared that they might be ashamed of the calumnies with which they had loaded him, that his interest might be so confirmed that they might be ashamed of their designs against him and their expectations of his ruin, that they might either be brought to that shame which would be a step towards their reformation or that that might be their portion which would be their everlasting misery. 3. He prays that his friends might have cause to rejoice and give glory to God, v. 27. Notwithstanding the arts that were used to blacken David, and make him odious, and to frighten people from owning him, there were some that favoured his righteous cause, that knew he was wronged and bore a good affection to him; and he prays for them, (1.) That they might rejoice with him in his joys. It is a great pleasure to all that are good to see an honest man, and an honest cause, prevail and prosper; and those that heartily espouse the interests of God's people, and are willing to take their lot with them even when they are run down and trampled upon, shall in due time shout for joy and be glad, for the righteous cause will at length be a victorious cause. (2.) That they might join with him in his praises: *Let them say continually, The Lord be magnified*, by us and others, who hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant. Note, [1.] The great God has pleasure in the prosperity of good people, not only of his family, the church in general, but of every particular servant in his family. He has pleasure in the prosperity both of their temporal and of their spiritual affairs, and delights not in their griefs; for he does not afflict willingly; and we ought therefore to have pleasure in their prosperity, and not to envy it. [2.] When God in his providence shows his goodwill to the prosperity of his servants, and the pleasure he takes in it, we ought to acknowledge it with thankfulness, to his praise, and to say, *The Lord be magnified*.

IV. The mercy he hoped to win by prayer he promises to wear with praise: "I will give thee thanks, as the author of my deliverance (v. 18), and my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness, the justice of thy judgments and the equity of all thy dispensations;" and this, 1. Publicly, as one that took a pleasure in owning his obligations to his God, so far was he from being ashamed of them. He will do it in the great congregation, and among

much people, that God might be honoured and many edified. 2. Constantly. He will speak God's praise *every day* (so it may be read) and *all the day long*; for it is a subject that will never be exhausted, no, not by the endless praises of saints and angels.

PSALM XXXVI.

It is uncertain when, and upon what occasion, David penned this psalm, probably when he was struck at either by Saul or by Absalom; for in it he complains of the malice of his enemies against him, but triumphs in the goodness of God to him. We are here led to consider, and it will do us good to consider seriously, 1. The sinfulness of sin, and how mischievous it is, ver. 1—4. 11. The goodness of God, and how gracious he is, 1. To all his creatures in general, ver. 5, 6. 2. To his own people in a special manner, ver. 7—9. By this the psalmist is encouraged to pray for all the saints (ver. 10), for himself in particular and his own preservation (ver. 11), and to triumph in the certain fall of his enemies, ver. 12. 15. In singing this psalm, our hearts be duly affected with the hatred of sin and satisfaction in God's loving-kindness, we sing it with grace and understanding.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David the servant of the Lord.

THE transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, *that there is no fear of God before his eyes.* 2 For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful. 3 The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit: he hath left off to be wise, *and to do good.* 4 He deviseth mischief upon his bed; he setteth himself in a way *that is not good*; he abhorreth not evil.

David, in the title of this psalm, is styled *the servant of the Lord*; why in this, and not in any other, except in xviii. (*title*), no reason can be given; but so he was, not only as every good man is God's servant, but as a king, as a prophet, as one employed in serving the interests of God's kingdom among men more immediately and more eminently than any other in his day. He glories in it, cxvi. 16. It is no disparagement, but an honour, to the greatest of men, to be the servants of the great God; it is the highest preferment a man is capable of in this world.

David, in these verses, describes the wickedness of the wicked; whether he means his persecutors in particular, or all notorious gross sinners in general, is not certain. But we have here sin in its causes and sin in its colours, in its root and in its branches.

I. Here is the root of bitterness, from which all the wickedness of the wicked comes. It takes rise, 1. From their contempt of God and the want of a due regard to him (v. 1): "*The transgression of the wicked* (as it is described afterwards, v. 3, 4) *saith within my heart* (makes me to conclude within myself) *that there is no fear of God before his eyes*; for, if there were, he would not talk and act so extravagantly as he does; he would not, he durst not, break the laws of God, and violate his covenants with him, if he had any awe of his majesty or dread of his wrath." Fitly therefore is it brought into the form of indictments by our law that the criminal, *not having the fear of God before his eyes*, did so

and so. The wicked did not openly renounce the fear of God, but their transgression whistled it secretly into the minds of all those that knew any thing of the nature of piety and impiety. David concluded concerning those who lived at large that they lived without God in the world. 2. From their conceit of themselves and a cheat they wilfully put upon their own souls (v. 2): *He flattereth himself in his own eyes*; that is, while he goes on in sin he thinks he does wisely and well for himself, and either does not see or will not own the evil and danger of his wicked practices; he calls evil good and good evil; his licentiousness he pretends to be but his just liberty, his fraud passes for his prudence and policy, and his persecuting the people of God, he suggests to himself, is a piece of necessary justice. If his own conscience threaten him for what he does, he says, *God will not requir it; I shall have peace though I go on.* Note. Sinners are self-destroyers, by being self-flatterers. Satan could not deceive them if they did not deceive themselves. But will the cheat last always? No; the day is coming when the sinner will be undeceived, when *his iniquity shall be found to be hateful*. Iniquity is a hateful thing; it is that *abominable thing which the Lord hates*, and which his pure and jealous eye cannot endure to look upon. It is hurtful to the sinner himself, and therefore ought to be hateful to him; but it is not so: he rolls it under his tongue as a sweet morsel, because of the secular profit and sensual pleasure which may attend it; yet *the meat in his bowels will be turned, it will be the gall of asps*, Job xx. 13, 14. When their consciences are convinced, and sin appears in its true colours and makes them a terror to themselves—when the cup of trembling is put into their hands and they are made to drink the dregs of it—then their iniquity will be found hateful, and their self-flattery their unspeakable folly, and an aggravation of their condemnation.

II. Here are the cursed branches which spring from this root of bitterness. The sinner defies God, and even deifies himself, and then what can be expected but that he should go all to naught? These two were the first inlets of sin. Men do not fear God, and therefore they flatter themselves, and then, 1. They make no conscience of what they say, true or false, right or wrong (v. 3): *The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit*, contrived to do wrong, and yet to cover it with specious and plausible pretences. It is no marvel if those that deceive themselves contrive how to deceive all mankind; for to whom will those be true who are false to their own souls? 2. What little good there has been in them is gone; the sparks of virtue are extinguished, their convictions baffled, their good beginnings come to nothing: *They have left off to be wise and to do good.* They seemed to be under the direction of wisdom and the government of religion, but they have broken these bonds asunder; they have shaken off their religion,

and therewith their wisdom. Note, Those that leave off to do good leave off to be wise. 3. Having left off to do good, they contrive to do hurt and to be vexatious to those about them that are good and do good (v. 4): *He devises mischief upon his bed.* Note, (1.) Omissions make way for commissions. When men leave off doing good, leave off praying, leave off their attendance on God's ordinances and their duty to him, the devil easily makes them his agents, his instruments to draw those that will be drawn into sin, and, with respect to those that will not, to draw them into trouble. Those that leave off to do good begin to do evil; the devil, being an apostate from his innocence, soon became a tempter to Eve and a persecutor of righteous Abel. (2.) It is bad to do mischief, but it is worse to devise it, to do it deliberately and with resolution, to set the wits on work to contrive to do it most effectually, to do it with plot and management, with the subtlety, as well as the malice, of the old serpent, to devise it upon the bed, where we should be meditating upon God and his word, Mic. ii. 1. This argues the sinner's heart fully set in him to do evil. 4. Having entered into the way of sin, that way that is not good, that has good neither in it nor at the end of it, they persist and resolve to persevere in that way. *He sets himself to execute the mischief he has devised, and nothing shall be withholden from him which he has purposed to do, though it be ever so contrary both to his duty and to his true interest.* If sinners did not steel their hearts and brazen their faces with obstinacy and impudence, they could not go on in their evil ways, in such a direct opposition to all that is just and good. 5. Doing evil themselves, they have no dislike at all of it in others: *He abhors not evil*, but, on the contrary, takes pleasure in it, and is glad to see others as bad as himself. Or this may denote his impenitency in sin. Those that have done evil, if God give them repentance, abhor the evil they have done and themselves because of it; it is bitter in the reflection, however sweet it was in the commission. But these hardened sinners have such seared stupified consciences that they never reflect upon their sins afterwards with any regret or remorse, but stand to what they have done, as if they could justify it before God himself.

Some think that David, in all this, particularly means Saul, who had cast off the fear of God and left off all goodness, who pretended kindness to him when he gave him his daughter to wife, but at the same time was devising mischief against him. But we are under no necessity of limiting ourselves so in the exposition of it; there are too many among us to whom the description agrees, which is to be greatly lamented.

5 Thy mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. 6 Thy righteous-

ness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep: O LORD, thou preservest man and beast. 7 How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. 8 They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. 9 For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light. 10 O continue thy lovingkindness unto them that know thee; and thy righteousness to the upright in heart. 11 Let not the foot of pride come against me, and let not the hand of the wicked remove me. 12 There are the workers of iniquity fallen: they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise.

David, having looked round with grief upon the wickedness of the wicked, here looks up with comfort upon the goodness of God, a subject as delightful as the former was distasteful and very proper to be set in the balance against it. Observe,

I. His meditations upon the grace of God. He sees the world polluted, himself endangered, and God dishonoured, by the transgressions of the wicked; but, of a sudden, he turns his eye, and heart, and speech, to God "However it be, yet thou art good." He here acknowledges,

1. The transcendent perfections of the divine nature. Among men we have often reason to complain, There is no truth nor mercy, (Hos. iv. 1), no judgment nor justice, Isa. v. 7. But all these may be found in God without the least alloy. Whatever is missing, or amiss, in the world, we are sure there is nothing missing, nothing amiss, in him that governs it. (1.) He is a God of inexhaustible goodness: *Thy mercy, O Lord! is in the heavens.* If men shut up the bowels of their compassion, yet with God, at the throne of his grace, we shall find mercy. When men are devising mischief against us God's thoughts concerning us, if we cleave closely to him, are thoughts of good. On earth we meet with little content and a great deal of disquiet and disappointment; but in the heavens, where the mercy of God reigns in perfection and to eternity, there is all satisfaction; there therefore, if we would be easy, let us have our conversation, and there let us long to be. How bad soever the world is, let us never think the worse of God nor of his government; but, from the abundance of wickedness that is among men, let us take occasion, instead of reflecting upon God's purity, as if he countenanced sin, to admire his patience, that he bears so much with those that so impudently

provoke him, nay, and causes his sun to shine and his rain to fall upon them. If God's mercy were not in the heavens (that is, infinitely above the mercies of any creature), he would, long ere this, have drowned the world again. See Isa. lv. 8, 9; Hos. xi. 9. (2.) He is a God of inviolable truth: *Thy faithfulness reaches unto the clouds.* Though God suffers wicked people to do a great deal of mischief, yet he is and will be faithful to his threatenings against sin, and there will come a day when he will reckon with them; he is faithful also to his covenant with his people, which cannot be broken, nor one jot or tittle of the promises of it defeated by all the malice of earth and hell. This is matter of great comfort to all good people, that, though men are false, God is faithful; men speak vanity, but the words of the Lord are pure words. God's faithfulness reaches so high that it does not change with the weather, as men's does, for it reaches to the *skies* (so it should be read, as some think), above the clouds, and all the changes of the lower region. (3.) He is a God of incontestable justice and equity: *Thy righteousness is like the great mountains*, so immovable and inflexible itself and so conspicuous and evident to all the world; for no truth is more certain nor more plain than this, That the Lord is righteous in all his ways, and that he never did, nor ever will do, any wrong to any of his creatures. Even *when clouds and darkness are round about him, yet judgment and justice are the habitation of his throne*, xcvi. 2. (4.) He is a God of unsearchable wisdom and design: "*Thy judgments are a great deep*, not to be fathomed with the line and plummet of any finite understanding." As his power is sovereign, which he owes not any account of to us, so his method is singular and mysterious, which cannot be accounted for by us: *His way is in the sea and his path in the great waters.* We know that he does all wisely and well; but what he does we know not now; it will be time enough to know hereafter.

2. The extensive care and beneficence of the divine Providence: "*Thou preservest man and beast*, not only protectest them from mischief, but suppliest them with that which is needful for the support of life." The beasts, though not capable of knowing and praising God, are yet graciously provided for; their eyes wait on him, and he gives them their meat in due season. Let us not wonder that God gives food to bad men, for he feeds the brute-creatures; and let us not fear but that he will provide well for good men; he that feeds the young lions will not starve his own children.

3. The peculiar favour of God to the saints. Observe,

(1.) Their character, v. 7. They are such as are allured by the *excellency of God's loving-kindness to put their trust under the shadow of his wings.* [1.] God's loving-kindness is precious to them. They relish it; they taste a

transcendent sweetness in it; they admire God's beauty and benignity above any thing in this world, nothing so amiable, so desirable. Those know not God that do not admire his loving-kindness; and those know not themselves that do not earnestly covet it. [2.] They therefore repose an entire confidence in him. They have recourse to him, put themselves under his protection, and then think themselves safe and find themselves easy, as the chickens under the wings of the hen, Matt. xxiii. 37. It was the character of proselytes that they came to *trust under the wings of the God of Israel* (Ruth ii. 12); and what more proper to gather proselytes than the excellency of his loving-kindness? What more powerful to engage our complacency to him and on him? Those that are thus drawn by love will cleave to him.

(2.) Their privilege. Happy, thrice happy, the people whose God is the Lord, for in him they have, or may have, or shall have, a complete happiness. [1.] Their desires shall be answered (v. 8): *They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house*, their wants supplied, their cravings gratified, and their capacities filled. In God all-sufficient they shall have enough, all that which an enlightened enlarged soul can desire or receive. The gains of the world and the delights of sense will surfeit, but never satisfy, Isa. lv. 2. But the communications of divine favour and grace will satisfy, but never surfeit. A gracious soul, though still desiring more of God, never desires more than God. The gifts of Providence so far satisfy them that they are content with such things as they have. *I have all, and abound*, Phil. iv. 18. The benefit of holy ordinances is the fatness of God's house, sweet to a sanctified soul and strengthening to the spiritual and divine life. With this they are abundantly satisfied; they desire nothing more in this world than to live a life of communion with God and to have the comfort of the promises. But the full, the abundant satisfaction is reserved for the future state, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Every vessel will be full there. [2.] Their joys shall be constant: *Thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.* First, There are pleasures that are truly divine. "*They are thy pleasures*, not only which come from thee as the giver of them, but which terminate in thee as the matter and centre of them." Being purely spiritual, they are of the same nature with those of the glorious inhabitants of the upper world, and bear some analogy even to the delights of the Eternal Mind. Secondly, There is a river of these pleasures, always full, always fresh, always flowing. There is enough for all, enough for each; see xli. 4. The pleasures of sense are putrid puddle-water; those of faith are pure and pleasant, *clear as crystal*, Rev. xxii. 1. Thirdly, God has not only provided this river of pleasures for his people, but he makes them to drink of it, works in

them a gracious appetite to these pleasures, and by his Spirit fills their souls with joy and peace in believing. In heaven they shall be for ever drinking of those pleasures that are at God's right hand, satiated with a fulness of joy, xvi. 11. [3.] Life and light shall be their everlasting bliss and portion, v. 9. Having God himself for their felicity, *First*, In him they have a fountain of life, from which those rivers of pleasure flow, v. 8. The God of nature is the fountain of natural life. In him we live, and move, and have our being. The God of grace is the fountain of spiritual life. All the strength and comfort of a sanctified soul, all its gracious principles, powers, and performances, are from God. He is the spring and author of all its sensations of divine things, and all its motions towards them: he quickens whom he will; and whosoever will may come, and take from him of the waters of life freely. He is the fountain of eternal life. The happiness of glorified saints consists in the vision and fruition of him, and in the immediate communications of his love, without interruption or fear of cessation. *Secondly*, In him they have light in perfection, wisdom, knowledge, and joy, all included in this light: *In thy light we shall see light*, that is, 1. "In the knowledge of thee in grace, and the vision of thee in glory, we shall have that which will abundantly suit and satisfy our understandings." That divine light which shines in the scripture, and especially in the face of Christ, the light of the world, has all truth in it. When we come to see God face to face, within the veil, we shall see light in perfection, we shall know enough then, 1 Cor. xiii. 12; 1 John iii. 2. 2. "In communion with thee now; by the communications of thy grace to us and the return of our devout affections to thee, and in the fruition of thee shortly in heaven, we shall have a complete felicity and satisfaction. In thy favour we have all the good we can desire." This is a dark world; we see little comfort in it; but in the heavenly light there is true light, and no false light, light that is lasting and never wastes. In this world we see God, and enjoy him by creatures and means; but in heaven *God himself shall be with us* (Rev. xxi. 3) and we shall see and enjoy him immediately.

II. We have here David's prayers, intercessions, and holy triumphs, grounded upon these meditations.

1. He intercedes for all saints, begging that they may always experience the benefit and comfort of God's favour and grace, v. 10. (1.) The persons he prays for are those that know God, that are acquainted with him, acknowledge him, and avouch him for theirs—the upright in heart, that are sincere in their profession of religion, and faithful both to God and man. Those that are not upright with God do not know him as they should. (2.) The blessing he begs for them is God's loving-kindness (that is, the tokens of his favour towards them) and his righteousness

(that is, the workings of his grace in them); or his loving-kindness and righteousness are his goodness according to promise; they are mercy and truth. (3.) The manner in which he desires this blessing may be conveyed: *O continue it, draw it out*, as the mother draws out her breasts to the child, and then the child draws out the milk from the breasts. Let it be drawn out to a length equal to the line of eternity itself. The happiness of the saints in heaven will be in perfection, and yet in continual progression (as some think); for the fountain there will be always full and the streams always flowing. *In these is continuance*, Isa. lxiv. 5.

2. He prays for himself, that he might be preserved in his integrity and comfort (v. 11): "*Let not the foot of pride come against me, to trip up my heels, or trample upon me; and let not the hand of the wicked, which is stretched out against me, prevail to remove me, either from my purity and integrity, by any temptation, or from my peace and comfort, by any trouble.*" Let not those who fight against God triumph over those who desire to cleave to him. Those that have experienced the pleasure of communion with God cannot but desire that nothing may ever remove them from him.

3. He rejoices in hope of the downfall of all his enemies in due time (v. 12): "*There; where they thought to gain the point against me, they have themselves fallen, been taken in that snare which they laid for me.*" *There*, in the other world (so some), where the saints stand in the judgment, and have a place in God's house, the workers of iniquity are cast in the judgment, *are cast down into hell, into the bottomless pit, out of which they shall assuredly never be able to rise from under the insupportable weight of God's wrath and curse.* It is true we are not to rejoice when any particular enemy of ours falls; but the final overthrow of all the workers of iniquity will be the everlasting triumph of glorified saints.

PSALM XXXVII.

This psalm is a sermon, and an excellent useful sermon it is, calculated not (as most of the psalms) for our devotion, but for our conversation; there is nothing in it of prayer or praise, but it is all instruction: it is "*Maaschil—a teaching psalm*;" it is an exposition of some of the hardest chapters in the book of Providence, the advancement of the wicked and the disgrace of the righteous, a solution of the difficulties that arise thereupon, and an exhortation to conduct ourselves as becomes us under such dark dispensations. The work of the prophets (and David was one) was to explain the law. Now the law of Moses had promised temporal blessings to the obedient, and denounced temporal miseries against the disobedient, which principally referred to the body of the people, the nation as a nation; for, when they came to be applied to particular persons, many instances occurred of sinners in prosperity and saints in adversity; to reconcile those instances with the word that God had spoken is the scope of the prophet in this psalm, in which, I. He forbids us to fret at the prosperity of the wicked in their wicked ways, ver. 1, 7, 8. II. He gives very good reasons why we should not fret at it. 1. Because of the scandalous character of the wicked (ver. 12, 14, 21, 32) notwithstanding their prosperity, and the honourable character of the righteous, ver. 21, 26, 30, 31. 2. Because of the destruction and ruin which the wicked are nigh to (ver. 2, 9, 10, 20, 35, 36, 39) and the salvation and protection which the righteous are sure of from all the malicious designs of the wicked, ver. 13, 15, 17, 28, 33, 39, 40. 3. Because of the particular mercy God has in store for all good people and the favour he shows them, ver. 11, 16, 18, 19, 29—35, 28, 29, 37. III. He prescribes very good remedies against this sin of envying the prosperity of the wicked, and great encouragement to use those remedies, ver. 3—6, 27, 34. In singing this psalm we must teach and admonish one another

rightly to understand the providence of God and to accommodate ourselves to it, at all times carefully to do our duty and then patiently to leave the event with God and to believe that, how black soever things may look for the present, it shall be "well with those that fear God, that fear before him."

A psalm of David.

FRET not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. 2 For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. 3 Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. 4 Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. 5 Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. 6 And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.

The instructions here given are very plain; much need not be said for the exposition of them, but there is a great deal to be done for the reducing of them to practice, and there they will look best.

I. We are here cautioned against discontent at the prosperity and success of evil-doers (v. 1, 2): *Fret not thyself, neither be thou envious.* We may suppose that David speaks this to himself first, and preaches it to his own heart (in his communing with that upon his bed), for the suppressing of those corrupt passions which he found working there, and then leaves it in writing for instruction to others that might be in similar temptation. That is preached best, and with most probability of success, to others, which is first preached to ourselves. Now, 1. When we look abroad we see the world full of evil-doers and workers of iniquity, that flourish and prosper, that have what they will and do what they will, that live in ease and pomp themselves and have power in their hands to do mischief to those about them. So it was in David's time; and therefore, if it is so still, let us not marvel at the matter, as though it were some new or strange thing. 2. When we look within we find ourselves tempted to fret at this, and to be envious against these scandals and burdens, these blemishes and common nuisances, of this earth. We are apt to fret at God, as if he were unkind to the world and unkind to his church in permitting such men to live, and prosper, and prevail, as they do. We are apt to fret ourselves with vexation at their success in their evil projects. We are apt to envy them the liberty they take in getting wealth, and perhaps by unlawful means, and in the indulgence of their lusts, and to wish that we could shake off the restraints of conscience and do so too. We are tempted to think them the only happy people, and to incline to imitate them, and to join ourselves with them, that

we may share in their gains and eat of their dainties; and this is that which we are warned against: *Fret not thyself, neither be thou envious.* Fretfulness and envy are sins that are their own punishments; they are the uneasiness of the spirit and the rottenness of the bones; it is therefore in kindness to ourselves that we are warned against them. Yet that is not all; for, 3. When we look forward with an eye of faith we shall see no reason to envy wicked people their prosperity, for their ruin is at the door and they are ripening apace for it, v. 2. They flourish, but as the grass, and as the green herb, which nobody envies nor frets at. The flourishing of a godly man is like that of a fruitful tree (i. 3), but that of the wicked man is like grass and herbs, which are very short-lived. (1.) They will soon wither of themselves. Outward prosperity is a fading thing, and so is the life itself to which it is confined. (2.) They will sooner be cut down by the judgments of God. Their triumphing is short, but their weeping and wailing will be everlasting.

II. We are here counselled to live a life of confidence and complacency in God, and that will keep us from fretting at the prosperity of evil-doers; if we do well for our own souls, we shall see little reason to envy those that do so ill for theirs. Here are three excellent precepts, which we are to be ruled by, and, to enforce them, three precious promises, which we may rely upon.

1. We must make God our hope in the way of duty and then we shall have a comfortable subsistence in this world, v. 3. (1.) It is required that we *trust in the Lord and do good*, that we confide in God and conform to him. The life of religion lies much in a believing reliance on God, his favour, his providence, his promise, his grace, and a diligent care to serve him and our generation, according to his will. We must not think to trust in God and then live as we list. No; it is not trusting God, but tempting him, if we do not make conscience of our duty to him. Nor must we think to do good, and then to trust to ourselves, and our own righteousness and strength. No; we must both trust in the Lord and do good. And then, (2.) It is promised that we shall be well provided for in this world: *So shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.* He does not say, "So shalt thou get preferment, dwell in a palace, and be feasted." This is not necessary; a man's life consists not in the abundance of these things; but, "Thou shalt have a place to live in, and that in the land, in Canaan, the valley of vision, and thou shalt have food convenient for thee." This is more than we deserve; it is as much as a good man will stipulate for (Gen. xxviii. 20) and it is enough for one that is going to heaven. "Thou shalt have a settlement, a quiet settlement, and a maintenance, a comfortable maintenance: *Verily thou shalt be fed.*" Some read it, *Thou shalt be fed by faith,*

as the just are said to live by faith, and it is good living, good feeding, upon the promises. "*Verily thou shalt be fed*, as Elijah in the famine, with what is needful for thee." God himself is a shepherd, a feeder, to all those that trust in him, xxiii. 1.

2. We must make God our heart's delight and then we shall have our heart's desire, v. 4. We must not only depend upon God, but solace ourselves in him. We must be well pleased that there is a God, that he is such a one as he has revealed himself to be, and that he is our God in covenant. We must delight ourselves in his beauty, bounty, and benignity; our souls must return to him, and repose in him, as their rest, and their portion for ever. Being satisfied of his loving-kindness, we must be satisfied with it, and make that our exceeding joy, xlii. 4. We were commanded (v. 3) to do good, and then follows this command to delight in God, which is as much a privilege as a duty. If we make conscience of obedience to God, we may then take the comfort of a complacency in him. And even this pleasant duty of delighting in God has a promise annexed to it, which is very full and precious, enough to recompense the hardest services: *He shall give thee the desires of thy heart*. He has not promised to gratify all the appetites of the body and the humours of the fancy, but to grant all the desires of the heart, all the cravings of the renewed sanctified soul. What is the desire of the heart of a good man? It is this, to know, and love, and live to God, to please him and to be pleased in him.

3. We must make God our guide, and submit in every thing to his guidance and disposal; and then all our affairs, even those that seem most intricate and perplexed, shall be made to issue well and to our satisfaction, v. 5, 6. (1.) The duty is very easy; and, if we do it aright, it will make us easy: *Commit thy way unto the Lord; roll thy way upon the Lord* (so the margin reads it), Prov. xvi. 3; Ps. lv. 22. *Cast thy burden upon the Lord*, the burden of thy care, 1 Pet. v. 7. We must roll it off ourselves, so as not to afflict and perplex ourselves with thoughts about future events (Matt. vi. 25), not to cumber and trouble ourselves either with the contrivance of the means or with expectation of the end, but refer it to God, leave it to him by his wise and good providence to order and dispose of all our concerns as he pleases. *Reveal thy way unto the Lord* (so the LXX.), that is, "By prayer spread thy case, and all thy cares about it, before the Lord" (as Jephthah uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh, Judg. xi. 11), "and then trust in him to bring it to a good issue, with a full satisfaction that all is well that God does." We must do our duty (that must be our care) and then leave the event with God. *Sit still, and see how the matter will fall*, Ruth iii. 18. We must follow Providence, and not force it, subscribe to Infinite Wisdom and not pre-

scribe. (2.) The promise is very sweet. [1.] In general, "*He shall bring that to pass*, whatever it is, which thou hast committed to him, if not to thy contrivance, yet to thy content. He will find means to extricate thee out of thy straits, to prevent thy fears, and bring about thy purposes, to thy satisfaction." [2.] In particular, "He will take care of thy reputation, and bring thee out of thy difficulties, not only with comfort, but with credit and honour: *He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light and thy judgment as the noon-day*" (v. 6), that is, "he shall make it to appear that thou art an honest man, and that is honour enough." *First*, It is implied that the righteousness and judgment of good people may, for a time, be clouded and eclipsed, either by remarkable rebukes of Providence (Job's great afflictions darkened his righteousness) or by the malicious censures and reproaches of men, who give them bad names which they no way deserve, and lay to their charge things which they know not. *Secondly*, It is promised that God will, in due time, roll away the reproach they are under, clear up their innocency, and bring forth their righteousness, to their honour, perhaps in this world, at furthest in the great day, Matt. xiii. 43. Note, If we take care to keep a good conscience, we may leave it to God to take care of our good name.

7 Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. 8 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. 9 For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. 10 For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. 11 But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. 12 The wicked plot-teth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. 13 The LORD shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming. 14 The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation. 15 Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken. 16 A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked. 17 For the arms of the wicked shall be

broken: but the LORD upholdeth the righteous. 18 The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever. 19 They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied. 20 But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD *shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away.*

In these verses we have,

I. The foregoing precepts inculcated; for we are so apt to disquiet ourselves with needless fruitless discontents and distrusts that it is necessary there should be precept upon precept, and line upon line, to suppress them and arm us against them. 1. Let us compose ourselves by believing in God: "*Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him* (v. 7), that is, be well reconciled to all he does and acquiesce in it, for that is best that is, because it is what God has appointed; and be well satisfied that he will still make all to work for good to us, though we know not how or which way." *Be silent to the Lord* (so the word is), not with a sullen, but a submissive silence. A patient bearing of what is laid upon us, with a patient expectation of what is further appointed for us, is as much our interest as it is our duty, for it will make us always easy; and there is a great deal of reason for it, for it is making a virtue of necessity. 2. Let us not discompose ourselves at what we see in this world: "*Fret not thyself because of him who prospers in his wicked way*, who, though he is a bad man, yet thrives and grows rich and great in the world; no, nor because of him who does mischief with his power and wealth, and brings wicked devices to pass against those that are virtuous and good, who seems to have gained his point and to have run them down. If thy heart begins to rise at it, stroke down thy folly, and *cease from anger* (v. 8), check the first stirrings of discontent and envy, and do not harbour any hard thoughts of God and his providence upon this account. Be not angry at any thing that God does, but forsake that wrath; it is the worst kind of wrath that can be. *Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil*; do not envy them their prosperity, lest thou be tempted to fall in with them and to take the same evil course that they take to enrich and advance themselves or some desperate course to avoid them and their power." Note, A fretful discontented spirit lies open to many temptations; and those that indulge it are in danger of doing evil.

II. The foregoing reasons, taken from the approaching ruin of the wicked notwithstanding their prosperity, and the real happiness of the righteous notwithstanding their troubles, are here much enlarged upon and the same

things repeated in a pleasing variety of expression. We were cautioned (v. 7) not to envy the wicked either worldly prosperity or the success of their plots against the righteous, and the reasons here given respect these two temptations severally:—

1. Good people have no reason to envy the worldly prosperity of wicked people, nor to grieve or be uneasy at it, (1.) Because the prosperity of the wicked will soon be at an end (v. 9): *Evil-doers shall be cut off* by some sudden stroke of divine justice in the midst of their prosperity; what they have got by sin will not only flow away from them (Job xx. 28), but they shall be carried away with it. See the end of these men (lxxiii. 17), how dear their ill-got gain will cost them, and you will be far from envying them or from being willing to espouse their lot, for better, for worse. Their ruin is sure, and it is very near (v. 10): *Yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be what they now are; they are brought into desolation in a moment*, lxxiii. 19. Have a little patience, for the *Judge stands before the door*, Jam. v. 8, 9. Moderate your passion, for the *Lord is at hand*, Phil. iv. 5. And when their ruin comes it will be an utter ruin; he and his shall be extirpated: the day that comes shall *leave him neither root nor branch* (Mal. iv. 1): *Thou shalt diligently consider his place*, where but the other day he made a mighty figure, but *it shall not be*, you will not find it; he shall leave nothing valuable, nothing honourable, behind him. To the same purport (v. 20), *The wicked shall perish*; their death is their perdition, because it is the termination of all their joy and a passage to endless misery. *Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord*; but undone, for ever undone, are the dead that die in their sins. The wicked are the enemies of the Lord; such those make themselves who will not have him to reign over them, and as such he will reckon with them: *They shall consume as the fat of lambs, they shall consume into smoke*. Their prosperity, which gratifies their sensuality, is like the fat of lambs, not solid or substantial, but loose and washy; and, when their ruin comes, they shall fall as sacrifices to the justice of God and be consumed as the fat of the sacrifices was upon the altar, whence it ascended in smoke. The day of God's vengeance on the wicked is represented as a *sacrifice of the fat of the kidneys of rams* (Isa. xxxiv. 6); for he will be honoured by the ruin of his enemies, as he was by the sacrifices. Damned sinners are sacrifices, Mark ix. 49. This is a good reason why we should not envy them their prosperity; while they are fed to the full, they are but in the fattening for the day of sacrifice, *like a lamb in a large place* (Hos. iv. 16), and the more they prosper the more will God be glorified in their ruin. (2.) Because the condition of the righteous, even in this life, is every way better and more desirable than that of the wicked, v. 16. In general,

a little that a righteous man has of the honour, wealth, and pleasure of this world, is better than the riches of many wicked. Observe, [1.] The wealth of the world is so dispensed by the divine Providence that it is often the lot of good people to have but a little of it, and of wicked people to have abundance of it; for thus God would show us that the things of this world are not the best things, for, if they were, those would have most that are best and dearest to God. [2.] That a godly man's little is really better than a wicked man's much; see Prov. xv. 16, 17; xvi. 8; xxviii. 6. A godly man's estate, though ever so little, is better than a wicked man's estate, though ever so much; for it comes from a better hand, from a hand of special love and not merely from a hand of common providence,—it is enjoyed by a better title (God gives it to them by promise, Gal. iii. 18),—it is theirs by virtue of their relation to Christ, who is the heir of all things,—and it is put to a better use: it is sanctified to them by the blessing of God. *Unto the pure all things are pure*, Tit. i. 15. A little wherewith God is served and honoured is better than a great deal prepared for Baal or for a base lust. The promises here made to the righteous secure them such a happiness that they need not envy the prosperity of evil-doers. Let them know to their comfort, *First*, That *they shall inherit the earth*, as much of it as Infinite Wisdom sees good for them; they have the promise of the *life that now is*, 1 Tim. iv. 8. If all the earth were necessary to make them happy, they should have it. All is theirs, even *the world, and things present*, as well as *things to come*, 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22. They have it by inheritance, a safe and honourable title, not by permission only and connivance. When evil-doers are cut off the righteous sometimes inherit what they gathered. *The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just*, Job xxvii. 17; Prov. xiii. 22. This promise is here made, 1. To those that live a life of faith (v. 9): *Those that wait upon the Lord*, as dependents on him, expectants from him, and supplicants to him, *shall inherit the earth*, as a token of his present favour to them and an earnest of better things intended for them in the other world. God is a good Master, that provides plentifully and well, not only for his working servants, but for his waiting servants. 2. To those that live a quiet and peaceable life (v. 11): *The meek shall inherit the earth*. They are in least danger of being injured and disturbed in the possession of what they have and they have most satisfaction in themselves and consequently the sweetest relish of their creature-comforts. Our Saviour has made this a gospel-promise, and a confirmation of the blessing he pronounced on the meek, Matt. v. 5. *Secondly*, That *they shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace*, v. 11. Perhaps they have not abundance of wealth to delight in;

but they have that which is better, abundance of peace, inward peace and tranquillity of mind, peace with God, and then peace in God, that great peace which those have that love God's law, whom *nothing shall offend* (cxix. 165), that abundance of peace which is in the kingdom of Christ (lxxii. 7), that peace which the world cannot give (John xiv. 27), and which the wicked cannot have, Isa. lviii. 21. This they shall delight themselves in, and in it they shall have a continual feast; while those that have abundance of wealth do but cumber and perplex themselves with it and have little delight in it. *Thirdly*, That *God knows their days*, v. 18. He takes particular notice of them, of all they do and of all that happens to them. He keeps account of the days of their service, and not one day's work shall go unrewarded, and of the days of their suffering, that for those also they may receive a recompence. He knows their bright days, and has pleasure in their prosperity; he knows their cloudy and dark days, the days of their affliction, and as the day is so shall the strength be. *Fourthly*, That *their inheritance shall be for ever*. Their time on earth is reckoned by days, which will soon be numbered. God takes cognizance of them, and gives them the blessings of every day in its day; but it was never intended that their inheritance should be confined within the limits of those days. No, that must be the portion of an immortal soul, and therefore must last as long as that lasts, and will run parallel with the longest line of eternity itself: *Their inheritance shall be for ever*; not their inheritance in the earth, but that incorruptible indefeasible one which is laid up for them in heaven. Those that are sure of an everlasting inheritance in the other world have no reason to envy the wicked their transitory possessions and pleasures in this world. *Fifthly*, That in the worst of times it shall go well with them (v. 19): *They shall not be ashamed of their hope and confidence in God*, nor of the profession they have made of religion; for the comfort of that will stand them in stead, and be a real support to them, in evil times. When others droop they shall lift up their heads with joy and confidence: *Even in the days of famine*, when others are dying for hunger round about them, *they shall be satisfied*, as Elijah was; in some way or other God will provide food convenient for them, or give them hearts to be satisfied and content without it, so that, if they should be hardly bestead and hungry, they shall not (as the wicked do) *fret themselves and curse their king and their God* (Isa. viii. 21), but rejoice in God as the God of their salvation even when *the fig-tree does not blossom*, Hab. iii. 17, 18.

2. Good people have no reason to fret at the occasional success of the designs of the wicked against the just. Though they do bring some of their wicked devices to pass, which makes us fear they will gain

their point and bring them all to pass, yet let us cease from anger, and not fret ourselves so as to think of giving up the cause. For,

(1.) Their plots will be their shame, v. 12, 13. It is true *the wicked plotteth against the just*; there is a rooted enmity in the seed of the wicked one against the righteous seed; their aim is, if they can, to destroy their righteousness, or, if that fail, then to destroy them. With this end in view they have acted with a great deal both of cursed policy and contrivance (they plot, they practise, against the just), and of cursed zeal and fury—they *gnash upon them with their teeth*, so desirous are they, if they could get it into their power, to eat them up, and so full of rage and indignation are they because it is not in their power; but by all this they do but make themselves ridiculous. *The Lord shall laugh at them*, ii. 4, 5. They are proud and insolent, but God shall pour contempt upon them. He is not only displeased with them, but he despises them and all their attempts as vain and ineffectual, and their malice as impotent and in a chain: *for he sees that his day is coming*, that is, [1.] The day of God's reckoning, the day of the revelation of his righteousness, which now seems clouded and eclipsed. Men have their day now. *This is your hour*, Luke xxii. 53. But God will have his day shortly, a day of recomences, a day which will set all to rights, and render that ridiculous which now passes for glorious. *It is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment*, 1 Cor. iv. 3. God's day will give a decisive judgment. [2.] The day of their ruin. The wicked man's day, the day set for his fall, that day *is coming*, which denotes delay; it has not yet come, but certainly it will come. The believing prospect of that day will enable the virgin, the daughter of Zion, to despise the rage of her enemies and *laugh them to scorn*, Isa. xxxvii. 22.

(2.) Their attempts will be their destruction, v. 14, 15. See here, [1.] How cruel they are in their designs against good people. They prepare instruments of death, *the sword and the bow*, no less will serve; they hunt for the precious life. That which they design is *to cast down and slay*; it is the blood of the saints they thirst after. They carry on the design very far; and it is near to be put in execution: *They have drawn the sword, and bent the bow*; and all these military preparations are made against the helpless, *the poor and needy* (which proves them to be very cowardly), and against the guiltless, *such as are of upright conversation*, that never gave them any provocation, nor offered injury to them or any other person, which proves them to be very wicked. Uprightness itself will be no fence against their malice. But, [2.] How justly their malice recoils upon themselves: *Their sword shall turn into their own heart*, which implies the preservation of the righteous from their malice and the filling up of the measure of

their own iniquity by it. Sometimes that very thing proves to be their own destruction which they projected against their harmless neighbours; however, God's sword, which their provocations have drawn against them, will give them their death's wound.

(3.) Those that are not suddenly cut off shall yet be so disabled for doing any further mischief that the interests of the church shall be effectually secured: *Their bows shall be broken* (v. 15); the instruments of their cruelty shall fail them and they shall lose those whom they had made tools of to serve their bloody purposes with; nay, *their arms shall be broken*, so that they shall not be able to go on with their enterprises, v. 17. *But the Lord upholds the righteous*, so that they neither sink under the weight of their afflictions nor are crushed by the violence of their enemies. He upholds them both in their integrity and in their prosperity; and those that are so upheld by the rock of ages have no reason to envy the wicked the support of their broken reeds.

21 The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth. 22 For *such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth*; and *they that be cursed of him shall be cut off*. 23 The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. 24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand. 25 I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. 26 He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed. 27 Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore. 28 For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. 29 The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever. 30 The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment. 31 The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide. 32 The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him. 33 The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged.

These verses are much to the same purport with the foregoing verses of this psalm, for it is a subject worthy to be dwelt upon. Observe here,

I. What is required of us as the way to our

happiness, which we may learn both from the characters here laid down and from the directions here given. If we would be blessed of God, 1. We must make conscience of giving every body his own; for *the wicked borrow and pays not again, v. 21.* It is the first thing which the Lord our God requires of us, that we do justly, and render to all their due. It is not only a shameful paltry thing, but a sinful wicked thing, not to repay what we have borrowed. Some make this an instance, not so much of the wickedness of the wicked as of the misery and poverty to which they are reduced by the just judgment of God, that they shall be necessitated to borrow for their supply and then be in no capacity to repay again, and so lie at the mercy of their creditors. Whatever some men seem to think of it, as it is a great sin for those that are able to deny the payment of their just debts, so it is a great misery not to be able to pay them. 2. We must be ready to all acts of charity and beneficence; for, as it is an instance of God's goodness to the righteous that he puts it into the power of his hand to be kind and to do good (and so some understand it, God's blessing increases his little to such a degree that he has abundance to spare for the relief of others), so it is an instance of the goodness of the righteous man that he has a heart proportionable to his estate: *He shows mercy, and gives, v. 21. He is ever merciful,* or every day, or all the day, merciful, *and lends,* and sometimes there is as true charity in lending as in giving; and giving and lending are acceptable to God when they proceed from a merciful disposition in the heart, which, if it be sincere, will be constant, and will keep us from being weary of well-doing. He that is truly merciful will be ever merciful. 3. We must leave our sins, and engage in the practice of serious godliness (*v. 27*): *Depart from evil and do good.* Cease to do evil and abhor it; learn to do well and cleave to it; this is true religion. 4. We must abound in good discourse, and with our tongues must glorify God and edify others. It is part of the character of a righteous man (*v. 30*) that his *mouth speaketh wisdom*; not only he speaks wisely, but he speaks wisdom, like Solomon himself, for the instruction of those about him. *His tongue talks not of things idle and impertinent, but of judgment,* that is, of the word and providence of God and the rules of wisdom for the right ordering of the conversation. Out of the abundance of a good heart will the mouth speak that which is good and to the use of edifying. 5. We must have our wills brought into an entire subjection to the will and word of God (*v. 31*): *The law of God, of his God, is in his heart;* and in vain do we pretend that God is our God if we do not receive his law into our hearts and resign ourselves to the government of it. It is but a jest and a mockery to speak wisdom, and to talk of judgment (*v. 30*), unless we have the law in our hearts, and we

think as we speak. The law of God must be a commanding ruling principle in the heart; it must be a light there, a spring there, and then the conversation will be regular and uniform: *None of his steps will slide;* it will effectually prevent backsliding into sin, and the uneasiness that follows from it.

II. What is assured to us, as instances of our happiness and comfort, upon these conditions.

1. That we shall have the blessing of God, and that blessing shall be the spring, and sweetness, and security of all our temporal comforts and enjoyments (*v. 22*): *Such as are blessed of God,* as all the righteous are, with a Father's blessing, by virtue of that *shall inherit the earth, or the land* (for so the same word is translated, *v. 29*), the land of Canaan, that glory of all lands. Our creature-comforts are comforts indeed to us when we see them flowing from the blessing of God, from his favour, his promise, and his covenant with us; and, if we are sure of the blessing of God, we are sure not to want any thing that is good for us in this world. *The earth shall yield us her increase if God, as our own God, give us his blessing, lxvii. 6.* And as *those whom God blesses are thus blessed indeed (for they shall inherit the land), so those whom he curses are cursed indeed; they shall be cut off and rooted out,* and their extirpation by the divine curse will set off the establishment of the righteous by the divine blessing and be a foil to it.

2. That God will direct and dispose of our actions and affairs so as may be most for his glory (*v. 23*): *The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.* By his grace and Holy Spirit he directs the thoughts, affections, and designs of good men. He has all hearts in his hand, but theirs by their own consent. By his providence he overrules the events that concern them, so as to make their way plain before them, both what they should do and what they may expect. Observe, God orders the steps of a good man; not only his way in general, by his written word, but his particular steps, by the whispers of conscience, saying, *This is the way, walk in it.* He does not always show him his way at a distance, but leads him step by step, as children are led, and so keeps him in a continual dependence upon his guidance; and this, (1.) Because *he delights in his way,* and is well pleased with the paths of righteousness wherein he walks. *The Lord knows the way of the righteous* (i. 6), knows it with favour, and therefore directs it. (2.) That he may delight in his way. Because God orders his way according to his own will, therefore he delights in it; for, as he loves his own image upon us so he is well pleased with what we do under his guidance.

3. That God will keep us from being ruined by our falls either into sin or into trouble (*v. 24*): *Though he fall, he shall not utterly cast down.* (1.) A good man may be overtaken in a fault, but the grace of God shall recover

him to repentance, so that he shall not be utterly cast down. Though he may, for a time, lose the joys of God's salvation, yet they shall be restored to him; for God shall uphold him with his hand, uphold him with his free Spirit. The root shall be kept alive, though the leaf wither; and there will come a spring after the winter. (2.) A good man may be in distress, his affairs embarrassed, his spirits sunk, but he shall not be utterly cast down; God will be the strength of his heart when his flesh and heart fail, and will uphold him with his comforts, so that the spirit he has made shall not fail before him.

4. That we shall not want the necessary supports of this life (v. 25): "*I have been young and now am old; and, among all the changes I have seen in men's outward condition and the observations I have made upon them, I never saw the righteous forsaken of God and man, as I have sometimes seen wicked people abandoned both by heaven and earth; nor do I ever remember to have seen the seed of the righteous reduced to such an extremity as to beg their bread.*" David had himself begged his bread of Ahimelech the priest, but it was when Saul hunted him; and our Saviour has taught us to except the case of persecution for righteousness' sake out of all the temporal promises (Mark x. 30), because that has such peculiar honours and comforts attending it as make it rather a gift (as the apostle reckons it, Phil. i. 29) than a loss or grievance. But there are very few instances of good men, or their families, that are reduced to such extreme poverty as many wicked people bring themselves to by their wickedness. He had not *seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread. Forsaken* (so some expound it); if they do want God will raise them up friends to supply them, without a scandalous exposing of themselves to the reproach of common beggars; or, if they go from door to door for meat, it shall not be with despair, as the wicked man *that wanders abroad for bread, saying, Where is it?* Job xv. 23. Nor shall he be denied, as the prodigal, *that would fain have filled his belly, but no man gave unto him*, Luke xv. 16. Nor shall he grudge if he be not satisfied, as David's enemies, when they *wandered up and down for meat*, lix. 15. Some make this promise relate especially to those that are charitable and liberal to the poor, and to intimate that David never observed any that brought themselves to poverty by their charity. It is *withholding more than is meet that tends to poverty*, Prov. xi. 24.

5. That God will not desert us, but graciously protect us in our difficulties and straits (v. 28): *The Lord loves judgment*; he delights in doing justice himself and he delights in those that do justice; and therefore he forsakes not his saints in affliction when others make themselves strange to them and become shy of them, but he takes care that they be *preserved for ever*, that is, that the saints in

every age be taken under his protection, that the succession be preserved to the end of time, and that particular saints be preserved from all the temptations and through all the trials of this present time, to that happiness which shall be for ever. He will *preserve them to his heavenly kingdom*; that is a preservation for ever, 2 Tim. iv. 18; Ps. xii. 7.

6. That we shall have a comfortable settlement in this world, and in a better when we leave this. That we shall *dwell for evermore* (v. 27), and not be *cut off* as the seed of the wicked, v. 28. That we shall *inherit the land* which the Lord our God gives us and *dwell therein for ever*, v. 29. Those shall not be tossed that make God their rest and are at home in him. But on this earth there is no dwelling for ever, no continuing city; it is in heaven only, that city which has foundations, that the righteous shall dwell for ever; that will be their everlasting habitation.

7. That we shall not become a prey to our adversaries, who seek our ruin, v. 32, 33. There is an adversary that takes all opportunities to do us a mischief, a wicked one that watches the righteous (as a roaring lion watches his prey) and seeks to slay him. There are wicked men that do so, that are very subtle (they watch the righteous, that they may have an opportunity to do them a mischief effectually and may have a pretence wherewith to justify themselves in the doing of it), and very spiteful, for they seek to slay him. But it may very well be applied to the wicked one, the devil, that old serpent, who has his wiles to entrap the righteous, his devices which we should not be ignorant of,—that great red dragon, who seeks to slay them,—that roaring lion, who goes about continually, restless and raging, and seeking whom he may devour. But it is here promised that he shall not prevail, neither Satan nor his instruments. (1.) He shall not prevail as a field-adversary. *The Lord will not leave him in his hand*; he will not permit Satan to do what he would, nor will he withdraw his strength and grace from his people, but will enable them to resist and overcome him, and *their faith shall not fail*, Luke xxii. 31, 32. A good man may fall into the hands of a messenger of Satan, and be sorely buffeted, but God will not leave him in his hands, 1 Cor. x. 13. (2.) He shall not prevail as a law-adversary: *God will not condemn him when he is judged*, though urged to do it by the accuser of the brethren, who accuses them before our God day and night. His false accusations will be thrown out, as those exhibited against Joshua (Zech. iii. 1, 2), *The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan! It is God that justifies, and then who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?*

34 Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it. 35 I have

seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. 36 Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. 37 Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of *that man is peace*. 38 But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off. 39 But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: *he is their strength in the time of trouble*. 40 And the LORD shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him.

The psalmist's conclusion of this sermon (for that is the nature of this poem) is of the same purport with the whole, and inculcates the same things.

I. The duty here pressed upon us is still the same (v. 34): *Wait on the Lord and keep his way*. Duty is ours, and we must mind it and make conscience of it, keep God's way and never turn out of it nor loiter in it, keep close, keep going; but events are God's, and we must refer ourselves to him for the disposal of them; we must wait on the Lord, attend the motions of his providence, carefully observe them, and conscientiously accommodate ourselves to them. If we make conscience of *keeping God's way*, we may with cheerfulness wait on him and commit to him our way; and we shall find him a good Master both to his working servants and to his waiting servants.

II. The reasons to enforce this duty are much the same too, taken from the certain destruction of the wicked and the certain salvation of the righteous. This good man, being tempted to envy the prosperity of the wicked, that he might fortify himself against the temptation, *goes into the sanctuary of God* and leads us thither (lxxiii. 17); there he understands their end, and thence gives us to understand it, and, by comparing that with the end of the righteous, baffles the temptation and puts it to silence. Observe,

1. The misery of the wicked at last, however they may prosper awhile: *The end of the wicked shall be cut off* (v. 38); and that cannot be well that will undoubtedly end so ill. The wicked, in their end, will be cut off from all good and all hopes of it; a final period will be put to all their joys, and they will be for ever separated from the fountain of life to all evil. (1.) Some instances of the remarkable ruin of wicked people David had himself observed in this world—that the pomp and prosperity of sinners would not secure them from the judgments of God when their day should come to fall (v. 36, 35): *I have seen a wicked man* (the word is singular),

suppose Saul or Ahithophel (for David was an old man when he penned this psalm), *in great power, formidable* (so some render it), *the terror of the mighty in the land of the living*, carrying all before him with a high hand, and seeming to be firmly fixed and finely flourishing, *spreading himself like a green bay-tree*, which produces all leaves and no fruit; like a native home-born Israelite (so Dr. Hammond), likely to take root. But what became of him? Eliphaz, long before, had learned, when he saw the foolish taking root, to curse his habitation, Job v. 3. And David saw cause for it; for this bay-tree withered away as soon as the fig-tree Christ cursed: *He passed away as a dream*, as a shadow, such was he and all the pomp and power he was so proud of. He was gone in an instant: *He was not; I sought him with wonder, but he could not be found*. He had acted his part and then quitted the stage, and there was no miss of him. (2.) The total and final ruin of sinners, of all sinners, will shortly be made as much a spectacle to the saints as they are now sometimes made a spectacle to the world (v. 34): *When the wicked are cut off* (and cut off they certainly will be) *thou shalt see it*, with awful adorations of the divine justice. *The transgressors shall be destroyed together*, v. 38. In this world God singles out here one sinner and there another, out of many, to be made an example in *terrorem*—as a warning; but in the day of judgment there will be a general destruction of all the transgressors, and not one shall escape. Those that have sinned together shall be damned together. *Bind them in bundles, to burn them*.

2. The blessedness of the righteous, at last. Let us see what will be the end of God's poor despised people. (1.) Preferment. There have been times the iniquity of which has been such that men's piety has hindered their preferment in this world, and put them quite out of the way of raising estates; but those that keep God's way may be assured that in due time he will *exalt them to inherit the land* (v. 34); he will advance them to a place in the heavenly mansions, to dignity, and honour, and true wealth, in the New Jerusalem, to inherit that good land, that land of promise, of which Canaan was a type; he will exalt them above all contempt and danger. (2.) Peace, v. 37. Let all people *mark the perfect man, and behold the upright*; take notice of him to admire him and imitate him, keep your eye upon him to observe what comes of him, and you will find that *the end of that man is peace*. Sometimes the latter end of his days proves more comfortable to him than the beginning was; the storms blow over, and he is comforted again, after the time that he was afflicted. However, if all his days continue dark and cloudy, perhaps his dying day may prove comfortable to him and his sun may set in brightness; or, if it should set under a cloud, yet his future state will be peace, ever lasting peace. Those that walk in their up-

rightness while they live shall enter into peace when they die, Isa. lvii. 2. A peaceful death has concluded the troublesome life of many a good man; and all is well that thus ends everlastingly well. Balaam himself wished that his death and his last end might be like that of the righteous Num. xxiii. 10. (3.) Salvation, v. 39, 40. *The salvation of the righteous* (which may be applied to the great salvation of which the prophets enquired and searched diligently, 1 Pet. i. 10) *is of the Lord*; it will be the Lord's doing. The eternal salvation, that salvation of God which those shall see that *order their conversation aright* (l. 23), is likewise of the Lord. And he that intends Christ and heaven for them will be a God all-sufficient to them: *He is their strength in time of trouble*, to support them under it and carry them through it. *He shall help them and deliver them*, help them to do their duties, to bear their burdens, and to maintain their spiritual conflicts, help them to bear their troubles well and get good by them, and, in due time, shall deliver them out of their troubles. He shall deliver them from the wicked that would overwhelm them and swallow them up, shall secure them there, where the wicked cease from troubling. He shall *save them*, not only keep them safe, but make them happy, *because they trust in him*, not because they have merited it from him, but because they have committed themselves to him and reposed a confidence in him, and have thereby honoured him.

PSALM XXXVIII.

⁷ This is one of the penitential psalms; it is full of grief and complaint from the beginning to the end. David's sins and his afflictions are the cause of his grief and the matter of his complaints. It should seem he was now sick and in pain, which rewarded him of his sins and helped to humble him for them; he was, at the same time, deserted by his friends and persecuted by his enemies; so that the psalm is calculated for the depth of distress and a complication of calamities. He complains, I. Of God's displeasure, and of his own sin which provoked God against him, ver. 1-5. II. Of his bodily sickness, ver. 6-10. III. Of the unkindness of his friends, ver. 11. IV. Of the injuries which his enemies did him, pleading his good conduct towards them, yet confessing his sins against God, ver. 12-20. Lastly, he concludes the psalm with earnest prayers to God for his gracious presence and help, ver. 21, 22. In singing this psalm we ought to be much affected with the malignity of sin; and, if we have not such troubles as are here described, we know not how soon we may have, and therefore must sing of them by way of preparation, and we know that others have them, and therefore we must sing of them by way of sympathy.

A psalm of David to bring to remembrance.

O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. 2 For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore. 3 *There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin.* 4 For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me. 5 My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness. 6 I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day

long. 7 For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and *there is no soundness in my flesh.* 8 I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart. 9 Lord, all my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee. 10 My heart panteth, my strength faileth me: as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me. 11 My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off.

The title of this psalm is very observable; it is a psalm to bring to remembrance; the 70th psalm, which was likewise penned in a day of affliction, is so entitled. It is designed, 1. To bring to his own remembrance. We will suppose it penned when he was sick and in pain, and then it teaches us that times of sickness are times to bring to remembrance, to bring the sin to remembrance, for which God contended with us, to awaken our consciences to deal faithfully and plainly with us, and set our sins in order before us, for our humiliation. *In a day of adversity consider.* Or we may suppose it penned after his recovery, but designed as a record of the convictions he was under and the workings of his heart when he was in affliction, that upon every review of this psalm he might call to mind the good impressions then made upon him and make a fresh improvement of them. To the same purport was the writing of Hezekiah when he had been sick. 2. To put others in mind of the same things which he was himself mindful of, and to teach them what to think and what to say when they are sick and in affliction; let them think as he did, and speak as he did.

I. He deprecates the wrath of God and his displeasure in his affliction (v. 1): *O Lord! rebuke me not in thy wrath.* With this same petition he began another prayer for the visitation of the sick, vi. 1. This was most upon his heart, and should be most upon ours when we are in affliction, that, however God rebukes and chastens us, it may not be in wrath and displeasure, for that will be wormwood and gall in the affliction and misery. Those that would escape the wrath of God must pray against that more than any outward affliction, and be content to bear any outward affliction while it comes from, and consists with, the love of God.

II. He bitterly laments the impressions of God's displeasure upon his soul (v. 2): *Thy arrows stick fast in me.* Let Job's complaint (ch. vii. 4) expound this of David. By the arrows of the Almighty he means the terrors of God, which did set themselves in array against him. He was under a very melancholy frightful apprehension of the wrath of God against him for his sins, and thought he could look for nothing but judgment and fiery

indignation to devour him. God's arrows, as they are sure to hit the mark, so they are sure to stick where they hit, to stick fast, till he is pleased to draw them out and to bind up with his comforts the wound he has made with his terrors. This will be the everlasting misery of the damned—the arrows of God's wrath will stick fast in them and the wound will be incurable. "*Thy hand, thy heavy hand, presses me sore, and I am ready to sink under it; it not only lies hard upon me, but it lies long; and who knows the power of God's anger, the weight of his hand?*" Sometimes God shot his arrows, and stretched forth his hand, for David (xviii. 14), but now against him; so uncertain is the continuance of divine comforts, where yet the continuance of divine grace is assured. He complains of God's wrath as that which inflicted the bodily distemper he was under (v. 3): *There is no soundness in my flesh because of thy anger.* The bitterness of it, infused in his mind, affected his body; but that was not the worst: it caused the disquietude of his heart, by reason of which he forgot the courage of a soldier, the dignity of a prince, and all the cheerfulness of the sweet psalmist of Israel, and roared terribly, v. 8. Nothing will disquiet the heart of a good man so much as the sense of God's anger, which shows what a fearful thing it is to fall into his hands. The way to keep the heart quiet is to keep ourselves in the love of God and to do nothing to offend him.

III. He acknowledges his sin to be the procuring provoking cause of all his troubles, and groans more under the load of guilt than any other load, v. 3. He complains that his flesh had no soundness, his bones had no rest, so great an agitation he was in. "*It is because of thy anger; that kindles the fire which burns so fiercely;*" but, in the next words, he justifies God herein, and takes all the blame upon himself: "*It is because of my sin. I have deserved it, and so have brought it upon myself. My own iniquities do correct me.*" If our trouble be the fruit of God's anger, we may thank ourselves; it is our sin that is the cause of it. Are we restless? It is sin that makes us so. If there were not sin in our souls, there would be no pain in our bones, no illness in our bodies. It is sin therefore that this good man complains most of. 1. As a burden, a heavy burden (v. 4): "*My iniquities have gone over my head, as proud waters over a man that is sinking and drowning, or as a heavy burden upon my head, pressing me down more than I am able to bear or to bear up under.*" Note, Sin is a burden. The power of sin dwelling in us is a weight, Heb. xii. 1. All are clogged with it; it keeps men from soaring upward and pressing forward. All the saints are complaining of it as a body of death they are loaded with, Rom. vii. 24. The guilt of sin committed by us is a burden, a heavy burden; it is a burden to God (he is pressed under it,

Amos ii. 13), a burden to the whole creation, which groans under it, Rom. viii. 21, 22. It will, first or last, be a burden to the sinner himself, either a burden of repentance when he is pricked to the heart for it, labours, and is heavy-laden, under it, or a burden of ruin when it sinks him to the lowest hell and will for ever detain him there; it will be a talent of lead upon him, Zech. v. 8. Sinners are said to bear their iniquity. Threatenings are burdens. 2. As wounds, dangerous wounds (v. 5): "*My wounds stink and are corrupt* (as wounds in the body rankle, and fester, and grow foul, for want of being dressed and looked after), and it is through my own foolishness." Sins are wounds (Gen. iv. 23), painful mortal wounds. Our wounds by sin are often in a bad condition, no care taken of them, no application made to them, and it is owing to the sinner's foolishness in not confessing sin, xxxii. 3, 4. A slight sore, neglected, may prove of fatal consequence, and so may a slight sin slighted and left unrepented of.

IV. He bemoans himself because of his afflictions, and gives ease to his grief by giving vent to it and pouring out his complaint before the Lord.

1. He was troubled in mind, his conscience was pained, and he had no rest in his own spirit; and a wounded spirit who can bear? He was troubled, or distorted, bowed down greatly, and went mourning all the day long, v. 6. He was always pensive and melancholy, which made him a burden and terror to himself. His spirit was feeble and sorely broken, and his heart disquieted, v. 8. Herein David, in his sufferings, was a type of Christ, who, being in his agony, cried out, *My soul is exceedingly sorrowful.* This is a sorer affliction than any other in this world; whatever God is pleased to lay upon us, we have no reason to complain as long as he preserves to us the use of our reason and the peace of our consciences.

2. He was sick and weak in body; his loins were filled with a loathsome disease, some swelling, or ulcer, or inflammation (some think a plague-sore, such as Hezekiah's boil), and there was no soundness in his flesh, but, like Job, he was all over distempered. See, (1.) What vile bodies these are which we carry about with us, what grievous diseases they are liable to, and what an offence and grievance they may soon be made by some diseases to the souls that animate them, as they always are a cloud and clog. (2.) That the bodies both of the greatest and of the best of men have in them the same seeds of diseases that the bodies of others have, and are liable to the same disasters. David himself, though so great a prince and so great a saint, was not exempt from the most grievous diseases: there was no soundness even in his flesh. Probably this was after his sin in the matter of Uriah, and thus did he smart in his flesh for his fleshly lusts. When, at any

time, we are distempered in our bodies, we ought to remember how God has been dishonoured in and by our bodies. He was *feeble and sorely broken*, v. 8. His *heart panted*, and was in a continual palpitation, v. 10. His *strength and limbs failed him*. As for the *light of his eyes*, that had gone from him, either with much weeping or by a defluxion of rheum upon them, or perhaps through the lowliness of his spirits and the frequent returns of fainting. Note, Sickness will tame the strongest body and the stoutest spirit. David was famed for his courage and great exploits; and yet, when God contended with him by bodily sickness and the impressions of his wrath upon his mind, his hair is cut, his heart fails him, and he becomes weak as water. Therefore let not the strong man glory in his strength, nor any man set grief at defiance, however it may be thought at a distance.

3. His friends were unkind to him (v. 11): *My lovers* (such as had been merry with him in the day of his mirth) now *stand aloof from my sore*; they would not sympathize with him in his griefs, nor so much as come within hearing of his complaints, but, like the priest and Levite (Luke x. 31), *passed by on the other side*. Even his *kinsmen*, that were bound to him by blood and alliance, *stood afar off*. See what little reason we have to trust in man or to wonder if we be disappointed in our expectations of kindness from men. Adversity tries friendship, and separates between the precious and the vile. It is our wisdom to make sure a friend in heaven, who will not stand aloof from our sore and from whose love no tribulation nor distress shall be able to separate us. David, in his troubles, was a type of Christ in his agony, Christ on his cross, feeble and sorely broken, and then deserted by his friends and kinsmen, who beheld afar off.

V. In the midst of his complaints, he comforts himself with the cognizance God graciously took both of his griefs and of his prayers (v. 9): "*Lord, all my desire is before thee*. Thou knowest what I want and what I would have: *My groaning is not hidden from thee*. Thou knowest the burdens I groan under and the blessings I groan after." The *groanings which cannot be uttered* are not hidden from him that *searches the heart and knows what is the mind of the Spirit*, Rom. viii. 26, 27.

In singing this, and praying it over, whatever burden lies upon our spirits, we should by faith cast it upon God, and all our care concerning it, and then be easy.

12 They also that seek after my life lay snares for me: and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long. 13 But I, as a deaf man, heard not; and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth. 14 Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose

mouth are no reproofs. 15 For in thee, O LORD, do I hope: thou wilt hear, O Lord my God. 16 For I said, *Hear me*, lest otherwise they should rejoice over me: when my foot slippeth, they magnify themselves against me. 17 For I am ready to halt, and my sorrow is continually before me. 18 For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin. 19 But mine enemies are lively, and they are strong: and they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied. 20 They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries; because I follow the thing that good is. 21 Forsake me not, O LORD: O my God, be not far from me. 22 Make haste to help me, O Lord my salvation.

In these verses,

I. David complains of the power and malice of his enemies, who, it should seem, not only took occasion from the weakness of his body and the trouble of his mind to insult over him, but took advantage thence to do him a mischief. He has a great deal to say against them, which he humbly offers as a reason why God should appear for him, as xxv. 19, *Consider my enemies*. 1. "They are very spiteful and cruel: *They seek my hurt*; nay, *they seek after my life*," v. 12. That life which was so precious in the sight of the Lord and all good men was aimed at, as if it had been forfeited, or a public nuisance. Such is the enmity of the serpent's seed against the seed of the woman; it would wound the head, though it can but reach the heel. It is the blood of the saints that is thirsted after. 2. "They are very subtle and politic. *They lay snares*, they *imagine deceits*, and herein they are restless and unwearied: they do it *all the day long*. They speak mischievous things one to another; every one has something or other to propose that may be a mischief to me." Mischief, covered and carried on by deceit, may well be called a *snares*. 3. "They are very insolent and abusive: *When my foot slips*, when I fall into any trouble, or when I make any mistake, misplace a word, or take a false step, they magnify themselves against me; they are pleased with it, and promise themselves that it will ruin my interest, and that if I slip I shall certainly fall and be undone." 4. "They are not only unjust, but very ungrateful: *They hate me wrongfully*, v. 19. I never did them any ill turn, nor so much as bore them any ill-will, nor ever gave them any provocation; nay, *they render evil for good*, v. 20. Many a kindness I have done them, for which I might have expected a return of kindness; but *for my love they are my adversaries*," cix. 4. Such a rooted enmity there is in the hearts of wicked men to

goodness for its own sake that they hate it, even when they themselves have the benefit of it; they hate prayer even in those that pray for them, and hate peace even in those that would be at peace with them. Very ill-natured indeed those are whom no courtesy will oblige, but who are rather exasperated by it. 5. "They are very impious and devilish: *They are my adversaries merely because I follow the thing that good is.*" They hated him, not only for his kindness to them, but for his devotion and obedience to God; they hated him because they hated God and all that bear his image. If we suffer ill for doing well, we must not think it strange; from the beginning it was so (Cain slew Abel, because his works were righteous); nor must we think it hard, because it will not be always so; for so much the greater will our reward be. 6. "They are many and mighty: *They are lively; they are strong; they are multiplied, v. 19. Lord, how are those increased that trouble me?*" iii. 1. Holy David was weak and faint; his heart panted, and his strength failed; he was melancholy and of a sorrowful spirit, and persecuted by his friends; but at the same time his wicked enemies were strong and lively, and their number increased. Let us not therefore pretend to judge of men's characters by their outward condition; none knows love or hatred by all that is before him. It should seem that David in this, as in other complaints he makes of his enemies, has an eye to Christ, whose persecutors were such as are here described, perfectly lost to all honour and virtue. None hate Christianity but such as have first divested themselves of the first principles of humanity and broken through its most sacred bonds.

II. He reflects, with comfort, upon his own peaceable and pious behaviour under all the injuries and indignities that were done him. It is then only that our enemies do us a real mischief when they provoke us to sin (Neh. vi. 13), when they prevail to put us out of the possession of our own souls, and drive us from God and our duty. If by divine grace we are enabled to prevent this mischief, we quench their fiery darts, and are saved from harm. If still we hold fast our integrity and our peace, who can hurt us? This David did here. 1. He kept his temper, and was not ruffled nor discomposed by any of the slights that were put upon him or the mischievous things that were said or done against him (v. 13, 14): "*I, as a deaf man, heard not; I took no notice of the affronts put upon me, did not resent them, nor was put into disorder by them, much less did I meditate revenge, or study to return the injury.*" Note, The less notice we take of the unkindness and injuries that are done us the more we consult the quiet of our own minds. Being deaf, he was dumb, as a man in whose mouth there are no reproofs; he was as silent as if he had nothing to say for himself, for

fear of putting himself into a heat and incensing his enemies yet more against him; he would not only not recriminate upon them, but not so much as vindicate himself, lest his necessary defence should be construed his offence. Though they sought after his life, and his silence might be taken for a confession of his guilt, yet he was as a dumb man that opens not his mouth. Note, When our enemies are most clamorous it is generally our prudence to be silent, or to say little, lest we make bad worse. David could not hope by his mildness to win upon his enemies, nor by his soft answers to turn away their wrath; for they were men of such base spirits that they rendered him evil for good; and yet he conducted himself thus meekly towards them, that he might prevent his own sin and might have the comfort of it in the reflection. Herein David was a type of Christ, who was as a sheep dumb before the shearers, and, when he was reviled, reviled not again; and both are examples to us not to render railing for railing. 2. He kept close to his God by faith and prayer, and so both supported himself under these injuries and silenced his own resentments of them (1.) He trusted in God (v. 15): "*I was as a man that opens not his mouth, for in thee, O Lord! do I hope.*" I depend upon thee to plead my cause and clear my innocency, and, some way or other, to put my enemies to silence and shame." His lovers and friends, that should have owned him, and stood by him, and appeared as witnesses for him, withdrew from him, v. 10. But God is a friend that will never fail us if we hope in him. "*I was as a man that heareth not, for thou wilt hear.*" Why need I hear, and God hear too?" *He careth for you* (1 Pet. v. 7), and why need you care and God care too? "*Thou wilt answer*" (so some) "and therefore I will say nothing." Note, It is a good reason why we should bear reproach and calumny with silence and patience, because God is a witness to all the wrong that is done us, and, in due time, will be a witness for us and against those that do us wrong; therefore let us be silent, because, if we be, then we may expect that God will appear for us, for this is an evidence that we trust in him; but, if we undertake to manage for ourselves, we take God's work out of his hands and forfeit the benefit of his appearing for us. Our Lord Jesus, when he suffered, threatened not, because he committed himself to him that judges righteously (1 Pet. ii. 23); and we shall lose nothing, at last, by doing so. *Thou shalt answer, Lord, for me.* (2.) He called upon God (v. 16): *For I said, Hear me* (that is supplied); "*I said so*" (as v. 15); "in thee do I hope, for thou wilt hear, lest they should rejoice over me. I comforted myself with that when I was apprehensive that they would overwhelm me." It is a great support to us, when men are false and unkind, that we have a God to go to whom

we may be free with and who will be faithful to us.

III. He here bewails his own follies and infirmities. 1. He was very sensible of the present workings of corruption in him, and that he was now ready to repine at the providence of God and to be put into a passion by the injuries men did him: *I am ready to halt, v. 17.* This will best be explained by a reflection like this which the psalmist made upon himself in a similar case (lxxiii. 2): *My feet were almost gone, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.* So here: *I was ready to halt, ready to say, I have cleansed my hands in vain.* His sorrow was continual: *All the day long have I been plagued* (lxxiii. 13, 14), and it was continually before him; he could not forbear poring upon it, and that made him almost ready to halt between religion and irreligion. The fear of this drove him to his God: "In thee do I hope, not only that thou wilt plead my cause, but that thou wilt prevent my falling into sin." Good men, by setting their sorrow continually before them, have been ready to halt, who, by setting God always before them, have kept their standing. 2. He remembered against himself his former transgressions, acknowledging that by them he had brought these troubles upon himself and forfeited the divine protection. Though before men he could justify himself, before God he will judge and condemn himself (v. 18): "*I will declare my iniquity, and not cover it; I will be sorry for my sin, and not make a light matter of it;*" and this helped to make him silent under the rebukes of Providence and the reproaches of men. Note, If we be truly penitent for sin, that will make us patient under affliction, and particularly under unjust censures. Two things are required in repentance:—(1.) Confession of sin: "*I will declare my iniquity;* I will not only in general own myself a sinner, but I will make a particular acknowledgment of what I have done amiss." We must declare our sins before God freely and fully, and with their aggravating circumstances, that we may give glory to God and take shame to ourselves. (2.) Contrition for sin: *I will be sorry for it.* Sin will have sorrow; every true penitent grieves for the dishonour he has done to God and the wrong he has done to himself. "I will be in care or fear about my sin" (so some), "in fear lest it ruin me and in care to get it pardoned."

IV. He concludes with very earnest prayers to God for his gracious presence with him and seasonable powerful succour in his distress (v. 21, 22): "*Forsake me not, O Lord!* though my friends forsake me, and though I deserve to be forsaken by thee. Be not far from me, as my unbelieving heart is ready to fear thou art." Nothing goes nearer to the heart of a good man in affliction than to be under the apprehension of God's deserting him in wrath; nor does any thing therefore

come more feelingly from his heart than this prayer: "*Lord, be not thou far from me; make haste for my help;* for I am ready to perish, and in danger of being lost if relief do not come quickly." God gives us leave, not only to call upon him when we are in trouble, but to hasten him. He pleads, "*Thou art my God, whom I serve, and on whom I depend to bear me out; and my salvation, who alone art able to save me, who hast engaged thyself by promise to save me, and from whom alone I expect salvation.*" Is any afflicted? let him thus pray, let him thus plead, let him thus hope, in singing this psalm.

PSALM XXXIX.

David seems to have been in a great strait when he penned this psalm, and, upon some account or other, very uneasy; for it is with some difficulty that he conquers his passion, and composes his spirit himself to take that good counsel which he had given to others (xxxvii.): to rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him, without fretting; for it is easier to give the good advice than to give the good example of quietness under affliction. What was the particular trouble which gave occasion for the conflict David was now in does not appear. Perhaps it was the death of some dear friend or relation that was the trial of his patience, and that suggested to him these meditations of mortality; and at the same time, it should seem too, he himself was weak and ill, and under some prevailing distemper. His enemies likewise were seeking advantages against him, and watched for his halting, that they might have something to reproach him for. Thus aggrieved, I. He relates the struggle that was in his breast between grace and corruption, between passion and patience, ver. 1—3. II. He meditates upon the doctrine of man's frailty and mortality, and prays to God to instruct him in it, ver. 4—6. III. He applies to God for the pardon of his sins, the removal of his afflictions, and the lengthening out of his life till he was ready for death, ver. 7—13. This is a funeral psalm, and very proper for the occasion; in singing it we should get our hearts duly affected with the brevity, uncertainty, and calamitous state of human life; and these on whose comforts God has, by death, made breaches, will find this psalm of great use to them, in order to their obtaining what we ought much to aim at under such an affliction, which is to get it sanctified to us for our spiritual benefit and to get our hearts reconciled to the holy will of God in it.

To the chief musician, *even* to Jeduthun. A psalm of David.

I SAID, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me. 2 I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, *even* from good; and my sorrow was stirred. 3 My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned: *then* spake I with my tongue, 4 LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am. 5 Behold, thou hast made my days as a handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah. 6 Surely every man walketh in a vain show: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.

David here recollects, and leaves upon record, the workings of his heart under his afflictions; and it is good for us to do so, that what was thought amiss may be amended,

and what was well thought of may be improved the next time.

I. He remembered the covenants he had made with God to walk circumspectly, and to be very cautious both of what he did and what he said. When at any time we are tempted to sin, and are in danger of falling into it, we must call to mind the solemn vows we have made against sin, against the particular sin we are upon the brink of. God can, and will, remind us of them (Jer. ii. 20, *Thou saidst, I will not transgress*), and therefore we ought to remind ourselves of them. So David did here.

1. He remembers that he had resolved, in general, to be very cautious and circumspect in his walking (v. 1): *I said, I will take heed to my ways*; and it was well said, and what he would never unsay and therefore must never gainsay. Note, (1.) It is the great concern of every one of us to take heed to our ways, that is, to walk circumspectly, while others walk at all adventures. (2.) We ought stedfastly to resolve that we will take heed to our ways, and frequently to renew that resolution. Fast bind, fast find. (3.) Having resolved to take heed to our ways, we must, upon all occasions, remind ourselves of that resolution, for it is a covenant never to be forgotten, but which we must be always mindful of.

2. He remembers that he had in particular covenanted against tongue-sins—that he would not sin with his tongue, that he would not speak amiss, either to offend God or offend the generation of the righteous, lxxiii. 15. It is not so easy as we could wish not to sin in thought; but, if an evil thought should arise in his mind, he would lay his hand upon his mouth, and suppress it, that it should go no further: and this is so great an attainment that, *if any offend not in word, the same is a perfect man*; and so needful a one that of him who seems to be religious, but *bridles not his tongue*, it is declared *His religion is vain*. David had resolved, (1.) That he would at all times watch against tongue-sins: *"I will keep a bridle, or muzzle, upon my mouth."* He would keep a bridle upon it, as upon an unruly horse, to guide and direct it, to check and curb it, to keep it in the right way and on a good pace; see Jam. iii. 3. Watchfulness in the habit is the bridle upon the head; watchfulness in the act and exercise is the hand upon the bridle. He would keep a muzzle upon it, as upon an unruly dog that is fierce and does mischief; by particular stedfast resolution corruption is restrained from breaking out at the lips, and so is muzzled. (2.) That he would double his guard against them when there was most danger of scandal—*when the wicked is before me*. When he was in company with the wicked he would take heed of saying any thing that might harden them or give occasion to them to blaspheme. If good men fall into bad company, they must take heed

what they say. Or, *when the wicked is before me*, in my thoughts. When he was contemplating the pride and power, the prosperity and flourishing estate, of evil-doers, he was tempted to speak amiss; and therefore then he would take special care what he said. Note, The stronger the temptation to a sin is the stronger the resolution must be against it.

II. Pursuant to these covenants he made a shift with much ado to bridle his tongue (v. 2): *I was dumb with silence; I held my peace even from good*. His silence was commendable; and the greater the provocation was the more praiseworthy was his silence. Watchfulness and resolution, in the strength of God's grace, will do more towards the bridling of the tongue than we can imagine, though it be an unruly evil. But what shall we say of his keeping silence *even from good*? Was it his wisdom that he refrained from good discourse when the wicked were before him, because he would not cast pearls before swine? I rather think it was his weakness; because he might not say any thing, he would say nothing, but ran into an extreme, which was a reproach to the law, for that prescribes a mean between extremes. The same law which forbids all corrupt communication requires that *which is good and to the use of edifying*, Eph. iv. 29.

III. The less he spoke the more he thought and the more warmly. Binding the distempered part did but draw the humour to it: *My sorrow was stirred, my heart was hot within me*, v. 3. He could bridle his tongue, but he could not keep his passion under; though he suppressed the smoke, that was as a fire in his bones, and, while he was musing upon his afflictions and upon the prosperity of the wicked, the fire burned. Note, Those that are of a fretful discontented spirit ought not to pore much, for, while they suffer their thoughts to dwell upon the causes of the calamity, the fire of their discontent is fed with fuel and burns the more furiously. Impatience is a sin that has its ill cause within ourselves, and that is musing, and its ill effects upon ourselves, and that is no less than burning. If therefore we would prevent the mischief of ungoverned passions, we must redress the grievance of ungoverned thoughts.

IV. When he did speak, at last, it was to the purpose: *At the last I spoke with my tongue*. Some make what he said to be the breach of his good purpose, and conclude that, in what he said, he sinned with his tongue; and so they make what follows to be a passionate wish *that he might die*, like Elijah (1 Kings xix. 4) and Job, ch. vi. 8, 9. But I rather take it to be, not the breach of his good purpose, but the reformation of his mistake in carrying it too far; he had kept silence from good, but now he would so keep silence no longer. He had nothing to say to the wicked that were before him, for to them he knew not how to place his words, but, after long musing, the first word he said was a

prayer, and a devout meditation upon a subject which it will be good for us all to think much of.

1. He prays to God to make him sensible of the shortness and uncertainty of life and the near approach of death (v. 4): *Lord, make me to know my end and the measure of my days.* He does not mean, "Lord, let me know how long I shall live and when I shall die." We could not, in faith, pray such a prayer; for God has nowhere promised to let us know, but has, in wisdom, locked up that knowledge among the secret things which belong not to us, nor would it be good for us to know it. But, *Lord, make me to know my end,* means, "Lord, give me wisdom and grace to consider it (Deut. xxxii. 29) and to improve what I know concerning it." *The living know that they shall die* (Eccl. ix. 5), but few care for thinking of death; we have therefore need to pray that God by his grace would conquer that aversion which is in our corrupt hearts to the thoughts of death. "Lord, make me to consider," (1.) "What death is. It is my end, the end of my life, and all the employments and enjoyments of life. It is the end of all men," Eccl. vii. 2. It is a final period to our state of probation and preparation, and an awful entrance upon a state of recompence and retribution. To the wicked man it is the end of all joys; to a godly man it is the end of all griefs. "Lord, give me to know my end, to be better acquainted with death, to make it more familiar to me (Job xvii. 14), and to be more affected with the greatness of the change. Lord, give me to consider what a serious thing it is to die." (2.) "How near it is. Lord, give me to consider the measure of my days, that they are measured in the counsel of God" (the end is a fixed end, so the word signifies; *my days are determined*, Job xiv. 5) "and that the measure is but short: My days will soon be numbered and finished." When we look upon death as a thing at a distance we are tempted to adjourn the necessary preparations for it; but, when we consider how short life is, we shall see ourselves concerned to do what our hand finds to do, not only with all our might, but with all possible expedition. (3.) That it is continually working in us: "Lord, give me to consider how frail I am, how scanty the stock of life is, and how faint the spirits which are as the oil to keep that lamp burning." We find by daily experience that the earthly house of this tabernacle is mouldering and going to decay: "Lord, make us to consider this, that we may secure mansions in the house not made with hands."

2. He meditates upon the brevity and vanity of life, pleading them with God for relief under the burdens of life, as Job often, and pleading them with himself for his quickening to the business of life.

(1.) Man's life on earth is short and of no continuance, and that is a reason why we should sit loose to it and prepare for the end

of it (v. 5): *Behold, thou hast made my days as a hand-breadth*, the breadth of four fingers, a certain dimension, a small one, and the measure whereof we have always about us, always before our eyes. We need no rod, no pole, no measuring line, wherewith to take the dimension of our days, nor any skill in arithmetic wherewith to compute the number of them. No; we have the standard of them at our fingers' end, and there is no multiplication of it; it is but one hand-breadth in all. Our time is short, and God has made it so; *for the number of our months is with him.* It is short, and he knows it to be so: *It is as nothing before thee.* He remembers how short our time is, lxxxix. 47. *It is nothing in comparison with thee;* so some. All time is nothing to God's eternity, much less our share of time.

(2.) Man's life on earth is vain and of no value, and therefore it is folly to be fond of it and wisdom to make sure of a better life. Adam is Abel—*man is vanity*, in his present state. He is not what he seems to be, has not what he promised himself. He and all his comforts lie at a continual uncertainty, and if there were not another life after this, all things considered, he were made in vain. He is vanity; he is mortal, he is mutable. Observe, [1.] How emphatically this truth is expressed here. *First, Every man is vanity* without exception; high and low, rich and poor, all meet in this. *Secondly, He is so at his best estate*, when he is young, and strong, and healthful, in wealth and honour, and the height of prosperity; when he is most easy, and merry, and secure, and thinks his mountain stands strong. *Thirdly, He is altogether vanity*, as vain as you can imagine. *All man is all vanity* (so it may be read); every thing about him is uncertain; nothing is substantial and durable but what relates to the new man. *Fourthly, Verily he is so.* This is a truth of undoubted certainty, but which we are very unwilling to believe and need to have solemnly attested to us, as indeed it is by frequent instances. *Fifthly, Selah* is annexed, as a note commanding observation. "Stop here, and pause awhile, that you may take time to consider and apply this truth, that every man is vanity." We ourselves are so. [2.] For the proof of the vanity of man, as mortal, he here mentions three things, and shows the vanity of each of them, v. 6. *First, The vanity of our joys and honours: Surely every man walks* (even when he walks in state, when he walks in pleasure) *in a shadow, in an image, in a vain show.* When he makes a figure his fashion passes away, and his great pomp is but great fancy, Acts xxv. 23. It is but a show, and therefore a vain show, like the rainbow, the gaudy colours of which must needs vanish and disappear quickly when the substratum is but a cloud, a vapour; such is life (Jam. iv. 14), and therefore such are all the gaieties of it. *Secondly, The vanity of our griefs and fears: Surely they are disquieto*

in vain. Our disquietudes are often groundless (we vex ourselves without any just cause, and the occasions of our trouble are often the creatures of our own fancy and imagination), and they are always fruitless; we disquiet ourselves in vain, for we cannot, with all our disquietment, alter the nature of things nor the counsel of God; things will be as they are when we have disquieted ourselves ever so much about them. *Thirdly*, The vanity of our cares and toils. Man takes a great deal of pains to *heap up riches*, and they are but like heaps of manure in the furrows of the field, good for nothing unless they be spread. But, when he has filled his treasures with his trash, he *knows not who shall gather them*, nor to whom they shall descend when he is gone; for he shall not take them away with him. He asks not, *For whom do I labour?* and that is his folly, Eccl. iv. 8. But, if he did ask, he could not tell whether he should be a wise man or a fool, a friend or a foe, Eccl. ii. 19. *This is vanity.*

7 And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee. 8 Deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish. 9 I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it. 10 Remove thy stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of thine hand. 11 When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man is vanity. Selah. 12 Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears: for I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were. 13 O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.

The psalmist, having meditated on the shortness and uncertainty of life, and the vanity and vexation of spirit that attend all the comforts of life, here, in these verses, turns his eyes and heart heaven-ward. When there is no solid satisfaction to be had in the creature it is to be found in God, and in communion with him; and to him we should be driven by our disappointments in the world. David here expresses,

I. His dependence on God, v. 7. Seeing all is vanity, and man himself is so, 1. He despairs of a happiness in the things of the world, and disclaims all expectations from it: "Now, Lord, what wait I for? Even nothing from the things of sense and time; I have nothing to wish for, nothing to hope for, from this earth." Note, The consideration of the vanity and frailty of human life should deaden our desires to the things of

this world and lower our expectations from it. "If the world be such a thing as this, God deliver me from having, or seeking, my portion in it." We cannot reckon upon constant health and prosperity, nor upon comfort in any relation; for it is all as uncertain as our continuance here. "Though I have sometimes foolishly promised myself this and the other from the world, I am now of another mind." 2. He takes hold of happiness and satisfaction in God: *My hope is in thee*. Note, When creature-confidences fail, it is our comfort that we have a God to go to, a God to trust to, and we should thereby be quickened to take so much the faster hold of him by faith.

II. His submission to God, and his cheerful acquiescence in his holy will, v. 9. If our hope be in God for a happiness in the other world, we may well afford to reconcile ourselves to all the dispensations of his providence concerning us in this world: "*I was dumb; I opened not my mouth* in a way of complaint and murmuring." He now again recovered that serenity and sedateness of mind which were disturbed, v. 2. Whatever comforts he is deprived of, whatever crosses he is burdened with, he will be easy. "*Because thou didst it*; it did not come to pass by chance, but according to thy appointment." We may here see, 1. A good God doing all, and ordering all events concerning us. Of every event we may say, "This is the finger of God; it is the Lord's doing," whoever were the instruments. 2. A good man, for that reason, saying nothing against it. He is dumb, he has nothing to object, no question to ask, no dispute to raise upon it. All that God does is well done.

III. His desire towards God, and the prayers he puts up to him. *Is any afflicted?* let him pray, as David here,

1. For the pardoning of his sin and the preventing of his shame, v. 8. Before he prays (v. 10), *Remove thy stroke from me*, he prays (v. 8), "*Deliver me from all my offences*, from the guilt I have contracted, the punishment I have deserved, and the power of corruption by which I have been enslaved." When God forgives our sins he delivers us from them, he delivers us from them all. He pleads, *Make me not a reproach to the foolish*. Wicked people are foolish people; and they then show their folly most when they think to show their wit, by scoffing at God's people. When David prays that God would pardon his sins, and not make him a reproach, it is to be taken as a prayer for peace of conscience ("Lord, leave me not to the power of melancholy, which the foolish will laugh at me for"), and as a prayer for grace, that God would never leave him to himself, so far as to do any thing that might make him a reproach to bad men. Note, This is a good reason why we should both watch and pray against sin, because the credit of our profession is nearly concerned in the preservation of our integrity.

2. For the removal of his affliction, that he might speedily be eased of his present burdens (v. 10): *Remove thy stroke away from me.* Note, When we are under the correcting hand of God our eye must be to God himself, and not to any other, for relief. He only that inflicts the stroke can remove it; and we may then in faith, and with satisfaction, pray that our afflictions may be removed, when our sins are pardoned (Isa. xxxviii. 17), and when, as here, the affliction is sanctified and has done its work, and we are humbled under the hand of God.

(1.) He pleads the great extremity he was reduced to by his affliction, which made him the proper object of God's compassion: *I am consumed by the blow of thy hand.* His sickness prevailed to such a degree that his spirits failed, his strength was wasted, and his body emaciated. "The blow, or conflict, of thy hand has brought me even to the gates of death." Note, The strongest, and boldest, and best of men cannot bear up under, much less make head against, the power of God's wrath. It was not his case only, but any man will find himself an unequal match for the Almighty, v. 11. When God, at any time, contends with us, when with rebukes he corrects us, [1.] We cannot impeach the equity of his controversy, but must acknowledge that he is righteous in it; for, whenever he corrects man, it is for iniquity. Our ways and our doings procure the trouble to ourselves, and we are beaten with a rod of our own making. It is the yoke of our transgressions, though it be *bound with his hand*, Lam. i. 14. [2.] We cannot oppose the effects of his controversy, but he will be too hard for us. As we have nothing to move in arrest of his judgment, so we have no way of escaping the execution. God's rebukes make man's *beauty to consume away like a moth*; we often see, we sometimes feel, how much the body is weakened and decayed by sickness in a little time; the countenance is changed; where are the ruddy cheek and lip, the sprightly eye, the lively look, the smiling face? It is the reverse of all this that presents itself to view. What a poor thing is beauty; and what fools are those that are proud of it, or in love with it, when it will certainly, and may quickly, be consumed thus! Some make the moth to represent man, who is as easily crushed as a moth with the touch of a finger, Job. iv. 19. Others make it to represent the divine rebukes, which silently and insensibly waste and consume us, as the moth does the garment. All this abundantly proves what he had said before, that surely every man is vanity, weak and helpless; so he will be found when God comes to contend with him.

(2.) He pleads the good impressions made upon him by his affliction. He hoped that the end was accomplished for which it was sent, and that therefore it would be removed in mercy; and unless an affliction has done its work, though it may be removed, it is not

removed in mercy. [1.] It had set him a weeping, and he hoped God would take notice of that. When the Lord God called to mourning, he answered the call and accommodated himself to the dispensation, and therefore could, in faith, pray, *Lord, hold not thy peace at my tears*, v. 12. He that does not willingly afflict and grieve the children of men, much less his own children, will not hold his peace at their tears, but will either speak deliverance for them (and, if he speak, it is done) or in the mean time speak comfort to them and make them to hear joy and gladness. [2.] It had set him a praying; and afflictions are sent to stir up prayer. If they have that effect, and when we are afflicted we pray more, and pray better, than before, we may hope that God will hear our prayer and give ear to our cry; for the prayer which by his providence he gives occasion for, and which by his Spirit of grace he indites, shall not return void. [3.] It had helped to wean him from the world and to take his affections off from it. Now he began, more than ever, to look upon himself as a *stranger and sojourner* here, like all his fathers, not at home in this world, but travelling through it to another, to a better, and would never reckon himself at home till he came to heaven. He pleads it with God: "Lord, take cognizance of me, and of my wants and burdens, for I am a stranger here, and therefore meet with strange usage; I am slighted and oppressed as a stranger; and whence should I expect relief but from thee, from that other country to which I belong?"

3. He prays for a reprieve yet a little longer (v. 13): "*O spare me*, ease me, raise me up from this illness, that I may recover strength both in body and mind, that I may get into a more calm and composed frame of spirit, and may be better prepared for another world, before I go hence by death, and shall be no more in this world." Some make this to be a passionate wish that God would send him help quickly or it would be too late, like that, Job x. 20, 21. But I rather take it as a pious prayer that God would continue him here till by his grace he had made him fit to go hence, and that he might finish the work of life before his life was finished. *Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee.*

PSALM XL

It should seem David penned this psalm upon occasion of his deliverance, by the power and goodness of God, from some great and pressing trouble, by which he was in danger of being overwhelmed; probably it was some trouble of mind arising from a sense of sin and of God's displeasure against him for it; whatever it was, the same Spirit that indited his praises for that deliverance was in him, at the same time, a Spirit of prophecy, testifying of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow: or, ere he was aware, he was led to speak of his undertaking, and the discharge of his undertaking, in words that must be applied to Christ only; and therefore how far the praises that here go before that illustrious prophecy, and the prayers that follow, may safely and profitably be applied to him it will be worth while to consider. In this psalm, I. David records God's favour to him in delivering him out of his deep distress, with thankfulness to his praise, ver. 1-5. II. Thence he takes occasion to speak of the work of our redemption by Christ, ver. 6-10. III. That gives him encouragement to pray to God for mercy and grace both for himself and for his friends, ver. 11-17. If, in singing this psalm, we mix faith with the prophecy of Christ, and join in sincerity with the praises and prayers here offered up, we make melody with our hearts to the Lord

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

I WAITED patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. 2 He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. 3 And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD. 4 Blessed is that man that maketh the LORD his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies. 5 Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.

In these verses we have,

I. The great distress and trouble that the psalmist had been in. He had been plunged into a horrible pit and into miry clay (v. 2), out of which he could not work himself, and in which he found himself sinking yet further. He says nothing here either of the sickness of his body or the insults of his enemies, and therefore we have reason to think it was some inward disquiet and perplexity of spirit that was now his greatest grievance. Despondency of spirit under the sense of God's withdrawals, and prevailing doubts and fears about the eternal state, are indeed a horrible pit and miry clay, and have been so to many a dear child of God.

II. His humble attendance upon God and his believing expectations from him in those depths: *I waited patiently for the Lord, v. 1. Waiting, I waited.* He expected relief from no other than from God; the same hand that tears must heal, that smites must bind up (Hos. vi. 1), or it will never be done. From God he expected relief, and he was big with expectation, not doubting but it would come in due time. There is power enough in God to help the weakest, and grace enough in God to help the unworthiest, of all his people that trust in him. But he waited patiently, which intimates that the relief did not come quickly; yet he doubted not but it would come, and resolved to continue believing, and hoping, and praying, till it did come. Those whose expectation is from God may wait with assurance, but must wait with patience. Now this is very applicable to Christ. His agony, both in the garden and on the cross, was the same continued, and it was a horrible pit and miry clay. Then was his soul troubled and exceedingly sorrowful; but then he prayed, *Father, glorify thy name; Father, save me*; then he kept hold of his relation to his Father, "My

God, my God," and thus waited patiently for him.

III. His comfortable experience of God's goodness to him in his distress, which he records for the honour of God and his own and others' encouragement.

1. God answered his prayers: *He inclined unto me and heard my cry.* Those that wait patiently for God, though they may wait long, do not wait in vain. Our Lord Jesus was heard in that he feared, Heb. v. 7. Nay, he was sure that the Father heard him always.

2. He silenced his fears, and stilled the tumult of his spirits, and gave him a settled peace of conscience (v. 2): "*He brought me up out of that horrible pit of despondency and despair, scattered the clouds, and shone brightly upon my soul, with the assurances of his favour; and not only so, but set my feet upon a rock and established my goings.*" Those that have been under the prevalence of a religious melancholy, and by the grace of God have been relieved, may apply this very feelingly to themselves; they are brought up out of a horrible pit. (1.) The mercy is completed by the setting of their feet upon a rock, where they find firm footing, are as much elevated with the hopes of heaven as they were before cast down with the fears of hell. Christ is the rock on which a poor soul may stand fast, and on whose mediation alone between us and God we can build any solid hopes or satisfaction. (2.) It is continued in the establishment of their goings. Where God has given a steadfast hope he expects there should be a steady regular conversation; and, if that be the blessed fruit of it, we have reason to acknowledge, with abundance of thankfulness, the riches and power of his grace.

3. He filled him with joy, as well as peace, in believing: "*He has put a new song in my mouth*"; he has given me cause to rejoice and a heart to rejoice." He was brought, as it were, into a new world, and that filled his mouth with a new song, *even praise to our God*; for to his praise and glory must all our songs be sung. Fresh mercies, especially such as we never before received, call for new songs. This is applicable to our Lord Jesus in his reception to paradise, his resurrection from the grave, and his exaltation to the joy and glory set before him; he was brought out of the horrible pit, set upon a rock, and had a new song put into his mouth.

IV. The good improvement that should be made of this instance of God's goodness to David.

1. David's experience would be an encouragement to many to hope in God, and, for that end, he leaves it here upon record: *Many shall see, and fear, and trust in the Lord.* They shall fear the Lord and his justice, which brought David, and the Son of David, into that horrible pit, and shall say, *If this be done to the green tree, what shall be done to the dry?* They shall fear the Lord and his goodness, in filling the mouth of David, and the Son of

and his *truth*, his mercy according to his word. Note, In the work of our redemption we ought to take notice how brightly all the divine attributes shine, and give to God the praise of each of them. 2. To whom it is preached—to the great congregation, v. 9 and again v. 10. When Christ was here on earth he preached to multitudes, thousands at a time. The gospel was preached both to Jews and Gentiles, to great congregations of both. Solemn religious assemblies are a divine institution, and in them the glory of God, in the face of Christ, ought to be both praised to the glory of God and preached for the edification of men. 3. How it is preached—freely and openly: *I have not refrained my lips; I have not hid it; I have not concealed it.* This intimates that whoever undertook to preach the gospel of Christ would be in great temptation to hide it and conceal it, because it must be preached with great contention and in the face of great opposition; but Christ himself, and those whom he called to that work, set their faces as a *flint* (Isa. 1. 7) and were wonderfully carried on in it. It is well for us that they were so, for by this means our eyes come to see this joyful light and our ears to hear this joyful sound, which otherwise we might for ever have perished in ignorance of.

11 Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD: let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me. 12 For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me. 13 Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me. 14 Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it; let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil. 15 Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame that say unto me, Aha, aha. 16 Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: let such as love thy salvation say continually, The LORD be magnified. 17 But I *am* poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: thou *art* my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.

The psalmist, having meditated upon the work of redemption, and spoken of it in the person of the Messiah, now comes to make improvement of the doctrine of his mediation between us and God, and therefore speaks in his own person. Christ having done his

Father's will, and finished his work, and given orders for the preaching of the gospel to every creature, we are encouraged to come boldly to the throne of grace, for mercy and grace.

I. This may encourage us to pray for the mercy of God, and to put ourselves under the protection of that mercy, v. 11. "Lord, thou hast not spared thy Son, nor withheld him; withhold not thou thy tender mercies then, which thou hast laid up for us in him; for wilt thou not with him also freely give us all things?" Rom. viii. 32. *Let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me."* The best saints are in continual danger, and see themselves undone if they be not continually preserved by the grace of God; and the everlasting lovingkindness and truth of God are what we have to depend upon for our preservation to the heavenly kingdom, lxi. 7.

II. This may encourage us in reference to the guilt of sin, that Jesus Christ has done that towards our discharge from it which sacrifice and offering could not do. See here, 1. The frightful sight he had of sin, v. 12. This was it that made the discovery he was now favoured with of a Redeemer very welcome to him. He saw his iniquities to be evils, the worst of evils; he saw that they compassed him about; in all the reviews of his life, and his reflections upon each step of it, still he discovered something amiss. The threatening consequences of his sin surrounded him. Look which way he would, he saw some mischief or other waiting for him, which he was conscious to himself his sins had deserved. He saw them taking hold of him, arresting him, as the bailiff does the poor debtor; he saw them to be innumerable, and more than the hairs of his head. Convinced awakened consciences are apprehensive of danger from the numberless number of the sins of infirmity which seem small as hairs, but, being numerous, are very dangerous. *Who can understand his errors?* God numbers our hairs (Matt. x. 30), which yet we cannot number; so he keeps an account of our sins, which we keep no account of. The sight of sin so oppressed him that he could not hold up his head—I am not able to look up; much less could he keep up his heart—therefore my heart fails me. Note, The sight of our sins in their own colours would drive us to distraction, if we had not at the same time some sight of a Saviour. 2. The careful recourse he had to God under the sense of sin (v. 13); seeing himself brought by his sins to the very brink of ruin, eternal ruin, with what a holy passion does he cry out, "Be pleased, O Lord! to deliver me (v. 13); O save me from the wrath to come, and the present terrors I am in through the apprehensions of that wrath! I am undone, I die, I perish, without speedy relief. In a case of this nature, where the bliss of an immortal soul is concerned, delays are dangerous; therefore, O Lord! make haste to help me."

III. This may encourage us to hope for

victory over our spiritual enemies that seek after our souls to destroy them (v. 14), the roaring lion that goes about continually seeking to devour. If Christ has triumphed over them, we, through him, shall be more than conquerors. In the belief of this we may pray, with humble boldness, *Let them be ashamed and confounded together, and driven backward, v. 14. Let them be desolate, v. 15.* Both the conversion of a sinner and the glorification of a saint are great disappointments to Satan, who does his utmost, with all his power and subtlety, to hinder both. Now, our Lord Jesus having undertaken to bring about the salvation of all his chosen, we may in faith pray that, in both these ways, that great adversary may be confounded. When a child of God is brought into that horrible pit, and the miry clay, Satan cries *Aha! aha!* thinking he has gained his point; but he shall rage when he sees the brand plucked out of the fire, and shall be *desolate, for a reward of his shame. The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan! The accuser of the brethren is cast out.*

IV. This may encourage all that seek God, and love his salvation, to rejoice in him and to praise him, v. 16. See here, 1. The character of good people. Conformably to the laws of natural religion, they seek God, desire his favour, and in all their exigencies apply to him, as a people should seek unto their God; and conformably to the laws of revealed religion they *love his salvation*, that great salvation of which the prophets enquired and searched diligently, which the Redeemer undertook to work out when he said, *Lo, I come.* All that shall be saved love the salvation, not only as a salvation from hell, but a salvation from sin. 2. The happiness secured to good people by this prophetic prayer. Those that seek God shall *rejoice and be glad in him*, and with good reason, for he will not only be found of them but will be their bountiful rewarder. Those that love his salvation shall be filled with the joy of his salvation, and shall *say continually, The Lord be magnified;* and thus they shall have a heaven upon earth. Blessed are those that are thus still praising God.

V. This may encourage the saints, in distress and affliction, to trust in God and comfort themselves in him, v. 17. David himself was one of these: *I am poor and needy* (a king, perhaps now on the throne, and yet, being troubled in spirit, he calls himself *poor and needy*, in want and distress, lost and undone without a Saviour), *yet the Lord thinketh upon me* in and through the Mediator, by whom we are made accepted. Men forget the poor and needy, and seldom think of them; but God's thoughts towards them (which he had spoken of v. 5) are their support and comfort. They may assure themselves that God is their help under their troubles, and I will be, in due time, their deliverer out of their troubles, and will make no long tarrying; for *the vision is for an appointed*

time, and therefore, though it tarry, we may wait for it, for it shall come; it will come, it will not tarry.

PSALM XLI.

God's kindness and truth have often been the support and comfort of the saints when they have had most experience of men's unkindness and treachery. David here found them so, upon a sick-bed; he found his enemies very barbarous, but his God very gracious. I. He here comforts himself in his communion with God under his sickness, by faith receiving and laying hold of God's promises to him (ver. 1—3) and lifting up his heart in prayer to God, ver. 4. II. He here represents the malice of his enemies against him, their malicious censures of him, their spiteful reflections upon him, and their insolent conduct towards him, ver. 5—9. III. He leaves his case with God, not doubting but that he would own and favour him (ver. 10—12), and so the psalm concludes with a doxology, ver. 13. Is any afflicted with sickness? let him sing the beginning of this psalm. Is any persecuted by enemies? let him sing the latter end of it; and we may any of us, in singing it, meditate upon both the calamities and comforts of good people in this world.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

BLESSED is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble. 2 The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. 3 The LORD will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness. 4 I said, LORD, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee.

In these verses we have,

I. God's promises of succour and comfort to those that consider the poor; and,

1. We may suppose that David makes mention of these with application either, (1.) To his friends, who were kind to him, and very considerate of his case, now that he was in affliction: *Blessed is he that considers poor David.* Here and there he met with one that sympathized with him, and was concerned for him, and kept up his good opinion of him and respect for him, notwithstanding his afflictions, while his enemies were so insolent and abusive to him; on these he pronounced this blessing, not doubting but that God would recompense to them all the kindness they had done him, particularly when they also came to be in affliction. The provocations which his enemies gave him did but endear his friends so much the more to him. Or, (2.) To himself. He had the testimony of his conscience for him that he had considered the poor, that when he was in honour and power at court he had taken cognizance of the wants and miseries of the poor and had provided for their relief, and therefore was sure God would, according to his promise, strengthen and comfort him in his sickness.

2. We must regard them more generally with application to ourselves. Here is a comment upon that promise, *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.* Observe, (1.) What the mercy is which is required of us. It is to consider the poor or afflicted, whether in mind, body, or estate. These we are to consider with prudence and tender-

ness; we must take notice of their affliction and enquire into their state, must sympathize with them and judge charitably concerning them. We must wisely consider the poor; that is, we must ourselves be instructed by the poverty and affliction of others; it must be *Maschil* to us, that is the word here used.

(2.) What the mercy is that is promised to us if we thus show mercy. He that considers the poor (if he cannot relieve them, yet he considers them, and has a compassionate concern for them, and in relieving them acts considerately and with discretion) shall be considered by his God: he shall not only be recompensed in the resurrection of the just, but he shall be *blessed upon the earth*. This branch of godliness, as much as any, has the promise of the life that now is and is usually recompensed with temporal blessings. Liberality to the poor is the surest and safest way of thriving; such as practise it may be sure of seasonable and effectual relief from God, [1.] In all troubles: *He will deliver them in the day of evil*, so that when the times are at the worst it shall go well with them, and they shall not fall into the calamities in which others are involved; if any be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger, they shall. Those who thus distinguish themselves from those that have hard hearts God will distinguish from those that have hard usage. Are they in danger? he will preserve and keep them alive; and those who have a thousand times forfeited their lives, as the best have, must acknowledge it as a great favour if they have their *lives given them for a prey*. He does not say, "They shall be preferred," but, "*They shall be preserved and kept alive*, when the arrows of death fly thickly round about them." Do their enemies threaten them? God will not *deliver them into the will of their enemies*; and the most potent enemy we have can have no power against us but what is given him from above. The good-will of a God that loves us is sufficient to secure us from the ill-will of all that hate us, men and devils; and that good-will we may promise ourselves an interest in if we have considered the poor and helped to relieve and rescue them. [2.] Particularly in sickness (v. 3): *The Lord will strengthen him*, both in body and mind, *upon the bed of languishing*, on which he had long lain sick, and *he will make all his bed*—a very condescending expression, alluding to the care of those that nurse and tend sick people, especially of mothers for their children when they are sick, which is to make their beds easy for them; and that bed must needs be well made which God himself has the making of. He will make all his bed from head to foot, so that no part shall be uneasy; he will *turn his bed* (so the word is), to shake it up, and make it very easy; or he will turn it into a bed of health. Note, God has promised his people that he will strengthen them, and make them easy, under their bodily pains and sicknesses. He

has not promised that they shall never be sick, nor that they shall not lie long languishing, nor that their sickness shall not be unto death; but he has promised to enable them to bear their affliction with patience, and cheerfully to wait the issue. The soul shall by his grace be made to dwell at ease when the body lies in pain.

II. David's prayer, directed and encouraged by these promises (v. 4): *I said, Heal my soul*. It is good for us to keep some account of our prayers, that we may not unsay, in our practices, any thing that we said in our prayers. Here is, 1. His humble petition: *Lord, be merciful to me*. He appeals to mercy, as one that knew he could not stand the test of strict justice. The best saints, even those that have been merciful to the poor, have not made God their debtor, but must throw themselves on his mercy. When we are under the rod we must thus recommend ourselves to the tender mercy of our God: *Lord, heal my soul*. Sin is the sickness of the soul; pardoning mercy heals it; renewing grace heals it; and this spiritual healing we should be more earnest for than for bodily health. 2. His penitent confession: "*I have sinned against thee*, and therefore my soul needs healing. I am a sinner, a miserable sinner; therefore, *God, be merciful to me*," Luke xviii. 13. It does not appear that this has reference to any particular gross act of sin, but, in general, to his many sins of infirmity, which his sickness set in order before him, and the dread of the consequences of which made him pray, *Heal my soul*.

5 Mine enemies speak evil of me, When shall he die, and his name perish? 6 And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity: his heart gathereth iniquity to itself; *when he goeth abroad, he telleth it*. 7 All that hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt. 8 An evil disease, *say they*, cleaveth fast unto him: and *now* that he lieth he shall rise up no more. 9 Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up *his heel* against me. 10 But thou, O LORD, be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite them. 11 By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me. 12 And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever. 13 Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.

David often complains of the insolent con-

duct of his enemies towards him when he was sick, which, as it was very barbarous in them, so it could not but be very grievous to him. They had not indeed arrived at that modern pitch of wickedness of poisoning his meat and drink, or giving him something to make him sick; but, when he was sick, they insulted over him (v. 5): *My enemies speak evil of me*, designing thereby to grieve his spirit, to ruin his reputation, and so to sink his interest. Let us enquire,

I. What was the conduct of his enemies towards him. 1. They longed for his death: *When shall he die, and his name perish with him?* He had but an uncomfortable life, and yet they grudged him that. But it was a useful life; he was, upon all accounts, the greatest ornament and blessing of his country; and yet, it seems, there were some who were sick of him, as the Jews were of Paul, crying out, *Away with such a fellow from the earth*. We ought not to desire the death of any; but to desire the death of useful men, for their usefulness, has much in it of the venom of the old serpent. They envied him his name, and the honour he had won, and doubted not but, if he were dead, that would be laid in the dust with him; yet see how they were mistaken: when he had served his generation he did die (Acts xiii. 36), but did his name perish? No; it lives and flourishes to this day in the sacred writings, and will to the end of time; for *the memory of the just is, and shall be, blessed*. 2. They picked up every thing they could to reproach him with (v. 6): *"If he come to see me"* (as it has always been reckoned a piece of neighbourly kindness to visit the sick) *"he speaks vanity"*; that is, he pretends friendship, and that his errand is to mourn with me and to comfort me; he tells me he is very sorry to see me so much indisposed, and wishes me my health; but it is all flattery and falsehood." We complain, and justly, of the want of sincerity in our days, and that there is scarcely any true friendship to be found among men; but it seems, by this, that the former days were no better than these. David's friends were all compliment, and had nothing of that affection for him in their hearts which they made profession of. Nor was that the worst of it; it was upon a mischievous design that they came to see him, that they might make invidious remarks upon every thing he said or did, and might represent it as they pleased to others, with their own comments upon it, so as to render him odious or ridiculous: *His heart gathereth iniquity to itself*, puts ill constructions upon every thing; and then, when he goes among his companions, he tells it to them, that they may tell it to others. *Report, say they, and we will report it*, Jer. xx. 10. If he complained much of his illness, they would reproach him for his pusillanimity; if he scarcely complained at all, they would reproach him for his stupidity. If he prayed, or gave them good counsel, they would ban-

ter it, and call it *canting*; if he kept silence from good, when the wicked were before him, they would say that he had forgotten his religion now that he was sick. There is no fence against those whose malice thus gathers iniquity. 3. They promised themselves that he would never recover from this sickness, nor ever wipe off the odium with which they had loaded him. They *whispered together against him* (v. 7), speaking that secretly in one another's ears which they could not for shame speak out, and which, if they did, they knew would be confuted. Whisperers and backbiters are put together among the worst of sinners, Rom. i. 29, 30. They whispered, that their plot against him might not be discovered and so defeated; there is seldom whispering (we say) but there is lying, or some mischief on foot. Those whisperers devised evil to David. Concluding he would die quickly, they contrived how to break all the measures he had concerted for the public good, to prevent the prosecution of them, and to undo all that he had hitherto been doing. This he calls *devising hurt against him*; and they doubted not but to gain their point: *An evil disease (a thing of Belial), say they, cleaves fast to him*. The reproach with which they had loaded his name, they hoped, would cleave so fast to it that it would perish with him, and then they should gain their point. They went by a modern maxim, *Fortiter calumniari, aliquid adhaerebit—Fling an abundance of calumny, and some will be sure to stick*. "The disease he is now under will certainly make an end of him; for it is the punishment of some great enormous crime, which he will not be brought to repent of, and proves him, however he has appeared, a son of Belial." Or, "It is inflicted by Satan, who is called *Belial*," the wicked one, 2 Cor. vi. 15. "It is" (according to a loose way of speaking some have) "a devilish disease, and therefore it will cleave fast to him; and now that he lieth, now that his distemper prevails so far as to oblige him to keep his bed, he shall rise up no more; we shall get rid of him, and divide the spoil of his preferments." We are not to think it strange if, when good men are sick, there be those that hope for their death, as well as those that fear it, which makes the world not worthy of them, Rev. xi. 10. 4. There was one particularly, in whom he had reposed a great deal of confidence, that took part with his enemies and was as abusive to him as any of them (v. 9): *My own familiar friend*; probably he means Ahithophel, who had been his bosom-friend and prime-minister of state, in whom he trusted as one inviolably firm to him, whose advice he relied much upon in dealing with his enemies, and who *did eat of his bread*, that is, with whom he had been very intimate and whom he had taken to sit at the table with him, nay, whom he had maintained and given a livelihood to, and so obliged, both in gratitude and interest, to adhere to him. Those that had their

maintenance from the king's palace did not think it meet for them to see the king's dishonour (Ezra iv. 14), much less to do him dishonour. Yet this base and treacherous confidant of David's forgot all the eaten bread, and *lifted up his heel against him* that had lifted up his head; not only deserted him, but insulted him, kicked at him, endeavoured to supplant him. Those are wicked indeed whom no courtesy done them, nor confidence reposed in them, will oblige; and let us not think it strange if we receive abuses from such: David did, and the Son of David; for of Judas the traitor David here, in the Spirit, spoke; our Saviour himself so expounds this, and therefore gave Judas the sop, that the scripture might be fulfilled, *He that eats bread with me has lifted up his heel against me*, John xiii. 18, 26. Nay, have not we ourselves behaved thus perfidiously and disingenuously towards God? We eat of his bread daily, and yet lift up the heel against him, as Jeshurun, that waxed fat and kicked, Deut. xxxii. 15.

II. How did David bear this insolent ill-natured conduct of his enemies towards him?

1. He prayed to God that they might be disappointed. He said nothing to them, but turned himself to God: *O Lord! be thou merciful to me*, for they are unmerciful, v. 10. He had prayed in reference to the guilt of his sins (v. 4), *Lord, be merciful to me*; and now again, in reference to the insults of his enemies, *Lord, be merciful to me*, for this is a prayer which will suit every case. God's mercy has in it a redress for every grievance. "They endeavour to run me down, but, Lord, do thou raise me up from this bed of languishing, from which they think I shall never arise. Raise me up that I may requite them, that I may render them good for evil" (so some), for that was David's practice, vii. 4; xxxv. 13. A good man will even wish for an opportunity of making it to appear that he bears no malice to those that have been injurious to him, but, on the contrary, that he is ready to do them any good office. Or, "That, as a king, I may put them under the marks of my just displeasure, banish them the court, and forbid them my table for the future," which would be a necessary piece of justice, for warning to others. Perhaps in this prayer is couched a prophecy of the exaltation of Christ, whom God raised up, that he might be a just avenger of all the wrongs done to him and to his people, particularly by the Jews, whose utter destruction followed not long after.

2. He assured himself that they would be disappointed (v. 11): "*By this I know that thou favourest me and my interest, because my enemy doth not triumph over me.*" They hoped for his death, but he found himself, through mercy, recovering, and this would add to the comfort of his recovery, (1.) That it would be a disappointment to his adversaries; they would be crest-fallen and

wretchedly ashamed, and there would be no occasion to upbraid them with their disappointment; they would fret at it themselves. Note, Though we may not take a pleasure in the fall of our enemies, we may take a pleasure in the frustrating of their designs against us. (2.) That it would be a token of God's favour to him, and a certain evidence that he did favour him, and would continue to do so. Note, When we can discern the favour of God to us in any mercy, personal or public, that doubles it and sweetens it.

3. He depended upon God, who had thus delivered him from many an evil work, to preserve him to his heavenly kingdom, as blessed Paul, 2 Tim. iv. 18. "As for me, forasmuch as thou favourest me, as a fruit of that favour, and to qualify me for the continuance of it, thou upholdest me in my integrity, and, in order to that, *testest me before thy face*, hast thy eye always upon me for good;" or, "Because thou dost, by thy grace, uphold me in my integrity, I know that thou wilt, in thy glory, set me for ever before thy face." Note, (1.) When at any time we suffer in our reputation our chief concern should be about our integrity, and then we may cheerfully leave it to God to secure our reputation. David knows that, if he can but persevere in his integrity, he needs not fear his enemies' triumphs over him. (2.) The best man in the world holds his integrity no longer than God upholds him in it; for by his grace we are what we are, if we be left to ourselves, we shall not only fall, but fall away. (3.) It is a great comfort to us that, however weak we are, God is able to uphold us in our integrity, and will do it if we commit the keeping of it to him. (4.) If the grace of God did not take a constant care of us, we should not be upheld in our integrity; his eye is always upon us, else we should soon start aside from him. (5.) Those whom God now upholds in their integrity he will set before his face for ever, and make happy in the vision and fruition of himself. *He that endures to the end shall be saved.*

4. The psalm concludes with a solemn doxology, or adoration of God as the Lord God of Israel, p. 13. It is not certain whether this verse pertains to this particular psalm (if so, it teaches us this, That a believing hope of our preservation through grace to glory is enough to fill our hearts with joy and our mouths with everlasting praise, even in our greatest straits) or whether it was added as the conclusion of the first book of *Psalms*, which is reckoned to end here (the like being subjoined to lxxii., lxxxix., cvi.), and then it teaches us to make God the Omega who is the Alpha, to make him the end who is the beginning of every good work. We are taught, (1.) To give glory to God as the Lord God of Israel, a God in covenant with his people, who has done great and kind things for them and has more and better in reserve. (2.) To give him glory as an eternal God, that has both his being and his blessedness from

everlasting and to everlasting. (3.) To do this with great affection and fervour of spirit, intimated in the double seal set to it—*Amen, and Amen*. Be it so now, be it so to all eternity. We say *Amen* to it, and let all others say *Amen* too.

PSALM XLII.

If the book of Psalms be, as some have styled it, a mirror or looking-glass of pious and devout affections, this psalm in particular deserves, as much as any one psalm, to be so entitled, and is as proper as any to kindle and excite such in us: gracious desires are here strong and fervent; gracious hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, are here struggling, but the pleasing passion comes off a conqueror. Or we may take it for a conflict between sense and faith, sense objecting and faith answering. I. Faith begins with holy desires towards God and communion with him, ver. 1, 2. II. Sense complains of the darkness and cloudiness of the present condition, aggravated by the remembrance of the former enjoyments, ver. 3, 4. III. Faith silences the complaint with the assurance of a good issue at last, ver. 5. IV. Sense renews its complaints of the present dark and melancholy state, ver. 6, 7. V. Faith holds up the heart, with the cheering, with hope that the day will dawn, ver. 8. VI. Sense repeats its lamentations (ver. 9, 10) and sighs out the same reproof that it had before made of its grievances. VII. Faith gets the last word (ver. 11), for the silencing of the complaints of sense, and, though it be almost the same with that ver. 8, yet now it prevails and carries the day. The title does not tell us who was the psalmist of this psalm, but most probably it was David, and we may conjecture that it was penned by him at a time when, either by Saul's persecution or Absalom's rebellion, he was driven from the sanctuary and cut off from the privilege of waiting upon God in public ordinances. The strain of it is much the same with laili, and therefore we may presume it was penned by the same hand and upon the same or a similar occasion. In singing it, if we be either in outward affliction or in inward distress, we may accommodate to ourselves the melancholy expressions we find here; if not, we must, in singing them, sympathize with those whose case they speak too plainly, and thank God it is not our own case; but those passages in it which express and excite holy desires towards God, and dependence on him, we must earnestly endeavour to bring our minds up to.

To the chief musician, Maschil, for the sons of Korah.

AS the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. 2 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? 3 My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? 4 When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday. 5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.

Holy love to God as the chief good and our felicity is the power of godliness, the very life and soul of religion, without which all external professions and performances are but a shell and carcase; now here we have some of the expressions of that love. Here is,

I. Holy love thirsting, love upon the wing, soaring upwards in holy desires towards the Lord and towards the remembrance of his name (v. 1, 2): "*My soul panteth, thirsteth, for God, for nothing more than God, but still for more and more of him.*" Now observe,

1. When it was that David thus expressed his vehement desire towards God. It was,

(1.) When he was debarred from his outward opportunities of waiting on God, when he was banished to the land of Jordan, a great way off from the courts of God's house. Note, Sometimes God teaches us effectually to know the worth of mercies by the want of them, and whets our appetite for the means of grace by cutting us short in those means. We are apt to loathe that manna, when we have plenty of it, which will be very precious to us if ever we come to know the scarcity of it. (2.) When he was deprived, in a great measure, of the inward comfort he used to have in God. He now went mourning, but he went on pining. Note, If God, by his grace, has wrought in us sincere and earnest desires towards him, we may take comfort from these when we want those ravishing delights we have sometimes had in God, because lamenting after God is as sure an evidence that we love him as rejoicing in God. Before the psalmist records his doubts, and fears, and griefs, which had sorely shaken him, he premises this, That he looked upon the living God as his chief good, and had set his heart upon him accordingly, and was resolved to live and die by him; and, casting anchor thus at first, he rides out the storm.

2. What is the object of his desire and what it is he thus thirsts after. (1.) He pants after God, he thirsts for God, not the ordinances themselves, but the God of the ordinances. A gracious soul can take little satisfaction in God's courts if it do not meet with God himself there: "*O that I knew where I might find him!*" that I might have more of the tokens of his favour, the graces and comforts of his Spirit, and the earnest of his glory." (2.) He has, herein, an eye to God as the living God, that has life in himself, and is the fountain of life and all happiness to those that are his, the living God, not only in opposition to dead idols, the works of men's hands, but to all the dying comforts of this world, which perish in the using. Living souls can never take up their rest anywhere short of a living God. (3.) He longs to come and appear before God,—to make himself known to him, as being conscious to himself of his own sincerity,—to attend on him, as a servant appears before his master, to pay his respects to him and receive his commands,—to give an account to him, as one from whom our judgment proceeds. To appear before God is as much the desire of the upright as it is the dread of the hypocrite. The psalmist knew he could not come into God's courts without incurring expense, for so was the law, that none should appear before God empty; yet he longs to come, and will not grudge the charges.

3. What is the degree of this desire. It is very importunate; it is his soul that pants, his soul that thirsts, which denotes not only the sincerity, but the strength, of his desire. His longing for the water of the well of Bethlehem was nothing to this. He compares it

ward (2.) Wherever he was he retained his affection for the courts of God's house; from the land of Jordan, or from the top of the hills, he used to look a long look, a longing look, towards the place of the sanctuary, and wish himself there. Distance and time could not make him forget that which his heart was so much upon and which lay so near it.

II. He complains of the tokens of God's displeasure against him, but comforts himself with the hopes of the return of his favour in due time.

1. He saw his troubles coming from God's wrath, and that discouraged him (v. 7): "*Deep calls unto deep*, one affliction comes upon the neck of another, as if it were called to hasten after it; and thy water-spouts give the signal and sound the alarm of war." It may be meant of the terror and disquietude of his mind under the apprehensions of God's anger. One frightful thought summoned another, and made way for it, as is usual in melancholy people. He was overpowered and overwhelmed with a deluge of grief, like that of the old world, when the windows of heaven were opened and the fountains of the great deep were broken up. Or it is an allusion to a ship at sea in a great storm, tossed by the roaring waves, which go over it, cvii. 25. Whatever waves and billows of affliction go over us at any time we must call them God's waves and his billows, that we may humble ourselves under his mighty hand, and may encourage ourselves to hope that though we be threatened we shall not be ruined; for the waves and billows are under a divine check. *The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of these many waters.* Let not good men think it strange if they be exercised with many and various trials, and if they come thickly upon them; God knows what he does, and so shall they shortly. Jonah, in the whale's belly, made use of these words of David, Jon. ii. 3 (they are exactly the same in the original), and of him they were literally true, *All thy waves and thy billows have gone over me*; for the book of psalms is contrived so as to reach every one's case.

2. He expected his deliverance to come from God's favour (v. 8): *Yet the Lord will command his lovingkindness.* Things are bad, but they shall not always be so. *Non si male nunc et olim sic erit—Though affairs are now in an evil plight, they may not always be so.* After the storm there will come a calm, and the prospect of this supported him when deep called unto deep. Observe, (1.) What he promised himself from God: *The Lord will command his lovingkindness.* He eyes the favour of God as the fountain of all the good he looked for. That is life; that is better than life; and with that God will gather those from whom he has, *in a little wrath, hid his face*, Isa. liv. 7, 8. God's conferring his favour is called his *commanding* it. This intimates the freeness of it; we cannot pretend to merit it, but it is bestowed in a way

of sovereignty, he gives like a king. It intimates also the efficacy of it; he speaks his lovingkindness, and makes us to hear it; speaks, and it is done. He *commands deliverance* (xliv. 4), *commands the blessing* (cxxxiii. 3), as one having authority. By *commanding* his lovingkindness, he commands down the waves and the billows, and they shall obey him. This he will do *in the daytime*, for God's lovingkindness will make day in the soul at any time. Though *weeping has endured for a night*, a long night, yet *joy will come in the morning*. (2.) What he promised for himself to God. If God command his lovingkindness for him, he will meet it, and bid it welcome, with his best affections and devotions. [1.] He will rejoice in God: *In the night his song shall be with me.* The mercies we receive in the day we ought to return thanks for at night; when others are sleeping we should be praising God. See cxix. 62, *At midnight will I rise to give thanks.* In silence and solitude, when we are retired from the hurries of the world, we must be pleasing ourselves with the thoughts of God's goodness. Or in the night of affliction: "Before the day dawns, in which God commands his lovingkindness, I will sing songs of praise in the prospect of it." Even in tribulation the saints can rejoice *in hope of the glory of God*, sing in hope, and praise in hope, Rom. v. 2, 3. It is God's prerogative to *give songs in the night*, Job xxxv. 10. [2.] He will seek to God in a constant dependence upon him: *My prayer shall be to the God of my life.* Our believing expectation of mercy must not supersede, but quicken, our prayers for it. God is the God of our life, in whom we live and move, the author and giver of all our comforts; and therefore to whom should we apply by prayer, but to him? And from him what good may not we expect? It would put life into our prayers in them to eye God as the God of our life; for then it is for our lives, and the lives of our souls, that we stand up to make request.

III. He complains of the insolence of his enemies, and yet comforts himself in God as his friend, v. 9—11.

1. His complaint is that his enemies oppressed and reproached him, and this made a great impression upon him. (1.) They oppressed him to such a degree that he went mourning from day to day, from place to place, v. 9. He did not break out into indecent passions, though abused as never man was, but he silently wept out his grief, and went mourning; and for this we cannot blame him: it must needs grieve a man that truly loves his country, and seeks the good of it, to see himself persecuted and hardly used, as if he were an enemy to it. Yet David ought not hence to have concluded that God had forgotten him and cast him off, nor thus to have expostulated with him, as if he did him as much wrong in suffering him to be trampled upon as those did that trampled upon

him: *Why go I mourning? and why hast thou forgotten me?* We may complain to God, but we are not allowed thus to complain of him.

(2.) They reproached him so cuttingly that it was a *sword in his bones*, v. 10. He had mentioned before what the reproach was that touched him thus to the quick, and here he repeats it: *They say daily unto me, Where is thy God?*—a reproach which was very grievous to him, both because it reflected dishonour upon God and was intended to discourage his hope in God, which he had enough to do to keep up in any measure, and which was but too apt to fail of itself.

2. His comfort is that God is his *rock* (v. 9)—a rock to build upon, a rock to take shelter in. The rock of ages, in whom is everlasting strength, would be his rock, his strength in the inner man, both for doing and suffering. To him he had access with confidence. To God his rock he might say what he had to say, and be sure of a gracious audience. He therefore repeats what he had before said (v. 5), and concludes with it (v. 11): *Why art thou cast down, O my soul?* His griefs and fears were clamorous and troublesome; they were not silenced though they were again and again answered. But here, at length, his faith came off a conqueror and forced the enemies to quit the field. And he gains this victory, (1.) By repeating what he had before said, chiding himself, as before, for his dejections and disquietudes, and encouraging himself to trust in the name of the Lord and to stay himself upon his God. Note, It may be of great use to us to think our good thoughts over again, and, if we do not gain our point with them at first, perhaps we may the second time; however, where the heart goes along with the words, it is no vain repetition. We have need to press the same thing over and over again upon our hearts, and all little enough. (2.) By adding one word to it; *there* he hoped to praise God for the salvation that was in his countenance; *here*, “I will praise him,” says he, “as the salvation of my countenance from the present cloud that is upon it; if God smile upon me, that will make me look pleasant, look up, look forward, look round, with pleasure.” He adds, *and my God*, “related to me, in covenant with me; all that he is, all that he has, is mine, according to the true intent and meaning of the promise.” This thought enabled him to triumph over all his griefs and fears. God’s being with the saints in heaven, and being their God, is that which will *wipe away all tears from their eyes*, Rev. xxi. 3, 4.

PSALM XLIII.

This psalm, it is likely, was penned upon the same occasion with the former, and, having no title, may be looked upon as an appendix to it; the malady presently returning, he had immediate recourse to the same remedy, because he had entered it in his book, with a “*probatum est*—it has been proved,” upon it. The second verse of this psalm is almost the very same with the ninth verse of the foregoing psalm, as the fifth of this is exactly the same with the eleventh of that. Christ himself, who had the Spirit without measure, when there was occasion prayed a second and third time “*saying the same words*,” Matt. xxvi. 44. In this psalm, 1. David appeals to God concerning the injuries that were done him by his enemies, ver. 1, 2. 11. He prays to God

to restore to him the free enjoyment of public ordinances again and promises to make a good improvement of them, ver. 3, 4. 111. He endeavours to still the tumult of his own spirit with lively hope and confidence in God (ver. 5), and if, in singing this psalm, we labour after these, we sing with grace in our hearts.

JUDGE me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man. 2 For thou art the God of my strength: why dost thou cast me off? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? 3 O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. 4 Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God. 5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, *who is the health of my countenance, and my God.*

David here makes application to God, by faith and prayer, as his judge, his strength, his guide, his joy, his hope, with suitable affections and expressions.

I. As his Judge, his righteous Judge, who he knew would judge him, and who (being conscious of his own integrity) he knew would judge for him (v. 1): *Judge me, O God! and plead my cause.* There were those that impeached him; against them he is defendant, and from their courts, where he stood unjustly convicted and condemned, he appeals to the court of heaven, the supreme judicature, praying to have their judgment given against him reversed and his innocency cleared. There were those that had injured him; against them he is plaintiff, and exhibits his complaint to him who is the avenger of wrong, praying for justice for himself and upon them. Observe, 1. Who his enemies were with whom he had this struggle. Here was a sinful body of men, whom he calls an *ungodly* or *unmerciful nation*. Those that are unmerciful make it appear that they are ungodly; for, those that have any fear or love of their master will have compassion on their fellow-servants. And here was one bad man the head of them, a deceitful and unjust man, most probably Saul, who not only showed no kindness to David, but dealt most perfidiously and dishonestly with him. If Absalom was the man he meant, his character was no better. As long as there are such bad men out of hell, and nations of them, it is not strange that good men, who are yet out of heaven, meet with hard and base treatment. Some think that David, by the spirit of prophecy, calculated this psalm for the use of the Jews in their captivity in Babylon, and that the Chaldeans are the ungodly nation here meant; to them it was very applicable, but only as other similar

administers to us, that we may see all our successes and enlargements coming to us from the favour of God and the light of his countenance. [2.] They were not owing to their own might, but to God's power engaged for them, without which all their own efforts and endeavours would have been fruitless. It was not by their own sword that they got the land in possession, though they had great numbers of mighty men; nor did their own arm save them from being driven back by the Canaanites and put to shame; but it was God's *right hand* and his *arm*. He fought for Israel, else they would have fought in vain; it was through him that they did valiantly and victoriously. It was God that planted Israel in that good land, as the careful husbandman plants a tree, from which he promises himself fruit. See lxxx. 8. This is applicable to the planting of the Christian church in the world, by the preaching of the gospel. Paganism was wonderfully driven out, as the Canaanites, not all at once, but by little and little, not by any human policy or power (for God chose to do it by the weak and foolish things of the world), but by the wisdom and power of God—Christ by his Spirit went forth conquering and to conquer; and the remembrance of that is a great support and comfort to those that groan under the yoke of antichristian tyranny, for to the state of the church under the power of the New-Testament Babylon, some think (and particularly [the learned Amyraldus], the complaints in the latter part of this psalm may very fitly be accommodated. He that by his power and goodness planted a church for himself in the world will certainly support it by the same power and goodness; and the *gates of hell shall not prevail against it*.

(2.) How frequently he had given them success against their enemies that attempted to disturb them in the possession of that good land (v. 7): *Thou hast, many a time, saved us from our enemies, and hast put to flight, and so put to shame, those that hated us*, witness the successes of the judges against the nations that oppressed Israel. Many a time have the persecutors of the Christian church, and those that hate it, been put to shame by the power of truth, Acts vi. 10.

II. The good use they make of this record, and had formerly made of it, in consideration of the great things God had done for their fathers of old.

1. They had taken God for their sovereign Lord, had sworn allegiance to him, and put themselves under his protection (v. 4). *Thou art my King, O God!* He speaks in the name of the church, as (lxxiv. 12), *Thou art my King of old*. God, as a king, has made laws for his church, provided for the peace and good order of it, judged for it, pleaded its cause, fought its battles, and protected it; it is his kingdom in the world, and ought to be subject to him, and to pay him tribute. Or the psalmist speaks for himself here:

"Lord, *Thou art my King*: whither shall I go with my petitions, but to thee? The favour I ask is not for myself, but for thy church." Note, It is every one's duty to improve his personal interest at the throne of grace for the public welfare and prosperity of the people of God; as Moses, "*If I have found grace in thy sight, guide thy people*," Exod. xxxiii. 13.

2. They had always applied to him by prayer for deliverance when at any time they were in distress: *Command deliverances for Jacob*. Observe, (1.) The enlargedness of their desire. They pray for deliverances, not one, but many, as many as they had need of, how many soever they were, a series of deliverances, a deliverance from every danger. (2.) The strength of their faith in the power of God. They do not say, *Work deliverances*, but, *Command them*, which denotes his doing it easily and instantly—*Speak and it is done* (such was the faith of the centurion, Matt. viii. 8, *Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed*); it denotes also his doing it effectually. "*Command it, as one having authority, whose command will be obeyed*." *Where the word of a king is there is power*, much more the word of the King of kings.

3. They had trusted and triumphed in him. As they owned it was not their own sword and bow that had saved them (v. 3), so neither did they trust to their own sword or bow to save them for the future (v. 6): "*I will not trust in my bow, nor in any of my military preparations, as if those would stand me in stead without God. No; through thee will we push down our enemies* (v. 5); we will attempt it in thy strength, relying only upon that, and not upon the number or valour of our forces; and, having thee on our side, we will not doubt of success in the attempt. *Through thy name* (by virtue of thy wisdom directing us, thy power strengthening us and working for us, and thy promise securing success to us) we shall, we will, tread those under that rise up against us."

4. They had made him their joy and praise (v. 8): "*In God we have boasted*; in him we do and will boast, every day, and all the day long." When their enemies boasted of their strength and successes, as Sennacherib and Rabshakeh hectoring Hezekiah, they owned they had nothing to boast of, in answer thereunto, but their relation to God and their interest in him; and, if he were for them, they could set all the world at defiance. *Let him that glories glory in the Lord*, and let that for ever exclude all other boasting. Let those that trust in God make their boast in him, for they know whom they have trusted; let them *boast in him all the day long*, for it is a subject that can never be exhausted. But let them withal *praise his name for ever*; if they have the comfort of his name, let them give unto him the glory due to it.

9 But thou hast cast off, and put us

to shame; and goest not forth with our armies. 10 Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy: and they which hate us spoil for themselves. 11 Thou hast given us like sheep *appointed* for meat; and hast scattered us among the heathen. 12 Thou sellest thy people for nought, and dost not increase *thy wealth* by their price. 13 Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and a derision to them that are round about us. 14 Thou makest us a byword among the heathen, a shaking of the head among the people. 15 My confusion is continually before me, and the shame of my face hath covered me, 16 For the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth; by reason of the enemy and avenger.

The people of God here complain to him of the low and afflicted condition that they were now in, under the prevailing power of their enemies and oppressors, which was the more grievous to them because *they* were now trampled upon, who had always been used, in their struggles with their neighbours, to win the day and get the upper hand, and because those were now their oppressors whom they had many a time triumphed over and made tributaries, and especially because they had boasted in their God with great assurance that he would still protect and prosper them, which made the distress they were in, and the disgrace they were under, the more shameful. Let us see what the complaint is.

I. That they wanted the usual tokens of God's favour to them and presence with them (v. 9): "*Thou hast cast off*; thou seemest to have cast us off and our cause, and to have cast off thy wonted care of us and concern for us, and so hast put us to shame, for we boasted of the constancy and perpetuity of thy favour. Our armies go forth as usual, but they are put to flight; we gain no ground, but lose what we have gained, for thou goest not forth with them, for, if thou didst, which way soever they turned they would prosper; but it is quite contrary." Note, God's people, when they are cast down, are tempted to think themselves cast off and forsaken of God; but it is a mistake. *Hath God cast away his people? God forbid*, Rom. xi. 1.

II. That they were put to the worst before their enemies in the field of battle (v. 10): "*Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy*, as Joshua complained when they met with a repulse at Ai (Josh. vii. 8): "We are dispirited, and have lost the ancient valour of Israelites; we flee, we fall, before those that used to flee and fall before us; and then those

that hate us have the plunder of our camp and of our country; they spoil for themselves, and reckon all their own that they can lay their hands on. Attempts to shake off the Babylonish yoke have been ineffectual, and we have rather lost ground by them."

III. That they were doomed to the sword and to captivity (v. 11): "*Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat*. They make no more scruple of killing an Israelite than of killing a sheep; nay, like the butcher, they make a trade of it, they take a pleasure in it as a hungry man in his meat; and we are led with as much ease, and as little resistance, as a lamb to the slaughter; many are slain, and the rest scattered among the heathen, continually insulted by their malice or in danger of being infected by their iniquities." They looked upon themselves as bought and sold, and charged it upon God, *Thou sellest thy people*, when they should have charged it upon their own sin. *For your iniquities have you sold yourselves*, Isa. l. 1. However, thus far was right that they looked above the instruments of their trouble and kept their eye upon God, as well knowing that their worst enemies had no power against them *but what was given them from above*; they own it was God that *delivered them into the hands of the ungodly*, as that which is sold is delivered to the buyer. *Thou sellest them for nought, and dost not increase in their price* (so it may be read); "thou dost not sell them by auction, to those that will bid most for them, but in haste, to those that will bid first for them; any one shall have them that will." Or, as we read it, *Thou dost not increase thy wealth by their price*, intimating that they could have suffered this contentedly if they had been sure that it would redound to the glory of God and that his interest might be some way served by their sufferings; but it was quite contrary: Israel's disgrace turned to God's dishonour, so that he was so far from being a gainer in his glory by the sale of them that it should seem he was greatly a loser by it; see Isa. lii. 5; Ezek. xxxvi. 20.

IV. That they were loaded with contempt, and all possible ignominy was put upon them. In this also they acknowledge God: "*Thou makest us a reproach*; thou bringest those calamities upon us which occasion the reproach, and thou permittest their virulent tongues to smite us." They complain, 1. That they were ridiculed and bantered, and were looked upon as the most contemptible people under the sun; their troubles were turned to their reproach, and upon the account of them they were derided. 2. That their neighbours, those about them, from whom they could not withdraw, were most abusive to them, v. 13. 3. That the heathen, the people that were strangers to the commonwealth of Israel and aliens to the covenants of promise, made them a by-word, and shook the head at them, as triumphing

in their fall, v. 14. 4. That the reproach was constant and incessant (v. 15): *My confusion is continually before me.* The church in general, the psalmist in particular, were continually teased and vexed with the insults of the enemy. Concerning those that are going down every one cries, "Down with them." 5. That it was very grievous, and in a manner overwhelmed him: *The shame of my face has covered me.* He blushed for sin, or rather for the dishonour done to God, and then it was a holy blushing. 6. That it reflected upon God himself; the reproach which the enemy and the avenger cast upon them was downright blasphemy against God, v. 16, and 2 Kings xix. 3. There was therefore strong reason to believe that God would appear for them. As there is no trouble more grievous to a generous and ingenuous mind than reproach and calumny, so there is none more grievous to a holy gracious soul than blasphemy and dishonour done to God.

17 All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant. 18 Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way; 19 Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death. 20 If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god; 21 Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart. 22 Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. 23 Awake, why sleepest thou, O LORD? arise, cast us not off for ever. 24 Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression? 25 For our soul is bowed down to the dust: our belly cleaveth unto the earth. 26 Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercies' sake.

The people of God, being greatly afflicted and oppressed, here apply to him; whither else should they go?

1. By way of appeal, concerning their integrity; which he only is an infallible judge of, and which he will certainly be the rewarder of. Two things they call God to witness to—

1 That, though they suffered these hard things, yet they kept close to God and to their duty (v. 17): "*All this has come upon us, and it is as bad perhaps as bad can be, yet have we not forgotten thee, neither cast off the thoughts of thee nor deserted the worship of thee; for, though we cannot deny but that we have dealt foolishly, yet we have not dealt falsely in thy covenant, so as to cast thee off and take to*

other gods. Though idolaters were our conquerors, we did not therefore entertain any more favourable thoughts of their idols and idolatries; though thou hast seemed to forsake us and withdraw from us, yet we have not therefore forsaken thee." The trouble they had been long in was very great: "We have been sorely broken in the place of dragons, among men as fierce, and furious, and cruel, as dragons. We have been covered with the shadow of death, that is, we have been under deep melancholy and apprehensive of nothing short of death. We have been wrapped up in obscurity, and buried alive; and thou hast thus broken us, thou hast thus covered us (v. 19), yet we have not harboured any hard thoughts of thee, nor meditated a retreat from thy service. Though thou hast slain us, we have continued to trust in thee: *Our heart has not turned back*; we have not secretly withdrawn our affections from thee, neither have our steps, either in our religious worship or in our conversation declined from thy way (v. 18), the way which thou hast appointed us to walk in." When the heart turns back the steps will soon decline; for it is the evil heart of unbelief that inclines to depart from God. Note, We may the better bear our troubles, how pressing soever, if in them we still hold fast our integrity. While our troubles do not drive us from our duty to God we should not suffer them to drive us from our comfort in God; for he will not leave us if we do not leave him. For the proof of their integrity they take God's omniscience to witness, which is as much the comfort of the upright in heart as it is the terror of hypocrites (v. 20, 21): "*If we have forgotten the name of our God, under pretence that he had forgotten us, or in our distress have stretched out our hands to a strange god, as more likely to help us, shall not God search this out?*" Shall he not know it more fully and distinctly than we know that which we have with the greatest care and diligence searched out? Shall he not judge it, and call us to an account for it?" Forgetting God was a heart-sin, and stretching out the hand to a strange god was often a secret sin, Ezek. viii. 12. But heart-sins and secret sins are known to God, and must be reckoned for; for he knows the secrets of the heart, and therefore is an infallible judge of the words and actions.

2. That they suffered these hard things because they kept close to God and to their duty (v. 22): "*It is for thy sake that we are killed all the day long, because we stand related to thee, are called by thy name, call upon thy name, and will not worship other gods.*" In this the Spirit of prophecy had reference to those who suffered even unto death for the testimony of Christ, to whom it is applied, Rom. viii. 36. So many were killed, and put to such lingering deaths, that they were in the killing all the day long; so universally was this practised that when a man became a

Christian he reckoned himself as a *sheep appointed for the slaughter.*

II. By way of petition, with reference to their present distress, that God would, in his own due time, work deliverance for them. 1. Their request is very importunate: *Awake, arise, v. 23. Arise for our help; redeem us (v. 26); come speedily and powerfully to our relief, lxxx. 2. Stir up thy strength, and come and save us.* They had complained (v. 12) that God had sold them; here they pray (v. 26) that God would redeem them; for there is no appealing from God, but by appealing to him. If he sell us, it is not any one else that can redeem us; the same hand that tears must heal, that smites must bind up, Hos. vi. 1. They had complained (v. 9), *Thou hast cast us off*; but here they pray (v. 23), *"Cast us not off for ever; let us not be finally forsaken of God."* 2. The expostulations are very moving: *Why sleepest thou? v. 23.* He that keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps; but, when he does not immediately appear for the deliverance of his people, they are tempted to think he sleeps. The expression is figurative (as lxxviii. 65, *Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep*); but it was applicable to Christ in the letter (Matt. viii. 24); he was asleep when his disciples were in a storm, and they awoke him, saying, *Lord, save us, we perish.* *"Wherefore hidest thou thy face, that we may not see thee and the light of thy countenance?"* Or, *"that thou mayest not see us and our distresses? Thou forgettest our affliction and our oppression, for it still continues, and we see no way open for our deliverance."* And, 3. The pleas are very proper, not their own merit and righteousness, though they had the testimony of their consciences concerning their integrity, but they plead the poor sinner's pleas. (1.) Their own misery, which made them the proper objects of the divine compassion (v. 25): *"Our soul is bowed down to the dust under prevailing grief and fear. We have become as creeping things, the most despicable animals: Our belly cleaves unto the earth; we cannot lift up ourselves, neither revive our own drooping spirits nor recover ourselves out of our low and sad condition, and we lie exposed to be trodden on by every insulting foe."* 2. God's mercy: *"O redeem us for thy mercies' sake; we depend upon the goodness of thy nature, which is the glory of thy name (Exod. xxxiv. 6), and upon those sure mercies of David which are conveyed by the covenant to all his spiritual seed."*

PSALM XLV.

This psalm is an illustrious prophecy of Messiah the Prince: it is altogether gospel, and points at him only, as a bridegroom espousing the church to himself and as a king ruling in it and ruling for it. It is probable that our Saviour has reference to this psalm when he compares the kingdom of heaven, more than once, to a nuptial solemnity, the solemnity of a royal nuptial, Matt. xxii. 2; xxv. 1. We have no reason to think it has any reference to Solomon's marriage with Pharaoh's daughter; if I thought that it had reference to any other than the mystical marriage between Christ and his church, I would rather apply it to some of David's marriages, because he was a man of war, such a one as the bridegroom here is described to be, which Solomon was not. But I take it to be purely and only meant of

Jesus Christ; of him speaks the prophet this, of him and of no other man; and to him (ver. 6, 7) it is applied in the New Testament (Heb. i. 8), nor can it be understood of any other. The psalm speaks the excellency of the song, ver. 1. The psalm speaks, 1. Of the royal bridegroom, who is Christ. 1. The transcendent excellency of his person, ver. 2. 2. The glory of his victories, ver. 3-5. 3. The righteousness of his government, ver. 6, 7. 4. The splendour of his court, ver. 8, 9. 11. Of the royal bride, which is the church. 1. Her consent gained, ver. 10, 11. 2. The nuptials solemnized, ver. 12-15. 3. The issue of this marriage, ver. 16, 17. In singing this psalm our hearts must be filled with high thoughts of Christ, with an entire submission to and satisfaction in his government, and with an earnest desire of the enlarging and perpetuating of his church in the world.

To the chief musician upon Shoshannim, for the sons of Korah, Maschil. A song of loves.

MY heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. 2 Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever. 3 Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. 4 And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. 5 Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee.

Some make *Shoshannim*, in the title, to signify an instrument of six strings; others take it in its primitive signification for lilies or roses, which probably were strewed, with other flowers, at nuptial solemnities; and then it is easily applicable to Christ, who calls himself the *rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys*, Cant. ii. 1. It is a *song of loves*, concerning the holy love that is between Christ and his church. It is a *song of the well-beloved*, the virgins, the companions of the bride (v. 14), prepared to be sung by them. The virgin-company that attend the Lamb on Mount Zion are said to *sing a new song*, Rev. xiv. 3, 4.

1. The preface (v. 1) speaks, 1. The dignity of the subject: *It is a good matter*, and it is a pity that such a moving art as poetry should ever be employed about a bad matter. It is *touching the King*, King Jesus, and his kingdom and government. Note, Those that speak of Christ speak of a good matter, no subject so noble, so copious, so fruitful, so profitable, and so well-becoming us; it is a shame that this good matter is not more the matter of our discourse. 2. The excellency of the management: This song was a confession with the mouth of faith in the heart concerning Christ and his church. (1.) The matter was well digested, as it well deserved: *My heart is inditing it*, which perhaps is meant of that Spirit of prophecy that dictated the psalm to David, that Spirit of Christ which was in the prophets, 1 Pet. i. 11. But it is appli-

cable to his devout meditations and affections in his heart, out of the abundance of which his mouth spoke. Things concerning Christ ought to be thought of by us with all possible seriousness, with fixedness of thought and a fire of holy love, especially when we are to speak of those things. We then speak best of Christ and divine things when we speak from the heart that which has warmed and affected us; and we should never be rash in speaking of the things of Christ, but weigh well beforehand what we have to say, lest we speak amiss. See Eccl. v. 2. (2.) It was well expressed: *I will speak of the things which I have made.* He would express himself, [1.] With all possible clearness, as one that did himself understand and was affected with the things he spoke of. Not, "I will speak the things I have heard from others," that is speaking by rote; but, "the things which I have myself studied." Note, What God has wrought in our souls, as well as what he has wrought for them, we must declare to others, lxxvi. 16. [2.] With all possible cheerfulness, freedom, and fluency: "*My tongue is as the pen of a ready writer,* guided by my heart in every word as the pen is by the hand." We call the prophets the *penmen* of scripture, whereas really they were but the pen. The tongue of the most subtle disputant, and the most eloquent orator, is but the pen with which God writes what he pleases. Why should we quarrel with the pen if bitter things be written against us, or idolize the pen if it write in our favour? David not only spoke what he thought of Christ, but wrote it, that it might spread the further and last the longer. His tongue was as the pen of a ready writer, that lets nothing slip. When the heart is inditing a good matter it is a pity but the tongue should be as *the pen of a ready writer*, to leave it upon record.

II. In these verses the Lord Jesus is represented,

1. As most beautiful and amiable in himself. It is a marriage-song; and therefore the transcendent excellencies of Christ are represented by the beauty of the royal bridegroom (v. 2): *Thou art fairer than the children of men*, than any of them. He proposed (v. 1) to speak of the King, but immediately directs his speech to him. Those that have an admiration and affection for Christ love to go to him and tell him so. Thus we must profess our faith, that we see his beauty, and our love, that we are pleased with it: *Thou art fair, thou art fairer than the children of men.* Note, Jesus Christ is in himself, and in the eyes of all believers, more amiable and lovely than the children of men. The beauties of the Lord Jesus, as God, as Mediator, far surpass those of human nature in general and those which the most amiable and excellent of the children of men are endowed with; there is more in Christ to engage our love than there is or can be in any creature. Our beloved is more than another beloved. The beauties of this lower

world, and its charms, are in danger of drawing away our hearts from Christ, and therefore we are concerned to understand how much he excels them all, and how much more worthy he is of our love.

2. As the great favourite of heaven. He is *fairer than the children of men*, for God has done more for him than for any of the children of men, and all his kindness to the children of men is for his sake, and passes through his hands, through his mouth. (1.) He has grace, and he has it for us: *Grace is poured into thy lips.* By his word, his promise, his gospel, the good-will of God is made known to us and the good work of God is begun and carried on in us. He received all grace from God, all the endowments that were requisite to qualify him for his work and office as Mediator, that from his fulness we might receive, John i. 16. It was not only poured into his heart, for his own strength and encouragement, but poured into his lips, that by the words of his mouth in general, and the kisses of his mouth to particular believers, he might communicate both holiness and comfort. From this grace poured into his lips proceeded those gracious words which all admired, Luke iv. 22. The gospel of grace is poured into his lips; for it began to be spoken by the Lord, and from him we receive it. He has the words of eternal life. *The spirit of prophecy is put into thy lips*; so the Chaldee. (2.) He has the blessing, and he has it for us. "Therefore, because thou art the great trustee of divine grace for the use and benefit of the children of men, therefore God has blessed thee for ever, has made thee an everlasting blessing, so as that in thee all the nations of the earth shall be blessed." Where God gives his grace he will give his blessing. We are blessed with spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, Eph. i. 3.

3. As victorious over all his enemies. The royal bridegroom is a man of war, and his nuptials do not excuse him from the field of battle (as was allowed by the law, Deut. xxiv. 5); nay, they bring him to the field of battle, for he is to rescue his spouse by dint of sword out of her captivity, to conquer her, and to conquer for her, and then to marry her. Now we have here,

(1.) His preparations for war (v. 3): *Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O Most Mighty!* The word of God is the sword of the Spirit. By the promises of that word, and the grace contained in those promises, souls are made willing to submit to Jesus Christ and become his loyal subjects; by the threatenings of that word, and the judgments executed according to them, those that stand it out against Christ will, in due time, be brought down and ruined. By the gospel of Christ many Jews and Gentiles were converted, and, at length, the Jewish nation was destroyed, according to the predictions of it, for their implacable enmity to it; and paganism was quite abolished. The sword here girt on Christ's thigh is the same which is said to proceed out of his mouth, Rev

xix. 15. When the gospel was sent forth to be preached to all nations, then our Redeemer girded his sword upon his thigh.

(2.) His expedition to this holy war: He goes forth *with his glory and his majesty*, as a great king takes the field with abundance of pomp and magnificence—his sword, his glory, and majesty. In his gospel he appears transcendently great and excellent, bright and blessed, in the honour and majesty which the Father has laid upon him. Christ, both in his person and in his gospel, had nothing of external glory or majesty, nothing to charm men (for he had no form nor comeliness), nothing to awe men, for he *took upon him the form of a servant*; it was all spiritual glory, spiritual majesty. There is so much grace, and therefore glory, in that word, *He that believes shall be saved*, so much terror, and therefore majesty, in that word, *He that believes not shall be damned*, that we may well say, in the chariot of that gospel, which these words are the sum of, the Redeemer rides forth in glory and majesty. *In thy majesty ride prosperously, v. 4. Prosper thou; ride thou.* This speaks the promise of his Father, that he should prosper according to the good pleasure of the Lord, that he should divide the spoil with the strong, in recompence of his sufferings. Those cannot but prosper to whom God says, Prosper, Isa. lii. 10—12. And it denotes the good wishes of his friends, praying that he may prosper in the conversion of souls to him, and the destruction of all the powers of darkness that rebel against him.” *“Thy kingdom come; Go on and prosper.”*

(3.) The glorious cause in which he is engaged—because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness, which were, in a manner, sunk and lost among men, and which Christ came to retrieve and rescue. [1.] The gospel itself is truth, meekness, and righteousness; it commands by the power of truth and righteousness; for Christianity has these, uncontestedly, on its side, and yet it is to be promoted by meekness and gentleness, 1 Cor. iv. 12, 13; 2 Tim. ii. 25. [2.] Christ appears in it in his truth, meekness, and righteousness, and these are his glory and majesty, and because of these he shall prosper. Men are brought to believe on him because he is true, to learn of him because he is meek, Matt. xi. 29 (the gentleness of Christ is of mighty force, 2 Cor. x. 1), and to submit to him because he is righteous and rules with equity. [3.] The gospel, as far as it prevails with men, sets up in their hearts truth, meekness, and righteousness, rectifies their mistakes by the light of truth, controls their passions by the power of meekness, and governs their hearts and lives by the laws of righteousness. Christ came, by setting up his kingdom among men, to restore those glories to a degenerate world, and to maintain the cause of those just and rightful rulers under him that by error, malice, and iniquity, had been deposed.

(4.) The success of his expedition: *“Thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things; thou shalt experience a wonderful divine power going along with thy gospel, to make it victorious, and the effects of it will be terrible things.”* [1.] In order to the conversion and reduction of souls to him, there are terrible things to be done; the heart must be pricked, conscience must be startled, and the terrors of the Lord must make way for his consolations. This is done by the right hand of Christ. The Comforter shall continue, John xvi. 8. [2.] In the conquest of the gates of hell and its supporters, in the destruction of Judaism and Paganism, terrible things will be done, which will make men’s hearts fail them for fear (Luke xxi. 26) and great men and chief captains call to the rocks and mountains to fall on them, Rev. vi. 15. The next verse describes these terrible things (v. 5): *Thy arrows are sharp in the heart of the king’s enemies.* First, Those that were by nature enemies are thus wounded, in order to their being subdued and reconciled. Convictions are like the arrows of the bow, which are sharp in the heart on which they fasten, and bring people to fall under Christ, in subjection to his laws and government. Those that thus fall on this stone shall be broken, Matt. xxi. 44. Secondly, Those that persist in their enmity are thus wounded, in order to their being ruined. The arrows of God’s terrors are sharp in their hearts, whereby they shall fall under him, so as to be made his footstool, cx. 1. Those that would not have him to reign over them shall be brought forth and slain before him (Luke xix. 27); those that would not submit to his golden sceptre shall be broken to pieces by his iron rod.

6 Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. 7 Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. 8 All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad. 9 Kings’ daughters were among thy honourable women: upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.

We have here the royal bridegroom filling his throne with judgment and keeping his court with splendour.

I. He here fills his throne with judgment. It is God the Father that says to the Son here, *Thy throne, O God! is for ever and ever*, as appears Heb. i. 8, 9, where this is quoted to prove that he is God and has a more excellent name than the angels. The Mediator is God, else he neither would have been able to do the Mediator’s work nor fit to wear the

Mediator's crown. Concerning his government observe, 1. The eternity of it; it is *for ever and ever*. It shall continue on earth throughout all the ages of time, in despite of all the opposition of the gates of hell; and in the blessed fruits and consequences of it it shall last as long as the days of heaven, and run parallel with the line of eternity itself. Perhaps even then the glory of the Redeemer, and the blessedness of the redeemed, shall be in a continual infinite progression; for it is promised that not only of his government, but of the increase of his government and peace, *there shall be no end* (Isa. ix. 7); even when the kingdom shall be delivered up to God even the Father (1 Cor. xvi. 24) the throne of the Redeemer will continue. 2. The equity of it: *The sceptre of thy kingdom*, the administration of thy government, is right, exactly according to the eternal counsel and will of God, which is the eternal rule and reason of good and evil. Whatever Christ does he does none of his subjects any wrong, but gives redress to those that do suffer wrong: *He loves righteousness, and hates wickedness*, v. 7. He himself loves to do righteousness, and hates to do wickedness; and he loves those that do righteousness, and hates those that do wickedness. By the holiness of his life, the merit of his death, and the great design of his gospel, he has made it to appear that he loves righteousness (for by his example, his satisfaction, and his precepts, he has brought in an everlasting righteousness), and that he hates wickedness, for never did God's hatred of sin appear so conspicuously as it did in the sufferings of Christ. 3. The establishment and elevation of it: *Therefore God, even thy God* (Christ, as Mediator, called God his God, John xx. 17, as commissioned by him, and the head of those that are taken into covenant with him), *has anointed thee with the oil of gladness*. Therefore, that is, (1.) "In order to this righteous government of thine, God has given thee his Spirit, that divine unction, to qualify thee for thy undertaking," Isa. lxi. 1. *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he has anointed me*. What God called him to he fitted him for, Isa. xli. 2. The Spirit is called the oil of gladness because of the delight wherewith Christ was filled in carrying on his undertaking. He was anointed with the Spirit above all his fellows, above all those that were anointed, whether priests or kings. (2.) "In recompence of what thou hast done and suffered for the advancement of righteousness and the destruction of sin God has anointed thee with the oil of gladness, has brought thee to all the honours and all the joys of thy exalted state." *Because he humbled himself, God has highly exalted him*, Phil. ii. 8, 9. His anointing him denotes the power and glory to which he is exalted; he is invested in all the dignities and authorities of the Messiah. And his anointing him with the oil of gladness denotes the

joy that was set before him (so his exaltation is expressed, Heb. xii. 2) both in the light of his Father's countenance (Acts ii. 28) and in the success of his undertaking, which he shall see, and be satisfied, Isa. liii. 11. This he is anointed with above all his fellows, above all believers, who are his brethren, and who partake of the anointing—they by measure, he without measure. But the apostle brings it to prove his pre-eminence above the angels, Heb. i. 4, 9. The salvation of sinners is the joy of angels (Luke xv. 10); but much more of the Son.

II. He keeps his court with splendour and magnificence. 1. His robes of state, wherein he appears, are taken notice of; not for their pomp, which might strike an awe upon the spectator, but their pleasantness and the gratefulness of the odours with which they were perfumed (v. 8): *They smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia* (the oil of gladness with which he and his garments were anointed); these were some of the ingredients of the holy anointing oil which God appointed, the like to which was not to be made up for any common use (Exod. xxx. 23, 24), which was typical of the unction of the Spirit which Christ, the great high priest of our profession, received, and to which therefore there seems here to be a reference. It is the savour of these good ointments, his graces and comforts, that draws souls to him (Cant. i. 3, 4) and makes him precious to believers, 1 Pet. ii. 7. 2. His royal palaces are said to be ivory ones, such as were then reckoned most magnificent. We read of an ivory house that Ahab made, 1 Kings xxii. 39. The mansions of light above are the ivory palaces, whence all the joys both of Christ and believers come, and where they will be for ever in perfection; for by them he is made glad, and all that are his with him; for they shall enter into the joy of their Lord. 3. The beauties of his court shine very brightly. In public appearances at court, when the pomp of it is shown, nothing is supposed to contribute so much to it as the splendour of the ladies, which is alluded to here, v. 9. (1.) Particular believers are here compared to the ladies at court, richly dressed in honour of the sovereign: *Kings' daughters are among thy honourable women*, whose looks, and mien, and ornaments, we may suppose, from the height of their extraction, to excel all others. All true believers are born from above; they are the children of the King of kings. These attend the throne of the Lord Jesus daily with their prayers and praises, which is really their honour, and he is pleased to reckon it his. The numbering of kings' daughters among his honourable women, or maids of honour, intimates that the kings whose daughters they were should be tributaries to him and dependents on him, and would therefore think it a preferment to their daughters to attend him. (2.) The church in general, constituted of these particular believers, is here

compared to the queen herself—the queen-consort, whom, by an everlasting covenant, he hath betrothed to himself. She stands at his right hand, near to him, and receives honour from him, in the richest array, in gold of Ophir, in robes woven with golden thread or with a gold chain and other ornaments of gold. This is the bride, the Lamb's wife, whose graces, which are her ornaments, are compared to fine linen, clean and white (Rev. xix. 8), for their purity, here to gold of Ophir, for their costliness; for, as we owe our redemption, so we owe our adorning, not to corruptible things, but to the precious blood of the Son of God.

10 Harken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; 11 So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him. 12 And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favour. 13 The king's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold. 14 She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needle-work: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. 15 With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace. 16 Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth. 17 I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

This latter part of the psalm is addressed to the royal bride, standing on the right hand of the royal bridegroom. God, who said to the Son, *Thy throne is for ever and ever*, says this to the church, which, upon the account of her espousals to the Son, he here calls his daughter.

I. He tells her of the duties expected from her, which ought to be considered by all those that come into relation to the Lord Jesus: "Harken, therefore, and consider this, and incline thy ear," that is, submit to those conditions of thy espousals, and bring thy will to comply with them." This is the method of profiting by the word of God. *He that has ears, let him hear*, let him harken diligently; he that hearkens, let him consider and weigh it duly; he that considers, let him incline and yield to the force of what is laid before him. And what is it that is here required?

1. She must renounce all others.

(1.) Here is the law of her espousals:

"Forget thy own people and thy father's house, according to the law of marriage. Retain not the affection thou hast had for them, nor covet to return to them again; banish all such remembrance (not only of thy people that were dear to thee, but of thy father's house that were dearer) as may incline thee to look back, as Lot's wife to Sodom." When Abraham, in obedience to God's call, had quitted his native soil, he was not so much as mindful of the country whence he came out. This shows, [1.] How necessary it was for those who were converted from Judaism or paganism to the faith of Christ wholly to cast out the old leaven, and not to bring into their Christian profession either the Jewish ceremonies or the heathen idolatries, for these would make such a mongrel religion in Christianity as the Samaritans had. [2.] How necessary it is for us all, when we give up our names to Jesus Christ, to hate father and mother, and all that is dear to us in this world, in comparison, that is, to love them less than Christ and his honour, and our interest in him, Luke xiv. 26.

(2.) Here is good encouragement given to the royal bride thus entirely to break off from her former alliances: *So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty*, which intimates that the mixing of her old rites and customs, whether Jewish or Gentile, with her religion, would blemish her beauty and would hazard her interest in the affections of the royal bridegroom, but that, if she entirely conformed to his will, he would delight in her. The beauty of holiness, both on the church and on particular believers, is in the sight of Christ of great price and very amiable. Where that is he says, *This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it*. Among the golden candlesticks he walks with pleasure, Rev. ii. 1.

2. She must reverence him, must love, honour, and obey him: *He is thy Lord and worship thou him*. The church is to be subject to Christ as the wife to the husband (Eph. v. 24), to call him Lord, as Sarah called Abraham, and to obey him (1 Pet. iii. 6), and so not only to submit to his government, but to give him divine honours. We must worship him as God, and our Lord; for this is the will of God, that *all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father*; nay, in so doing it is reckoned that they honour the Father. If we confess that Christ is Lord, and pay our homage to him accordingly, it is to the glory of God the Father, Phil. ii. 11.

II. He tells her of the honours designed for her.

1. Great court should be made to her, and rich presents brought her (v. 12): "The daughter of Tyre," a rich and splendid city, "the daughter of the King of Tyre shall be there with a gift; every royal family round about shall send a branch, as a representative of the whole, to seek thy favour and to make

an interest in thee; *even the rich among the people*, whose wealth might be thought to exempt them from dependence at court; even they shall entreat thy favour, for his sake to whom thou art espoused, that by thee they may make him their friend." The Jews, the pretending Jews, who are rich to a proverb (as rich as a Jew), shall come and worship before the church's feet in the Philadelphian period, and shall *know that Christ has loved her*, Rev. iii. 9. When the Gentiles, being converted to the faith of Christ, join themselves to the church, they then *come with a gift*, 2 Cor. viii. 5; Rom. xv. 16. When with themselves they devote all they have to the honour of Christ, and the service of his kingdom, they then *come with a gift*.

2. She shall be very splendid, and highly esteemed in the eyes of all, (1.) For her personal qualifications, the endowments of her mind, which every one shall admire (v. 13): *The king's daughter is all glorious within*. Note, The glory of the church is spiritual glory, and that is indeed all glory; it is the glory of the soul, and that is the man; it is glory in God's sight, and it is an earnest of eternal glory. The glory of the saints falls not within the view of a carnal eye. As their life, so their glory, is hidden with Christ in God, neither can the natural man know it, for it is spiritually discerned; but those who do so discern it highly value it. Let us see here what is that true glory which we should be ambitious of, not that which *makes a fair show in the flesh*, but which is in the *hidden man of the heart*, in that which is not corruptible (1 Pet. iii. 4), whose *praise is not of men, but of God*, Rom. ii. 29. (2.) For her rich apparel. Though all her glory is within, that for which she is truly valuable, yet *her clothing* also is of wrought gold; the conversation of Christians, in which they appear in the world, must be enriched with good works, not gay and gaudy ones, like paint and flourish, but substantially good, like gold; and it must be accurate and exact, like wrought gold, which is worked with a great deal of care and caution.

3. Her nuptials shall be celebrated with a great deal of honour and joy (v. 14, 15): *She shall be brought to the king*, as the Lord God brought the woman to the man (Gen. ii. 22), which was a type of this mystical marriage between Christ and his church. None are brought to Christ but whom the Father brings, and he has undertaken to do it; none besides are so brought to the king (v. 14) as to enter into the king's palace, v. 15.

(1.) This intimates a two-fold bringing of the spouse to Christ. [1.] In the conversion of souls to Christ; then they are espoused to him, privately contracted, as chaste virgins, 2 Cor. xi. 2; Rom. vii. 4. [2.] In the completing of the mystical body, and the glorification of all the saints, at the end of time; then the *bride, the Lamb's wife*, shall

be made completely ready, when all that belong to the election of grace shall be called in and called home, and all gathered together to Christ, 2 Thess. ii. 1. Then is the marriage of the Lamb come (Rev. xix. 7; xxi. 2), and the virgins *go forth to meet the bridegroom*, Matt. xxv. 1. Then they shall enter into the king's palaces, into the heavenly mansions, to be ever with the Lord.

(2.) In both these espousals, observe, to the honour of the royal bride, [1.] Her wedding clothes—*raiment of needle-work*, the righteousness of Christ, the graces of the Spirit; both curiously wrought by divine wisdom. [2.] Her bride-maids—the *virgins her companions*, the wise virgins who have oil in their vessels as well as in their lamps, those who, being joined to the church, cleave to it and follow it, these shall go in to the marriage. [3.] The mirth with which the nuptials will be celebrated: *With gladness and rejoicing shall she be brought*. When the prodigal is brought home to his father it is meet that *we should make merry and be glad* (Luke xv. 32); and when the marriage of the Lamb has come *let us be glad and rejoice* (Rev. xix. 7); for the day of his espousals is the day of the gladness of his heart, Cant. iii. 11.

4. The progeny of this marriage shall be illustrious (v. 16): *Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children*. Instead of the Old-Testament church, the economy of which had waxed old, and ready to *vanish away* (Heb. viii. 13), as the fathers that are going off, there shall be a New-Testament church, a Gentile-church, that shall be grafted into the same olive and partake of its root and fatness (Rom. xi. 17); more and more eminent shall be the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, Isa. liv. 1. This promise to Christ is of the same import with that Isa. liii. 10, *He shall see his seed*; and these shall be made *princes in all the earth*; there shall be some of all nations brought into subjection to Christ, and so made princes, *made to our God kings and priests*, Rev. i. 6. Or it may intimate that there should be a much greater number of Christian kings than ever there was of Jewish kings (those in Canaan only, these in all the earth), nursing fathers and nursing mothers to the church, which shall *suck the breasts of kings*. They are princes of Christ's making; for by him *kings reign and princes decree justice*.

5. The praise of this marriage shall be perpetual in the praises of the royal bridegroom (v. 18): *I will make thy name to be remembered*. His Father has given him a name above every name, and here promises to make it perpetual, by keeping up a succession of ministers and Christians in every age, that shall bear up his name, which shall thus *endure for ever* (lxxii. 17), by being remembered in all the generations of time; for the entail of Christianity shall not be cut off. "Therefore, because they shall remember thee in all generations, they shall praise thee for ever

and ever." Those that help to support the honour of Christ on earth shall in heaven see his glory, and share in it, and be for ever praising him. In the believing hope of our everlasting happiness in the other world let us always keep up the remembrance of Christ, as our only way thither, in our generation; and, in assurance of the perpetuating of the kingdom of the Redeemer in the world, let us transmit the remembrance of him to succeeding generations, that his name may endure for ever and be as the days of heaven.

PSALM XLVI.

This psalm encourages us to hope and trust in God, and his power, and providence, and gracious presence with his church in the worst of times, and directs us to give him the glory of what he has done for us and what he will do; probably it was penned upon occasion of David's victories over the neighbouring nations (2 Sam. viii.), and the rest which God gave him from all his enemies round about. We are here taught, I. To take comfort in God when things look very black and threatening, ver. 1.—5. II. To mention, to his praise, the great things he has wrought for his church against its enemies, ver. 6.—9. III. To assure ourselves that God who has glorified his own name will glorify it yet again, and to comfort ourselves with that, ver. 10, 11. We may, in singing it, apply it either to our spiritual enemies, and the encouragement we have to hope that through Christ we shall be more than conquerors over them, or to the public enemies of Christ's kingdom in the world and their threatening insults, endeavouring to deprive a holy security and serenity of mind when they seem most formidable. It is said of Luther that, when he heard any discouraging news, he would say, Come let us sing the forty-sixth psalm.

To the chief musician for the sons of Korah.

A song upon Alamoth.

GOD is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. 2 Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; 3 *Though* the waters thereof roar *and* be troubled, *though* the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah. 4 *There is* a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy *place* of the tabernacles of the most high. 5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, *and that* right early.

The psalmist here teaches us by his own example.

I. To triumph in God, and his relation to us and presence with us, especially when we have had some fresh experiences of his appearing in our behalf (v. 1): *God is our refuge and strength*; we have found him so, he has engaged to be so, and he ever will be so. Are we pursued? God is our refuge to whom we may flee, and in whom we may be safe and think ourselves so; secure upon good grounds, Prov. xviii. 10. Are we oppressed by troubles? Have we work to do and enemies to grapple with? God is our strength, to bear us up under our burdens, to fit us for all our services and sufferings; he will by his grace put strength into us, and on him we may stay ourselves. Are we in distress? He is a help, to do all that for us which we need, *a present help, a help found* (so the word

is), one whom we have found to be so, a help on which we may write *Probatum est—It is tried*, as Christ is called a *tried stone*, Isa. xxviii. 16. Or, *a help at hand*, one that never is to seek for, but that is always near. Or, *a help sufficient*, a help accommodated to every case and exigence; whatever it is, he is a very present help; we cannot desire a better help, nor shall ever find the like in any creature.

II. To triumph over the greatest dangers: *God is our strength and our help*, a God almighty to us; *therefore will not we fear*. Those that with a holy reverence fear God need not with any amazement to be afraid of the power of hell or earth. *If God be for us, who can be against us*, to do us any harm? It is our duty, it is our privilege, to be thus fearless; it is an evidence of a clear conscience, of an honest heart, and of a lively faith in God and his providence and promise: *"We will not fear, though the earth be removed, though all our creature-confidences fail us and sink us; nay, though that which should support us threaten to swallow us up, as the earth did Korah,"* for whose sons this psalm was penned, and, some think, by them; yet while we keep close to God, and have him for us, we will not fear, for we have no cause to fear;

—Si fractus illabatur orbis,
Impavidum ferient ruinae.—Hor.

—Let Jove's dread arm with thunder rend the sphere,
Beneath the crash of worlds undaunted he appears.

Observe here, 1. How threatening the danger is. We will suppose the earth to be removed, and thrown into the sea, even the mountains, the strongest and firmest parts of the earth, to lie buried in the unfathomed ocean; we will suppose the sea to roar and rage, and make a dreadful noise, and its foaming billows to insult the shore with so much violence as even to *shake the mountains*, v. 3. Though kingdoms and states be in confusion, embroiled in wars, tossed with tumults, and their governments in continual revolution—though their powers combine against the church and people of God, aim at no less than their ruin, and go very near to gain their point—yet will not we fear, knowing that all these troubles will end well for the church. See xciii. 4. If the earth be removed, those have reason to fear who have laid up their treasures on earth, and set their hearts upon it; but not those who have laid up for themselves treasures in heaven, and who expect to be most happy when *the earth and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up*. Let those be troubled at the troubling of the waters who build their confidence on such a floating foundation, but not those who are led to *the rock that is higher than they*, and find firm footing upon that rock. 2. How well-grounded the defiance of this danger is, considering how well guarded the church is, and that interest which we are concerned for. It is not any private particular concern of our own that we are in pain about; no, it is the city of God.

the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High; it is the ark of God for which our hearts tremble. But, when we consider what God has provided for the comfort and safety of his church, we shall see reason to have our hearts fixed, and set above the fear of evil tidings. Here is, (1.) Joy to the church, even in the most melancholy and sorrowful times (v. 4). *There is a river the streams whereof shall make it glad*, even then when the waters of the sea roar and threaten it. It alludes to the waters of Siloam, which *went softly by Jerusalem* (Isa. viii. 6, 7); though of no great depth or breadth, yet the waters of it were made serviceable to the defence of Jerusalem in Hezekiah's time, Isa. xxii. 10, 11. But this must be understood spiritually; the covenant of grace is the river, the promises of which are the streams; or the Spirit of grace is the river (John vii. 38, 39), the comforts of which are the streams, that make glad the city of our God. God's word and ordinances are rivers and streams with which God makes his saints glad in cloudy and dark days. God himself is to his church a place of broad rivers and streams, Isa. xxxiii. 21. The streams that make glad the city of God are not rapid, but gentle, like those of Siloam. Note, The spiritual comforts which are conveyed to the saints by soft and silent whispers, and which come not with observation, are sufficient to counterbalance the most loud and noisy threatenings of an angry and malicious world. (2.) Establishment to the church. Though heaven and earth are shaken, yet *God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved*, v. 5. God has assured his church of his special presence with her and concern for her; his honour is embarked in her, he has set up his tabernacle in her and has undertaken the protection of it, and therefore she shall not be moved, that is, [1.] Not destroyed, not removed, as the earth may be, v. 2. The church shall survive the world, and be in bliss when that is in ruins. *It is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*. [2.] Not disturbed, not much moved, with fears of the issue. If God be for us, if God be with us, we need not be moved at the most violent attempts made against us. (3.) Deliverance to the church, though her dangers be very great: *God shall help her*; and who then can hurt her? He shall help her under her troubles, that she shall not sink; nay, that the more she is afflicted the more she shall multiply. *God shall help her out of her troubles, and that right early*—when the morning appears; that is, very speedily, for he is a present help (v. 1), and very seasonably, when things are brought to the last extremity and when the relief will be most welcome. This may be applied by particular believers to themselves; if God be in our hearts, in the midst of us, by his word dwelling richly in us, we shall be established, we shall be helped; let us therefore trust and not be afraid; all is well, and will end well.

6 The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted. 7 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah. 8 Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth. 9 He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire. 10 Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. 11 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

These verses give glory to God both as King of nations and as King of saints.

1. As King of nations, ruling the world by his power and providence, and overruling all the affairs of the children of men to his own glory; he does according to his will among the inhabitants of the earth, and none may say, *What doest thou?* 1. He checks the rage and breaks the power of the nations that oppose him and his interests in the world (v. 6): *The heathen raged at David's coming to the throne, and at the setting up of the kingdom of the Son of David*; compare ii. 1, 2. *The kingdoms were moved* with indignation, and rose in a tumultuous furious manner to oppose it; but *God uttered his voice, spoke to them in his wrath*, and they were moved in another sense, they were struck into confusion and consternation, put into disorder, and all their measures broken; the earth itself melted under them, so that they found no firm footing; their earthly hearts failed them for fear, and dissolved like snow before the sun. (Such a melting of the spirits of the enemies is described, Judg. v. 4, 5; and see Luke xxi. 25, 26. 2. When he pleases to draw his sword, and give it commission, he can make great havoc among the nations and lay all waste (v. 8): *Come, behold the works of the Lord*; they are to be observed (lxvi. 5), and to be sought out, exi. 2. All the operations of Providence must be considered as the works of the Lord, and his attributes and purposes must be taken notice of in them. Particularly take notice of the desolations he has made in the earth, among the enemies of his church, who thought to lay the land of Israel desolate. The destruction they designed to bring upon the church has been turned upon themselves. War is a tragedy which commonly destroys the stage it is acted on; David carried the war into the enemies' country; and O what desolations did it make there! Cities were burnt, countries laid waste, and armies of men cut off and laid in heaps upon heaps. Come and see the effects of desolating judgments, and stand

in awe of God; say, *How terrible art thou in thy works!* lvi. 3. Let all that oppose him see this with terror, and expect the same cup of trembling to be put into their hands; let all that fear him and trust in him see it with pleasure, and not be afraid of the most formidable powers armed against the church. Let them gird themselves, but *they shall be broken to pieces.* 3. When he pleases to sheathe his sword, he puts an end to the wars of the nations and crowns them with peace, v. 9. War and peace depend on his word and will, as much as storms and calms at sea do, cvii. 25, 29. *He makes wars to cease unto the end of the earth,* sometimes in pity to the nations, that they may have a breathing-time, when, by long wars with each other, they have run themselves out of breath: Both sides perhaps are weary of the war, and willing to let it fall; expedients are found out for accommodation; martial princes are removed, and peace-makers set in their room; and then the bow is broken by consent, the spear cut asunder and turned into a pruning-hook, the sword beaten into a ploughshare, and the chariots of war are burned, there being no more occasion for them; or, rather, it may be meant of what he does, at other times, in favour of his own people. He makes those wars to cease that were waged against them and designed for their ruin. He breaks the enemies' bow that was drawn against them. *No weapon formed against Zion shall prosper,* Isa. liv. 17. The total destruction of Gog and Magog is prophetically described by the burning of their weapons of war (Ezek. xxxix. 9, 10), which intimates likewise the church's perfect security and assurance of lasting peace, which made it needless to lay up those weapons of war for their own service. The bringing of a long war to a good issue is a work of the Lord, which we ought to behold with wonder and thankfulness.

II. As King of saints, and as such we must own that *great and marvellous are his works,* Rev. xv. 3. He does and will do great things,

1. For his own glory (v. 10): *Be still, and know that I am God.* (1.) Let his enemies be still, and threaten no more; but know it; to their terror, that he is God, one infinitely above them, and that will certainly be too hard for them; let them rage no more, for it is all in vain: *he that sits in heaven, laughs at them;* and, in spite of all their impotent malice against his name and honour, he will be exalted among the heathen and not merely among his own people, he will be exalted in the earth and not merely in the church: Men will set up themselves, will have their own way and do their own will; but let them know that God will be exalted, he will have his way will do his own will, will glorify his own name, and *wherein they deal proudly he will be above them,* and make them know that he is so. (2.) Let his own people be still; let them be calm and sedate, and tremble no more, but know, to their comfort, that the Lord is God, he is

God alone, and will be exalted above the heathen; let him alone to maintain his honour, to fulfil his own counsels and to support his own interest in the world. Though we be depressed, yet let us not be dejected, for we are sure that God will be exalted, and that may satisfy us; he will work for his great name, and then no matter what becomes of our little names. When we pray, *Father, glorify thy name,* we ought to exercise faith upon the answer given to that prayer when Christ himself prayed it, *I have both glorified it and I will glorify it yet again.* Amen, Lord, so be it.

2. For his people's safety and protection. He triumphs in the former: *I will be exalted;* they triumph in this, v. 7, and again v. 11. It is the burden of the song, "*The Lord of hosts is with us;*" he is on our side, he takes our part, is present with us and president over us; *the God of Jacob is our refuge,* to whom we may flee; and in whom we may confide and be sure of safety." Let all believers triumph in this. (1.) They have the presence of a God of power, of all power: *The Lord of hosts is with us.* God is the Lord of hosts, for he has all the creatures which are called *the hosts of heaven and earth* at his beck and command, and he makes what use he pleases of them, as the instruments either of his justice or of his mercy. This sovereign Lord is with us, sides with us, acts with us, and has promised he will never leave us. Hosts may be against us, but we need not fear them if the Lord of hosts be with us. (2.) They are under the protection of a God in covenant, who not only is able to help them, but is engaged in honour and faithfulness to help them. He is the God of Jacob, not only Jacob the person, but Jacob the people; nay, and of all praying people, the spiritual seed of wrestling Jacob; and he is our refuge, by whom we are sheltered and in whom we are satisfied, who by his providence secures our welfare when without are fightings, and who by his grace quiets our minds, and establishes them when within are fears. The Lord of hosts, the God of Jacob, has been, is, and will be with us—has been, is, and will be our refuge: the original includes all; and well may *Selah* be added to it. Mark this, and take the comfort of it, and say, *If God be for us, who can be against us?*

PSALM XLVII.

The scope of this psalm is to stir us up to praise God, to stir up all people to do so; and, 1. We are directed in what manner to do it, publicly, cheerfully, and intelligently, ver. 1, 6, 7. 11. We are furnished with matter for praise. 1. God's majesty, ver. 2. 2. His sovereign and universal dominion, ver. 2, 7—9. 3. The great things he had done, and will do, for his people, ver. 3—5. Many suppose that this psalm was penned upon occasion of the bringing up of the ark to Mount Zion, which ver. 6 seems to refer to ("God has gone up with a shout")—but it looks further, to the ascension of Christ into the heavenly Zion, after he had finished his undertaking on earth, and to the setting up of his kingdom in the world, to which the heathen should become willing subjects. In singing this psalm we are to give honour to the exalted Redeemer, to rejoice in his exaltation, and to celebrate his praises, confessing that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

To the chief musician. A psalm for the sons of Korah.

O CLAP your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph. 2 For the LORD most high is terrible; *he is a great King* over all the earth. 3 He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet. 4 He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved. Selah.

The psalmist, having his own heart filled with great and good thoughts of God, endeavours to engage all about him in the blessed work of praise, as one convinced that God is worthy of all blessing and praise, and as one grieved at his own and others' backwardness to and barrenness in this work. Observe, in these verses,

I. Who are called upon to praise God: "*All you people, all you people of Israel;*" those were his own subjects, and under his charge, and therefore he will engage them to praise God, for on them he has an influence. Whatever others do, he and his house, he and his people, shall praise the Lord. Or, "*All you people and nations of the earth;*" and so it may be taken as a prophecy of the conversion of the Gentiles and the bringing of them into the church; see Rom. xv. 11.

II. What they are called upon to do: "*O clap your hands,* in token of your own joy and satisfaction in what God has done for you, of your approbation, nay, your admiration, of what God has done in general, and of your indignation against all the enemies of God's glory, Job xxvii. 23. *Clap your hands,* as men transported with pleasure, that cannot contain themselves; *shout unto God,* not to make him hear (his ear is not heavy), but to make all about you hear, and take notice how much you are affected and filled with the works of God. *Shout with the voice of triumph* in him, and in his power and goodness, that others may join with you in the triumph." Note, Such expressions of pious and devout affections as to some may seem indecent and imprudent ought not to be hastily censured and condemned, much less ridiculed, because, if they come from an upright heart, God will accept the strength of the affection and excuse the weakness of the expressions of it.

III. What is suggested to us as matter for our praise. 1. That the God with whom we have to do is a God of awful majesty (v. 2): *The Lord most high is terrible.* He is infinitely above the noblest creatures, higher than the highest; there are those perfections in him that are to be revered by all, and particularly that power, holiness, and justice, that are to be dreaded by all those that contend with him. 2. That he is a God of sovereign and universal dominion. He is a King that reigns alone, and with an absolute power, *a King over all the earth;* all the creatures, being made by him, are subject to him,

and therefore he is *a great King*, the King of kings. 3. That he takes a particular care of his people and their concerns, has done so and ever will; (1.) In giving them victory and success (v. 3), subduing the people and nations under them, both those that stood in their way (xliv. 2) and those that made attempts upon them. This God had done for them, witness the planting of them in Canaan, and their continuance there unto this day. This they doubted not but he would still do for them by his servant David, who prospered which way soever he turned his victorious arms. But this looks forward to the kingdom of the Messiah, which was to be set over all the earth, and not confined to the Jewish nation. Jesus Christ shall subdue the Gentiles; he shall bring them *in as sheep into the fold* (so the word signifies), not for slaughter, but for preservation. He shall subdue their affections, and make them *a willing people in the day of his power*, shall bring their thoughts into obedience to him, and reduce those who had gone astray, under the guidance of the *great shepherd and bishop of souls*, 1 Pet. ii. 25. (2.) In giving them rest and settlement (v. 4): *He shall choose our inheritance for us.* He had chosen the land of Canaan to be an inheritance for Israel; it was the land which the Lord their God spied out for them; see Deut. xxxii. 8. This justified their possession of that land, and gave them a good title; and this sweetened their enjoyment of it, and made it comfortable; they had reason to think it a happy lot, and to be satisfied in it, when it was that which Infinite Wisdom chose for them. And the setting up of God's sanctuary in it made it *the excellency, the honour, of Jacob* (Amos vi. 8); and he chose so good an inheritance for Jacob because he loved him, Deut. vii. 8. Apply this spiritually, and it bespeaks, [1.] The happiness of the saints, that God himself has chosen their inheritance for them, and it is a goodly heritage: *he has chosen it who knows the soul, and what will serve to make it happy; and he has chosen so well that he himself has undertaken to be the inheritance of his people* (xvi. 5), and he has laid up for them in the other world an inheritance incorruptible, 1 Pet. i. 4. This will be indeed the excellency of Jacob, for whom, because he loved them, he prepared such a happiness as eye has not seen. [2.] The faith and submission of the saints to God. This is the language of every gracious soul, "*God shall choose my inheritance for me; let him appoint me my lot, and I will acquiesce in the appointment.* He knows what is good for me better than I do for myself, and therefore I will have no will of my own but what is resolved into his."

5 God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet. 6 Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises.

For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding. 8 God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness. 9 The princes of the people are gathered together, *even* the people of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth *belong* unto God: he is greatly exalted.

We are here most earnestly pressed to praise God, and to sing his praises; so backward are we to this duty that we have need to be urged to it by precept upon precept, and line upon line; so we are here (v. 6) *Sing praises to God*, and again, *Sing praises, Sing praises to our King*, and again, *Sing praises*. This intimates that it is a very necessary and excellent duty, that it is a duty we ought to be frequent and abundant in; we may sing praises again and again in the same words, and it is no vain repetition if it be done with new affections. Should not a people praise their God? Dan. v. 4. Should not subjects praise their king? God is our God, our King, and therefore we must praise him; we must sing his praises, as those that are pleased with them and that are not ashamed of them. But here is a needful rule subjoined (v. 7): *Sing you praises with understanding, with Maschil*. 1. "Intelligently; as those that do yourselves understand why and for what reasons you praise God and what is the meaning of the service." This is the gospel-rule (1 Cor. xiv. 15), *to sing with the spirit and with the understanding also*; it is only with the heart that we make melody to the Lord, Eph. v. 19. It is not an acceptable service if it be not a reasonable service. 2. "Instructively, as those that desire to make others understand God's glorious perfections, and to teach them to praise him." Three things are mentioned in these verses as just matter for our praises, and each of them will admit of a double sense:—

I. We must praise God going up (v. 5): *God has gone up with a shout*, which may refer, 1. To the carrying up of the ark to the hill of Zion, which was done with great solemnity, David himself dancing before it, the priests, it is likely, blowing the trumpets, and the people following with their loud huzzas. The ark being the instituted token of God's special presence with them, when that was brought up by warrant from him he might be said to *go up*. The emerging of God's ordinances out of obscurity, in order to the more public and solemn administration of them, is a great favour to any people, which they have reason to rejoice in and give thanks for. 2. To the ascension of our Lord Jesus into heaven, when he had finished his work on earth, Acts i. 9. Then *God went up with a shout*, the shout of a King, of a conqueror, as one who, having *spoiled principalities and powers*, then *led captivity captive*, lxxviii. 18.

He went up as a Mediator, typified by the ark and the mercy-seat over it, and was brought as the ark was into the most holy place, *into heaven itself*; see Heb. ix. 24. We read not of a shout, or of the sound of a trumpet, at the ascension of Christ, but they were the inhabitants of the upper world, those sons of God, that then shouted for joy, Job xxxviii. 7. He shall come again in the same manner as he went (Acts i. 11) and we are sure that he shall come again with a shout and the sound of a trumpet.

II. We must praise God reigning, v. 7. 8. God is not only our King, and therefore we owe our homage to him, but he is *King of all the earth* (v. 7), over all the kings of the earth, and therefore in every place the incense of praise is to be offered up to him. Now this may be understood, 1. Of the kingdom of providence. God, as Creator, and the God of nature, *reigns over the heathen*, disposes of them and all their affairs, as he pleases, though they know him not, nor have any regard to him: *He sits upon the throne of his holiness*, which he has prepared in the heavens, and there he rules over all, even over the heathen, serving his own purposes by them and upon them. See here the extent of God's government; all are born within his allegiance; even the heathen that serve other gods are ruled by the true God, our God, whether they will or no. See the equity of his government; it is a throne of holiness, on which he sits, whence he gives warrants, orders, and judgment, in which we are sure there is no iniquity. 2. Of the kingdom of the Messiah. Jesus Christ, who is God, and whose *throne is for ever and ever, reigns over the heathen*; not only he is entrusted with the administration of the providential kingdom, but he shall set up the kingdom of his grace in the Gentile world, and rule in the hearts of multitudes that were bred up in heathenism, Eph. ii. 12, 13. This the apostle speaks of as a great mystery that the *Gentiles should be fellow-heirs*, Eph. iii. 6. Christ *sits upon the throne of his holiness*, his throne in the heavens, where all the administrations of his government are intended to show forth God's holiness and to advance holiness among the children of men.

III. We must praise God as attended and honoured by *the princes of the people*, v. 9. This may be understood, 1. Of the congress or convention of the states of Israel, the heads and rulers of the several tribes, at the solemn feasts, or to despatch the public business of the nation. It was the honour of Israel that they were *the people of the God of Abraham*, as they were Abraham's seed and taken into his covenant; and, thanks be to God, this blessing of Abraham has come upon the isles of the Gentiles, Gal. iii. 14. It was their happiness that they had a settled government, *princes of their people*, who were the *shields of their land*. Magistracy is the shield of a nation, and it is a great mercy to

any people to have this shield, especially when their princes, *their shields, belong unto the Lord*, are devoted to his honour, and their power is employed in his service, for then he is greatly exalted. It is likewise the honour of God that, in another sense, the *shields of the earth do belong to him*; magistracy is his institution, and he serves his own purposes by it in the government of the world, turning the hearts of kings as the rivers of water, which way soever he pleases. It was well with Israel when the princes of their people were gathered together to consult for the public welfare. The unanimous agreement of the great ones of a nation in the things that belong to its peace is a very happy omen, which promises abundance of blessings. 2. It may be applied to the calling of the Gentiles into the church of Christ, and taken as a prophecy that in the days of the Messiah the kings of the earth and their people should join themselves to the church, and bring their glory and power into the New Jerusalem; that they should all become *the people of the God of Abraham*, to whom it was promised that he should be *the father of many nations*. The volunteers of the people (so it may be read); it is the same word that is used in ex. 3, *Thy people shall be willing*; for those that are gathered to Christ are not forced, but made freely willing, to be his. When the *shields of the earth*, the ensigns of royal dignity (1 Kings xiv. 27, 28.), are surrendered to the Lord Jesus, as the keys of a city are presented to the conqueror or sovereign, when princes use their power for the advancement of the interests of religion, then Christ is greatly exalted.

PSALM XLVIII.

This psalm, as the two former, is a triumph song; some think it was penned on occasion of Jehoshaphat's victory (2 Chron. xx.), others of Sennacherib's defeat, when his army laid siege to Jerusalem in Hezekiah's time; but, for aught we know, it might be penned by David upon occasion of some eminent victory obtained in his time; yet not so calculated for that but that it might serve any other similar occasion in aftertimes, and be applicable also to the glories of the gospel church, of which Jerusalem was a type, especially when it shall come to be a church triumphant, the "heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb. xii. 22), "the Jerusalem which is above," Gal. iv. 26. Jerusalem is here praised, I. For its relation to God, ver. 1, 2. II. For God's care of it, ver. 3. III. For the terror it strikes upon its enemies, ver. 4-7. IV. For the pleasure it gives to its friends, who delight to think, 1. Of what God has done, does, and will do for it, ver. 8. 2. Of the gracious discoveries he makes of himself in and for that holy city, ver. 9, 10. 3. Of the effectual provision which is made for its safety, ver. 11-13. 4. Of the assurance we have of the perpetuity of God's covenant with the children of Zion, ver. 14. In singing this psalm we must be affected with the privilege we have as members of the gospel church, and must express and excite our sincere good-will to all its interests.

A song and psalm for the sons of Korah.

GREAT is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God; in the mountain of his holiness. 2 Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. 3 God is known in her palaces for a refuge. 4 For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. 5 They saw it, and so they marvelled;

they were troubled, and hasted away. 6 Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail. 7 Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind.

The psalmist is designing to praise Jerusalem and to set forth the grandeur of that city; but he begins with the praises of God and his greatness (v. 1), and ends with the praises of God and his goodness, v. 14. For, whatever is the subject of our praises, God must be both the Alpha and Omega of them. And, particularly, whatever is said to the honour of the church must redound to the honour of the church's God.

What is here said to the honour of Jerusalem is;

I. That the King of heaven owns it: it is *the city of our God* (v. 1), which he chose out of all the cities of Israel to put his name there. Of Zion he said kinder things than ever he said of any place upon earth. *This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it*, cxxxii. 13, 14. It is *the city of the great King* (v. 2), the King of all the earth, who is pleased to declare himself in a special manner present there. This our Saviour quotes to prove that to swear by Jerusalem is profanely to swear by God himself (Matt. v. 35), *for it is the city of the great King*, who has chosen it for the special residence of his grace, as heaven is of his glory. 1. It is enlightened with the knowledge of God. *In Judah God is known, and his name is great*, but especially in Jerusalem, the head-quarters of the priests, whose lips were to keep this knowledge. In Jerusalem God is great (v. 1) who in other places was made little of, was made nothing of. Happy the kingdom, the city, the family, the heart, in which God is great, in which he is uppermost; in which he is all. There God is known (v. 3) and where he is known he will be great; none condemn God but those that are ignorant of him. 2. It is devoted to the honour of God. It is therefore called *the mountain of his holiness, for holiness to the Lord* is written upon it and all the furniture of it, Zech. xiv. 20, 21. This is the privilege of the church of Christ, that it is *a holy nation, a peculiar people*; Jerusalem, the type of it, is called *the holy city*, bad as it was (Matt. xxvii. 53), till that was set up, but never after. 3. It is the place appointed for the solemn service and worship of God; there he is greatly praised, and *greatly to be praised*, v. 1. Note, The clearer discoveries are made to us of God and his greatness the more it is expected that we should abound in his praises. Those that from all parts of the country brought their offerings to Jerusalem had reason to be thankful that God would not only permit them thus to attend him, but promise to accept them, and meet them with a blessing, and reckon himself praised and honoured by their services. Herein Jerusalem typified

the gospel church; for what little tribute of praise God has from this earth arises from that church upon earth, which is therefore its tabernacle among men. 4. It is taken under his special protection (v. 3): He is known as a refuge; that is, he has approved himself such a one, and as such a one he is there applied to by his worshippers. Those that know him will trust in him, and seek to him, ix. 10. God was known, not only in the streets, but even in the palaces of Jerusalem, for a refuge; he great men had recourse to God and acquaintance with him. And then religion was likely to flourish in the city when it reigned in the palaces. 5. Upon all these accounts, Jerusalem, and especially Mount Zion, on which the temple was built, were universally beloved and admired—*beautiful for situation, and the joy of the whole earth, v. 2*. The situation must needs be every way agreeable, when Infinite Wisdom chose it for the place of the sanctuary; and that which made it beautiful was that it was the mountain of holiness, for there is a beauty in holiness. This earth is, by sin, covered with deformity, and therefore justly might that spot of ground which was thus beautified with holiness be called *the joy of the whole earth*, that is, what the whole earth had reason to rejoice in, that God would thus in very deed dwell with man upon the earth. Mount Zion was on the north side of Jerusalem, and so was a shelter to the city from the cold and bleak winds that blew from that quarter; or, if fair weather was expected out of the north, they were thus directed to look Zion-ward for it.

11. That the kings of the earth were afraid of it. That God was known in their palaces for a refuge they had had a late instance, and a very remarkable one. Whatever it was, 1. They had had but too much occasion to fear their enemies; for *the kings were assembled, v. 4*. The neighbouring princes were confederate against Jerusalem; their heads and horns, their policies and powers, were combined for its ruin; they were assembled with all their forces; they passed, advanced, and marched on together, not doubting but they should soon make themselves masters of that city which should have been the joy, but was the envy of the whole earth. 2. God made their enemies to fear them. The very sight of Jerusalem struck them into a consternation and gave check to their fury, as the sight of the tents of Jacob frightened Balaam from his purpose to curse Israel (Num. xxiv. 2): *They saw it and marvelled, and hasted away, v. 5*. 'Not *Veni, vidi, vici—I came, I saw, I conquered*; but, on the contrary, *Veni, vidi, victus sum—I came, I saw, I was defeated*. Not that there was any thing to be seen in Jerusalem that was so very formidable; but the sight of it brought to mind what they had heard concerning the special presence of God in that city and the divine protection it was under, and God impressed such terrors on their minds thereby as made them retire with precipita-

tion. Though they were kings, though they were many in confederacy, yet they knew themselves an unequal match for Omnipotence, and therefore fear came upon them, and pain, v. 6. Note, God can dispirit the stoutest of his church's enemies, and soon put those in pain that live at ease. The fright they were in upon the sight of Jerusalem is here compared to the throes of a woman in travail, which are sharp and grievous, which sometimes come suddenly (1 Thess. v. 3), which cannot be avoided, and which are effects of sin and the curse. The defeat hereby given to their designs upon Jerusalem is compared to the dreadful work made with a fleet of ships by a violent storm, when some are split, others shattered, all dispersed (v. 7): *Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind*; effects at sea lie thus exposed. The terrors of God are compared to an east wind (Job xxvii. 20, 21); these shall put them into confusion, and break all their measures. *Who knows the power of God's anger?*

8 As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it for ever. Selah. 9 We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple. 10 According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth: thy right hand is full of righteousness. 11 Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgments. 12 Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. 13 Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. 14 For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.

We have here the good use and improvement which the people of God are taught to make of his late glorious and gracious appearances for them against their enemies, that they might work for their good.

I. Let our faith in the word of God be hereby confirmed. If we compare what God has done with what he has spoken, we shall find that, as *we have heard*, so *have we seen* (v. 8), and what we have seen obliges us to believe what we have heard. 1. "As we have heard done in former providences, in the days of old, so have we seen done in our own days." Note, God's latter appearances for his people against his and their enemies are consonant to his former appearances, and should put us in mind of them. 2. "As we have heard in the promise and prediction, so have we seen in the performance and accomplishment. We have heard that God is the Lord of hosts, and that Jerusalem is the city of our God, is dear to him, is his particular care; and now we have

seen it; we have seen the power of our God; we have seen his goodness; we have seen his care and concern for us, that he is a *wall of fire round about Jerusalem and the glory in the midst of her.*" Note, In the great things that God has done, and is doing, for his church, it is good to take notice of the fulfilling of the scriptures; and this would help us the better to understand both the providence itself and the scripture that is fulfilled in it.

II. Let our hope of the stability and perpetuity of the church be hereby encouraged. "From what we have seen, compared with what we have heard, in the city of our God, we may conclude that God will establish it for ever." This was not fulfilled in Jerusalem (that city was long since destroyed, and all its glory laid in the dust), but has its accomplishment in the gospel church. We are sure that that shall be established for ever; it is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it, Matt. xvi. 18. God himself has undertaken the establishment of it; it is the Lord that has founded Zion, Isa. xiv. 32. And what we have seen, compared with what we have heard, may encourage us to hope in that promise of God upon which the church is built.

III. Let our minds be hereby filled with good thoughts of God. "From what we have heard, and seen, and hope for, we may take occasion to think much of God's loving-kindness, whenever we meet *in the midst of his temple,*" v. 9. All the streams of mercy that flow down to us must be traced up to the fountain of God's lovingkindness. It is not owing to any merit of ours, but purely to his mercy, and the peculiar favour he bears to his people. This therefore we must think of with delight, think of frequently and fixedly. What subject can we dwell upon more noble, more pleasant, more profitable? We must have God's lovingkindness always before our eyes (xxvi. 3), especially when we attend upon him in his temple. When we enjoy the benefit of public ordinances undisturbed, when we meet in his temple and there is none to make us afraid, we should take occasion thence to think of his lovingkindness.

IV. Let us give to God the glory of the great things which he has done for us, and mention them to his honour (v. 10): "*According to thy name, O God! so is thy praise,* not only in Jerusalem, but to the ends of the earth." By the late signal deliverance of Jerusalem God had made himself a name; that is, he had gloriously discovered his wisdom, power, and goodness, and made all the nations about sensible of it; and so *was his praise*; that is, some in all parts would be found giving glory to him accordingly. As far as his name goes his praise will go, at least it should go, and, at length, it shall go, when all the ends of the world shall praise him, xvii. 27; Rev. xi. 15. Some, by his *name*, understand especially that glorious name of his, *the Lord of hosts*; according to that name, so

is his praise; for all the creatures, even the ends of the earth, are under his command. But his people must, in a special manner, acknowledge his justice in all he does for them: "*Righteousness fills thy right hand;*" that all the operations of thy power are consonant to the eternal rules of equity.

V. Let all the members of the church particular take to themselves the comfort what God does for his church in general (v. 11): "*Let Mount Zion rejoice,* the priests Levites that attend the sanctuary, and the *let all the daughters of Judah,* the count towns, and the inhabitants of them, be glad let the women in their songs and dances, usual on occasion of public joys, celebrate with thankfulness the great salvation which God has wrought for us." Note, When we have given God the praise we may then take the pleasure of the extraordinary deliverance of the church, and be glad because of God's judgments (that is, the operations of his providence), all which we may see wrought in wisdom (therefore called judgments) and working for the good of his church.

VI. Let us diligently observe the instances and evidences of the church's beauty, strength and safety, and faithfully transmit our observations to those that shall come after (v. 12, 13): *Walk about Zion.* Some think this refers to the ceremony of the triumph; but those who are employed in that solemnity walk round the walls (as they did, Neh. xii. 3) singing and praising God. In doing this *let them tell the towers and mark well the bulwarks.* 1. That they might magnify the late wonderful deliverance God had wrought for them. Let them observe, with wonder, that the towers and bulwarks are all in their full strength and none of them damaged, the places in their beauty and none of them blemished; there is not the least damage done to the city by the kings that were assembled against it (v. 4): *Tell this to the generation following,* as a wonderful instance of God's care of his holy city, that the enemies should not only not ruin or destroy it, but not so much as hurt or deface it. 2. That they might fortify themselves against the fear of the like threatening danger another time. And so, (1.) We may understand it literally of Jerusalem, and the strong-hold of Zion. Let the daughters of Judah see the towers and bulwarks of Zion with a pleasure equal to the terror with which the kings their enemies saw them, v. 5. Jerusalem was generally looked upon as an impregnable place, as appears, Lam. iv. 12. *Let the inhabitants of the world would not have believed that an enemy should enter the gates of Jerusalem;* nor could they have entered if the inhabitants had not sinned away their defence. *Set your heart to her bulwarks.* This intimates that the principal bulwarks of Zion were not the objects of sense, which the enemy might set their eye upon, but the objects of faith, which they must set their hearts upon. It was well enough fortified indeed both by

ature and art; but its bulwarks that were mostly to be relied upon were the special presence of God in it, the beauty of holiness he had put upon it, and the promises he had made concerning it. "Consider Jerusalem's strength, and tell it to the generations to come, that they may do nothing to weaken it, and that, if at any time it be in distress, they may not basely surrender it to the enemy as not able." Calvin observes here that when they are directed to transmit to posterity a particular account of the towers, and bulwarks, and palaces of Jerusalem, it is intimated that in process of time they would all be destroyed and remain no longer to be seen; or, otherwise, what need was there to preserve the description and history of them? Then the disciples were admiring the buildings of the temple their Master told them that a little time one stone of it should not be left upon another, Matt. xxiv. 1, 2. Therefore, (1.) This must certainly be applied to the gospel church, that Mount Zion, Heb. xii. 22. Consider the towers, and bulwarks, and palaces of that, that you may be invited and encouraged to join yourselves to it and embark in it. See it founded on Christ, the rock fortified by the divine power, guarded by him that neither slumbers nor sleeps. See what precious ordinances are its palaces, what precious promises are its bulwarks; tell this to the generation following, that they may with purpose of heart espouse its interests and leave to it."

VII. Let us triumph in God, and in the assurances we have of his everlasting loving-kindness, v. 14. Tell this to the generation following; transmit this truth as a sacred deposit to your posterity, That *this God*, who as now done such great things for us, is *our God for ever and ever*; he is constant and unchangeable in his love to us and care for us. 1. If God be our God, he is ours for ever, not only through all the ages of time, but to eternity; for it is the everlasting blessedness of glorified saints that *God himself will be with them and will be their God*, Rev. xxi. 3. 2. If he be our God, *he will be our guide*, our faithful constant guide, to show us our way and to lead us in it; he will be so, *even unto death*, which will be the period of our day, and will bring us to our rest. He will lead and keep us even to the last. He will be our guide *above death* (so some); he will guide us as to set us above the reach of death, so that it shall not be able to do us any real hurt. He will be our guide *beyond death* (so others); he will conduct us safely to a happiness on the other side death, to a life in which there shall be no more death. If we take the Lord for our God, he will conduct and convey us safely to death, through death, and beyond death—down to death and up again to glory.

PSALM XLIX.

This psalm is a sermon; and so is the next. In most of the psalms we have the psalmist praying or praising; in these we have him preaching; and it is our duty, in singing psalms, to teach and

admonish ourselves and one another. The scope and design of this discourse is to convince the men of this world of their sin and folly in setting their hearts upon the things of this world, and so to persuade them to seek the things of a better world, as also to comfort the people of God, in reference to their own troubles and the grief that arises from the prosperity of the wicked. 1. In the preface he proposes to awaken worldly people out of their security (ver. 1—3) and to comfort himself and other godly people in a day of distress, ver. 4, 5. II. In the rest of the psalm, I. He endeavours to convince sinners of their folly in doting upon the wealth of this world, by showing them, (1.) That they cannot, with all their wealth, save their friends from death, ver. 6—9. (2.) They cannot save themselves from death, ver. 10. (3.) They cannot secure to themselves a happiness in this world, ver. 11, 12. Much less, (4.) Can they secure to themselves a happiness in the other world, ver. 14. 2. He endeavours to comfort himself and other good people, (1.) Against the fear of death, ver. 15. (2.) Against the fear of the prospering power of wicked people, ver. 16—20. In singing this psalm let us receive these instructions, and be wise.

To the chief musician. A psalm for the sons of Korah.

HEAR this, all ye people; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world: 2 Both low and high, rich and poor, together. 3 My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding. 4 I will incline mine ear to a parable: I will open my dark saying upon the harp. 5 Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?

This is the psalmist's preface to his discourse concerning the vanity of the world and its insufficiency to make us happy; and we seldom meet with an introduction more solemn than this is; for there is no truth of more undoubted certainty, nor of greater weight and importance, and the consideration of which will be of more advantage to us.

I. He demands the attention of others to that which he was about to say (v. 1, 2): *Hear this, all you people*; hear it and heed it, hear it and consider it; what is spoken once, hear twice. *Hear and give ear*, lxii. 9, 11. Not only, "Hear, all you Israelites, and give ear all the inhabitants of Canaan," but, *Hear, all you people, and give ear, all you inhabitants of the world*; for this doctrine is not peculiar to those that are blessed with divine revelation, but even the light of nature witnesses to it. All men may know, and therefore let all men consider, that their riches will not profit them in the day of death. *Both low and high, both rich and poor*, must come together, to hear the word of God; let both therefore hear this with application. Let those that are high and rich in the world hear of the vanity of their worldly possessions and not be proud of them, nor secure in the enjoyment of them, but lay them out in doing good, that with them they may make to themselves friends; let those that are poor and low hear this and be content with their little, and not envy those that have abundance. Poor people are as much in danger from an inordinate desire towards the wealth of the world as rich people from an inordinate delight in it. He gives a good reason why his discourse should be regarded

(v. 3): *My mouth shall speak of wisdom*; what he had to say, 1. Was true and good. It is wisdom and understanding; it will make those wise and intelligent that receive it and submit to it. It is not doubtful but certain, not trivial but weighty, not a matter of nice speculation but of admirable use to guide us in the right way to our great end. 2. It was what he had himself well digested. What his mouth spoke was the *meditation of his heart* (as xix. 14; xlv. 1); it was what God put into his mind, what he had himself seriously considered, and was fully apprized of the meaning of and convinced of the truth of. That which ministers speak from their own hearts is most likely to reach the hearts of their hearers.

II. He engages his own attention (v. 4): *I will incline my ear to a parable*. It is called a *parable*, not because it is figurative and obscure, but because it is a wise discourse and very instructive. It is the same word that is used concerning Solomon's proverbs. The psalmist will himself incline his ear to it. This intimates, 1. That he was taught it by the Spirit of God and did not speak of himself. Those that undertake to teach others must first learn themselves. 2. That he thought himself nearly concerned in it; and was resolved not to venture his own soul upon that bottom which he dissuaded others from venturing theirs upon. 3. That he would not expect others should attend to that which he himself did not attend to as a matter of the greatest importance. Where God gives the tongue of the learned he first wakens the ear to hear as the learned, Isa. l. 4.

III. He promises to make the matter as plain and as affecting as he could: *I will open my dark saying upon the harp*. What he learned for himself he would not conceal or confine to himself, but would communicate, for the benefit of others. 1. Some understood it not; it was a riddle to them; tell them of the vanity of the things that are seen, and of the reality and weight of invisible things, and they say, *Ah Lord God! doth he not speak parables?* For the sake of such, he would open this dark saying, and make it so plain that he that runs might read it. 2. Others understood it well enough, but they were not moved by it, it never affected them, and for their sake he would open it upon the harp, and try that expedient to work upon them, to win upon them. *A verse may find him who a sermon flies*. Herbert.

IV. He begins with the application of it to himself, and that is the right method in which to treat of divine things. We must first preach to ourselves before we undertake to admonish or instruct others. Before he comes to set down the folly of carnal security (v. 6), he here lays down, from his own experience, the benefit and comfort of a holy gracious security, which those enjoy who trust in God, and not in their worldly wealth: *Wherefore should I fear?* he means, *Where-*

fore should I fear their fear (Isa. viii. 12), the fears of worldly people. 1. "Wherefore should I be afraid of them? Wherefore should I fear in the days of trouble and persecution when the iniquity of my heels, or of my supplanters that endeavour to trip up my heels shall compass me about, and they shall surround me with their mischievous attempts? Why should I be afraid of those all whose power lies in their wealth, which will not enable them to redeem their friends? I will not fear their power, for it cannot enable them to run me." The great men of the world will not appear at all formidable when we consider what little stead their wealth will stand them in. We need not fear their casting us down from our excellency who cannot support themselves in their own excellency. 2. "Wherefore should I be afraid like them? The days of old age and death are the days of evil, Eccl. xii. 1. In the day of judgment the iniquity of our heels (or of our steps, our past sins) will compass us about, will be set in order before us. Every work will be brought into judgment, with every secret thing; and every one of us must give account of himself. In these days worldly wicked people will be afraid; nothing more dreadful to those that have set their hearts upon the world than to think of leaving it; death to them is the king of terrors, because, after death, comes the judgment, when their sins will surround them as so many furies; but wherefore should a good man fear death, who has God with him? xiii. 4. When his iniquities compass him about, he sees them all pardoned, his conscience is purified and pacified, and then even in the judgment day, when the hearts of others fail them for fear, he can lift up his head with joy, Luke xxi. 26, 28. Note, The children of God, though ever so poor, are in this truly happy, above the most prosperous of the children of this world, that they are well guarded against the terrors of death and the judgment to come.

6 They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; 7 None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: 8 (For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever): 9 That he should still live for ever, and not see corruption. 10 For he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others. 11 Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names. 12 Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that

perish. 13. This their way is their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings. Selah. 14. Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling.

In these verses we have,

I. A description of the spirit and way of worldly people, whose portion is in this life, *eccl.* 14. It is taken for granted that they have wealth, and a multitude of riches (*v.* 6), houses and lands of inheritance, which they call their own, *v.* 11. God often gives abundance of the good things of this world to bad men who live in contempt of him and rebellion against him, by which it appears that they are not the best things in themselves (for then God would give most of them to his best friends), and that they are not the best things for us, for then those would not have so much of them who, being marked for ruin, are to be ripened for it by their prosperity, *Prov.* i. 32. A man may have abundance of the wealth of this world and be made better by it, may thereby have his heart enlarged in love, and thankfulness, and obedience, and may do that good with it which will be fruit abounding to his account; and therefore it is not men's having riches that denominates them worldly, but their setting their hearts upon them as the best things; and so these worldly people are here described. 1. They repose a confidence in their riches: *They trust in their wealth* (*v.* 6); they depend upon it as their portion and happiness, and expect that it will secure them from all evil and supply them with all good, and that they need nothing else, no, not God himself. Their gold is their hope (*Job* xxxi. 24), and so it becomes their God. Thus our Saviour explains the difficulty of the salvation of rich people (*Mark* x. 24): *How hard is it for those that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!* See *1 Tim.* vi. 17. 2. They take a pride in their riches: *They boast themselves in the multitude of them*, as if they were sure tokens of God's favour and certain proofs of their own ingenuity and industry (*my might, and the power of my hand, have gotten me this wealth*), as if they made them truly great and happy, and more really excellent than their neighbours. They boast that they have all they would have (*x.* 3) and can set all the world at defiance (*I sit as a queen, and shall be a lady for ever*); therefore they call their lands after their own names; hoping thereby to perpetuate their memory; and, if their lands do retain the names by which they called them, it is but a poor honour; but they often change their names when they change their owners. 3. They flatter themselves with an expectation of the perpetuity of their worldly possessions (*v.* 11):

Their inward thought is that their houses shall continue for ever, and with this thought they please themselves. Are not all thoughts inward? Yes; but it intimates, (1.) That this thought is deeply rooted in their minds, is rolled and revolved there, and carefully lodged in the innermost recesses of their hearts. A godly man has thoughts of the world, but they are his outward thoughts; his inward thought is reserved for God and heavenly things; but a worldly man has only some floating foreign thoughts of the things of God, while his fixed thought, his inward thought, is about the world; that lies nearest his heart, and is upon the throne there. (2.) There it is industriously concealed. They cannot, for shame, say that they expect their houses to continue for ever, but inwardly they think so. If they cannot persuade themselves that they shall continue for ever, yet they are so foolish as to think *their houses* shall, and their dwelling-places; and suppose they should, what good will that do them when they shall be no longer theirs? But they will not; for the world passes away, and the fashion of it. All things are devoured by the teeth of time.

II. A demonstration of their folly herein. In general (*v.* 13), *This their way is their folly*. Note, The way of worldliness is a very foolish way: those that lay up their treasure on earth, and set their affections on things below, act contrary both to right reason and to their true interest. God himself pronounced him a fool who thought his goods were laid up for many years, and that they would be a portion for his soul, *Luke* xii. 19, 20. And yet their posterity approve their sayings, agree with them in the same sentiments, say as they say and do as they do, and tread in the steps of their worldliness. Note, The love of the world is a disease that runs in the blood; men have it by kind, till the grace of God cures it. To prove the folly of carnal worldlings he shows,

1. That with all their wealth they cannot save the life of the dearest friend they have in the world, nor purchase a reprieve for him when he is under the arrest of death (*v.* 7—9): *None of them can by any means redeem his brother*, his brother worldling, who would give him counter-security out of his own estate, if he would but be bail for him: and gladly he would, in hopes that he might do the same kindness for him another time. But their words will not be taken one for another, nor will one man's estate be the ransom of another man's life. God does not value it; it is of no account with him; and the true value of things is as they stand in his books. His justice will not accept it by way of commutation or equivalent. The Lord of our brother's life is the Lord of our estate, and may take both if he please, without either difficulty to himself or wrong to us; and therefore one cannot be ransom for another. We cannot bribe death, that our

brother should still live, much less that he should live for ever, in this world, nor bribe the grave, that he should not see corruption; for we must needs die, and return to the dust, and there is no discharge from that war. What folly is it to trust to that, and boast of that, which will not enable us so much as for one hour to respite the execution of the sentence of death upon a parent, a child, or a friend that is to us as our own soul! It is certainly true that *the redemption of the soul is precious and ceaseth for ever*; that is, life, when it is going, cannot be arrested, and when it is gone it cannot be recalled, by any human art, or worldly price. But this looks further, to the eternal redemption which was to be wrought out by the Messiah, whom the Old-Testament saints had an eye to as the Redeemer. Everlasting life is a jewel of too great a value to be purchased by the wealth of this world. We are *not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold*, 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. The learned Dr. Hammond applies the 8th and 9th verses expressly to Christ: "*The redemption of the soul shall be precious, shall be high-priced, it shall cost very dear; but, being once wrought, it shall cease for ever, it shall never need to be repeated*, Heb. ix. 25, 26; x. 12. And he (that is, the Redeemer) *shall yet live for ever, and shall not see corruption*; he shall rise again before he sees corruption, and then shall live for evermore," Rev. i. 18. Christ did that for us which all the riches of the world could not do; well therefore may he be dearer to us than any worldly things. Christ did that for us which a brother, a friend, could not do for us, no, not one of the best estate or interest; and therefore those that *love father or brother more than him are not worthy of him*. This likewise shows the folly of worldly people, who sell their souls for that which would never buy them.

2. That with all their wealth they cannot secure themselves from the stroke of death. The worldling sees, and it vexes him to see it, that *wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish*, v. 10. Therefore he cannot but expect that it will, at length, come to his own turn; he cannot find any encouragement to hope that he himself shall continue for ever, and therefore foolishly comforts himself with this, that, though he shall not, his house shall. Some rich people are wise, they are politicians, but they cannot out-wit death, nor evade his stroke, with all their art and management; others are fools and brutish (*Fortuna favet fatuis—Fools are Fortune's favourites*); these, though they do no good, yet perhaps do no great hurt in the world: but that shall not excuse them; they shall perish, and be taken away by death, as well as the wise that did mischief with their craft. Or by the wise and the foolish we may understand the godly and the wicked; the godly die, and their death is their deliverance; the wicked perish, and their death is

their destruction; but, however, they leave their wealth to others. (1.) They can continue with it, nor will it serve to procure them a reprieve. That is a frivolous pleasure, though once it served a turn (Jer. xlii. 17). *Slay us not, for we have treasures in the firmament*. (2.) They cannot carry it away with them, but must leave it behind them. (3.) They cannot foresee who will enjoy it when they have left it; they must leave it to others, but to whom they know not, perhaps a fool (Eccl. ii. 19), perhaps to an enemy.

3. That, as their wealth will stand them no stead in a dying hour, so neither will it honour (v. 12): *Man, being in honour, abideth not*. We will suppose a man advanced to the highest pinnacle of preferment, as great and happy as the world can make him, in splendour, man at his best estate, surrounded and supported with all the advantages he can desire; yet then he abides not. His honour does not continue; that is, a fleeting shadow. He himself does not, he carries not all night; this world is an inn, which his stay is so short that he can scarcely be said to get a night's lodging in it; little rest is there in these things; he has but a baiting time. *He is like the beasts that perish*; that is, he must as certainly die as the beasts, and his death will be as final a period to his state in this world as theirs is; his dead body likewise will putrefy as theirs does; and (as Dr. Hammond observes) frequently the greatest honours and wealth, unjustly gotten by the parent, descend not to any one of his posterity (as the beasts, when they die, leave nothing behind them to their young ones, but the wide world to feed in), but fall into other hands immediately, for which he never designed to gather them.

4. That their condition on the other side of death will be very miserable. The wealth they dote upon will not only not save them from death, but will sink them so much the lower into hell (v. 14): *Like sheep they are laid in the grave*. Their prosperity did but feed them like sheep for the slaughter (Heb. iv. 16), and then death comes, and shuts them up in the grave like fat sheep in a fold, *to be brought forth to the day of wrath*, Job xxi. 30. Multitudes of them, like flocks of sheep dead of some disease, are thrown into the grave, and there death shall feed on them the second death, *the worm that dies not*, Job xxiv. 20. Their own guilty consciences, like so many vultures, shall be continually preying upon them, with, *Son, remember*, Luk. xvi. 25. Death insults and triumphs over them, as it is represented in the fall of the king of Babylon, at which *hell from beneath is moved*, Isa. xiv. 9, &c. While a saint can ask proud Death, *Where is thy sting?* Death will ask the proud sinner, *Where is thy wealth thy pomp?* and the more he was fattened with prosperity the more sweetly will death feed on him. And in the morning of the resurrection, when all that sleep in the du-

shall awake (Dan. xii. 2), *the upright shall have dominion over them*, shall not only be advanced to the highest dignity and honour when they are filled with everlasting shame and contempt, elevated to the highest heavens when they are sunk to the lowest hell, but they shall be assessors with Christ in passing judgment upon them, and shall applaud the justice of God in their ruin. When the rich man in hell begged that Lazarus might bring him a drop of water to cool his tongue he owned that that upright man had dominion over him, as the foolish virgins also owned the dominion of the wise, and that they lay much at their mercy, when they begged, *Give us of your oil*. Let this comfort us in reference to the oppressions which the upright are now often groaning under, and the dominion which the wicked have over them. The day is coming when the tables will be turned (Esther ix. 1) and the upright will have the dominion. Let us now judge of things as they will appear at that day. But what will become of all the beauty of the wicked? Alas! that shall all be *consumed in the grave from their dwelling*; all that upon which they valued themselves, and for which others caressed and admired them, was advertisement and borrowed; it was paint and varnish, and they will rise in their own native deformity. The beauty of holiness is that which the grave, that consumes all other beauty, cannot touch, or do any damage to. Their beauty shall consume, the grave (or hell) being a habitation to every one of them; and what beauty can be there where there is nothing but the blackness of darkness forever?

15 But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me. Selah. 16 Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased; 17 For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him. 18 Though while he lived he blessed his soul: and men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself. 19 He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light. 20 Man *that is* in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.

Good reason is here given to good people, I. Why they should not be afraid of death. There is no cause for that fear if they have such a comfortable prospect as David here has of a happy state on the other side death, v. 15. He had shown (v. 14) how miserable the dead are that die in their sins, where he shows how blessed the dead are that die in the Lord. The distinction of men's outward condition, how great a difference soever it

makes in life, makes none at death; rich and poor meet in the grave. But the distinction of men's spiritual state, though, in this life, it makes a small difference, where all things come alike to all, yet, at and after death, it makes a very great one. *Now he is comforted, and thou art tormented*. The righteous has hope in his death, so has David here hope in God concerning his soul. Note, The believing hopes of the soul's redemption from the grave, and reception to glory, are the great support and joy of the children of God in a dying hour. They hope,

1. That God will redeem their souls from the power of the grave, which includes, (1.) The preserving of the soul from going to the grave with the body. The grave has a power over the body, by virtue of the sentence (Gen. iii. 19), and it is cruel enough in executing that power (Cant. viii. 6); but it has no such power over the soul. It has power to silence, and imprison, and consume the body; but the soul then moves, and acts, and converses, more freely than ever (Rev. vi. 9, 10); it is immaterial and immortal. When death breaks the dark lantern, yet it does not extinguish the candle that was pent up in it. (2.) The reuniting of the soul and body at the resurrection. The soul is often put for the life; that indeed falls under the power of the grave for a time, but it shall, at length, be redeemed from it, when *mortality shall be swallowed up of life*. The God of life, that was its Creator at first, can and will be its Redeemer at last. (3.) The salvation of the soul from eternal ruin: "*God shall redeem my soul from the sheol of hell* (v. 15), the wrath to come, that pit of destruction into which the wicked shall be cast," v. 14. It is a great comfort to dying saints that they shall not be hurt of the second death (Rev. ii. 11), and therefore the first death has no sting and the grave no victory.

2. That he will receive them to himself. He redeems their souls, that he may receive them. Ps. xxxi. 5, *Into thy hands I commit my spirit, for thou hast redeemed it*. He will receive them into his favour, will admit them into his kingdom, into the mansions that are prepared for them (John xiv. 2, 3), those everlasting habitations, Luke xvi. 9.

II. Why they should not be afraid of the prosperity and power of wicked people in this world, which, as it is their pride and joy, has often been the envy, and grief, and terror of the righteous, which yet, all things considered, there is no reason for.

1. He supposes the temptation very strong to envy the prosperity of sinners, and to be afraid that they will carry all before them with a high hand, that with their wealth and interest they will run down religion and religious people, and that they will be found the truly happy people; for he supposes, (1.) That they are made rich, and so are enabled to give law to all about them and have every thing at command. *Pecunia*

shall come in flaming fire, 2 Thess. i. 8. See Dan. vii. 9; Heb. x. 27. 4. That as on Mount Sinai he came with *ten thousands of his saints*, so he shall now call to the heavens from above, to take notice of this solemn process (v. 4), as Moses often called heaven and earth to witness against Israel (Deut. iv. 26, xxxii. 28, xxxii. 1), and God by his prophets, Isa. i. 2; Mic. vi. 2. The equity of the judgment of the great day will be attested and applauded by heaven and earth, by saints and angels, even all the holy myriads.

III. The parties summoned (v. 5): *Gather my saints together unto me*. This may be understood either, 1. Of saints indeed: "Let them be gathered to God through Christ; let the few pious Israelites be set by themselves;" for to them the following denunciations of wrath do not belong; rebukes to hypocrites ought not to be terrors to the upright. When God will reject the services of those that only offered sacrifice, resting in the outside of the performance, he will graciously accept those who, in sacrificing, *make a covenant with him*, and so attend to and answer the end of the institution of sacrifices. The design of the preaching of the gospel, and the setting up of Christ's kingdom, was to gather together in one the children of God, John xi. 52. And at the second coming of Jesus Christ all his saints shall be gathered together unto him (2 Thess. ii. 1) to be assessors with him in the judgment; for *the saints shall judge the world*, 1 Cor. vi. 2. Now it is here given as a character of the saints that they have made a covenant with God by sacrifice. Note, (1.) Those only shall be gathered to God as his saints who have, in sincerity, covenanted with him, who have taken him to be their God and given up themselves to him to be his people, and thus have joined themselves unto the Lord. (2.) It is only by sacrifice, by Christ the great sacrifice (from whom all the legal sacrifices derived what value they had), that we poor sinners can covenant with God so as to be accepted of him. There must be an atonement made for the breach of the first covenant before we can be admitted again into covenant. Or, 2. It may be understood of saints in profession, such as the people of Israel were, who are called a *kingdom of priests and a holy nation*, Exod. xix. 6. They were, as a body politic, taken into covenant with God, the covenant of peculiarity; and it was done with great solemnity, by sacrifice, Exod. xxiv. 8. "Let them come and hear what God has to say to them; let them receive the reproofs God sends them now by his prophets, and the gospel he will, in due time, send them by his Son, which shall supersede the ceremonial law. If these be slighted, let them expect to hear from God another way, and to be judged by that word which they will not be ruled by."

IV. The issue of this solemn trial foretold (v. 6): *The heavens shall declare his righteousness*, those heavens that were called to be

witnesses to the trial (v. 4); *the people in heaven shall say, Hallelujah*. True and righteous are his judgments, Rev. xix. 1, 2. The righteousness of God in all the rebukes of his word and providence, in the establishment of his gospel (which brings in an everlasting righteousness, and in which the righteousness of God is revealed), and especially in the judgment of the great day, is what the heavens will declare; that is, 1. It will be universally known, and proclaimed to all the world. *As the heavens declare the glory, the wisdom and power, of God the Creator* (xix. 1), so they shall no less openly declare the glory, the justice and righteousness, of God the Judge; and so loudly do they proclaim both that *there is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard*, as it follows there, v. 3. 2. It will be incontestably owned and proved; who can deny what the heavens declare? Even sinners' own consciences will subscribe to it, and hell as well as heaven will be forced to acknowledge the righteousness of God. The reason given is, *for God is Judge himself*, and therefore, (1.) He will be just; for it is impossible he should do any wrong to any of his creatures, he never did, nor ever will. When men are employed to judge for him they may do unjustly; but, when he is Judge himself, there can be no injustice done. *Is God unrighteous, who takes vengeance?* The apostle, for this reason, startles at the thought of it; *God forbid!* for then how shall God judge the world? Rom. iii. 5, 6. These decisions will be perfectly just, for against them there will lie no exception, and from them there will lie no appeal. (2.) He will be justified; *God is Judge*, and therefore he will not only execute justice, but he will oblige all to own it; for he will be clear when he judges, li. 4.

7 Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: *I am God, even thy God*. 8 I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, *to have been* continually before me. 9 I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds. 10 For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. 11 I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. 12 If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. 13 Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? 14 Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most high: 15 And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

God is here dealing with those that placed all their religion in the observances of the ceremonial law, and thought those sufficient.

I. He lays down the original contract between him and Israel, in which they had avouched him to be their God, and he them to be his people, and so both parties were agreed (v. 7): *Hear, O my people! and I will speak*. Note, It is justly expected that whatever others do, when he speaks, his people should give ear; who will, if they do not? And then we may comfortably expect that God will speak to us when we are ready to hear what he says; even when he testifies against us in the rebukes and threatenings of his word and providences we must be forward to hear what he says, to hear even *the rod and him that has appointed it*.

II. He puts a slight upon the legal sacrifices, v. 8, &c. Now,

1. This may be considered as looking back to the use of these under the law. God had a controversy with the Jews; but what was the ground of the controversy? Not their neglect of the ceremonial institutions; no, they had not been wanting in the observance of them, their burnt-offerings had been continually before God, they took a pride in them, and hoped by their offerings to procure a dispensation for their lusts, as the adulterous woman, Prov. vii. 14. Their constant sacrifices, they thought, would both expiate and excuse their neglect of the weightier matters of the law. Nay, if they had, in some degree, neglected these institutions, yet that should not have been the cause of God's quarrel with them, for it was but a small offence in comparison with the immoralities of their conversation. They thought God was mightily beholden to them for the many sacrifices they had brought to his altar, and that they had made him very much their debtor by them, as if he could not have maintained his numerous family of priests without their contributions; but God here shows them the contrary, (1.) That he did not need their sacrifices. What occasion had he for their bullocks and goats who has the command of all *the beasts of the forest*, and the *cattle upon a thousand hills* (v. 9, 10), has an incontestable propriety in them and dominion over them, has them all always under his eye and within his reach, and can make what use he pleases of them; they all wait on him, and are all at his disposal? civ. 27—29. Can we add any thing to his store whose all the wild fowl and wild beasts are, the world itself and the fulness thereof? v. 11, 12. God's infinite self-sufficiency proves our utter insufficiency to add any thing to him. (2.) That he could not be benefited by their sacrifices. Their goodness, of this kind, could not possibly extend to him, nor, if they were in this matter righteous, was he the better (v. 13): *Will I eat the flesh of bulls?* It is as absurd to think that their sacrifices could, of themselves, and by virtue of any innate

excellency in them, add any pleasure or praise to God, as it would be to imagine that an infinite Spirit could be supported by meat and drink, as our bodies are. It is said indeed of the demons whom the Gentiles worshipped that they did *eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drink the wine of their drink-offerings* (Deut. xxxii. 38): they regaled themselves in the homage they robbed the true God of; but will the great Jehovah be thus entertained? No; *to obey is better than sacrifice*, and to love God and our neighbour *better than all burnt-offerings*, so much better that God by his prophets often told them that their sacrifices were not only not acceptable, but abominable, to him, while they lived in sin; instead of pleasing him, he looked upon them as a mockery, and therefore an affront and provocation to him; see Prov. xv. 8; Isa. i. 11, &c.; lxvi. 3; Jer. vi. 20; Amos v. 21. They are therefore here warned not to rest in these performances; but to conduct themselves, in all other instances, towards God as their God.

2. This may be considered as looking forward to the abolishing of these by the gospel of Christ. Thus Dr. Hammond understands it. When God shall set up the kingdom of the Messiah he shall abolish the old way of worship by sacrifice and offerings; he will no more have those to be *continually before him* (v. 8); he will no more require of his worshippers to bring him their bullocks and their goats, to be burnt upon his altar, v. 9. For indeed he never appointed this as that which he had any need of, or took any pleasure in, for, besides that all we have is his already, he has far more beasts in the forest and upon the mountains, which we know nothing of nor have any property in, than we have in our folds; but he instituted it to prefigure the great sacrifice which his own Son should in the fulness of time offer upon the cross, to make atonement for sin, and all the other spiritual sacrifices of acknowledgment with which God, through Christ, will be well pleased.

III. He directs to the best sacrifices of prayer and praise as those which, under the law, were preferred before all burnt-offerings and sacrifices, and on which then the greatest stress was laid, and which now, under the gospel, come in the room of those carnal ordinances which were imposed until the times of reformation. He shows us here (v. 14, 15) what is good, and what the Lord our God requires of us, and will accept, when sacrifices are slighted and superseded. 1. We must make a penitent acknowledgment of our sins. *Offer to God confession*, so some read it, and understand it of the confession of sin, in order to our giving glory to God and taking shame to ourselves, that we may never return to it. *A broken and contrite heart* is the sacrifice which *God will not despise*, li. 17. If the sin was not abandoned the sin-offering was not accepted. 2. We must give God

thanks for his mercies to us: *Offer to God thanksgiving, every day, often every day (seven times a day will I praise thee), and upon special occasions; and this shall please the Lord, if it come from a humble thankful heart, full of love to him and joy in him, better than an ox or bullock that has horns and hoofs, lxix. 30, 31.*

3. We must make conscience of performing our covenants with him: *Pay thy vows to the Most High, forsake thy sins, and do thy duty better, pursuant to the solemn promises thou hast made him to that purpose.* When we give God thanks for any mercy we have received we must be sure to pay the vows we made to him when we were in the pursuit of the mercy, else our thanksgivings will not be accepted. Dr. Hammond applies this to the great gospel ordinance of the eucharist, in which we are to give thanks to God for his great love in sending his Son to save us, and to pay our vows of love and duty to him, and to give alms. Instead of all the Old-Testament types of a Christ to come, we have that blessed memorial of a Christ already come. 4. In the day of distress we must address ourselves to God by faithful and fervent prayer (v. 15): *Call upon me in the day of trouble, and not upon any other god.* Our troubles, though we see them coming from God's hand, must drive us to him, and not drive us from him. We must thus acknowledge him in all our ways, depend upon his wisdom, power, and goodness, and refer ourselves entirely to him, and so give him glory. This is a cheaper, easier, readier way of seeking his favour than by a peace-offering, and yet more acceptable. 5. When he, in answer to our prayers, delivers us, as he has promised to do in such way and time as he shall think fit, we must glorify him, not only by a grateful mention of his favour, but by living to his praise. Thus must we keep up our communion with God, meeting him with our prayers when he afflicts us and with our praises when he delivers us.

16 But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or *that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth?* 17 Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee. 18 When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers. 19 Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. 20 Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son. 21 These *things* hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether *such a one* as thyself: *but* I will reprove thee, and set *them* in order before thine eyes. 22 Now

consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear *you* in pieces, and *there be none* to deliver. 23 Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth *his* conversation *aright* will I show the salvation of God.

God, by the psalmist, having instructed his people in the right way of worshipping him and keeping up their communion with him, here directs his speech to the wicked, to hypocrites, whether they were such as professed the Jewish or the Christian religion: hypocrisy is wickedness for which God will judge. Observe here,

1. The charge drawn up against them. 1. They are charged with invading and usurping the honours and privileges of religion (v. 16): *What hast thou to do, O wicked man! to declare my statutes?* This is a challenge to those that are really profane, but seemingly godly, to show what title they have to the cloak of religion, and by what authority they wear it, when they use it only to cover and conceal the abominable impieties of their hearts and lives. Let them make out their claim to it if they can. Some think it points prophetically at the scribes and Pharisees that were the teachers and leaders of the Jewish church at the time when the kingdom of the Messiah, and that evangelical way of worship spoken of in the foregoing verses, were to be set up. They violently opposed that great revolution, and used all the power and interest which they had by sitting in Moses's seat to hinder it; but the account which our blessed Saviour gives of them (Matt. xxiii.), and St. Paul (Rom. ii. 21, 22), makes this expostulation here agree very well to them. They took on them to declare God's statutes, but they hated Christ's instruction; and therefore what had they to do to expound the law, when they rejected the gospel? But it is applicable to all those that are practisers of iniquity, and yet professors of piety, especially if withal they be preachers of it. Note, It is very absurd in itself, and a great affront to the God of heaven, for those that are wicked and ungodly to declare his statutes and to take his covenant in their mouths. It is very possible, and too common, for those that declare God's statutes to others to live in disobedience to them themselves, and for those that take God's covenant in their mouths yet in their hearts to continue their covenant with sin and death; but they are guilty of a usurpation, they take to themselves an honour which they have no title to, and there is a day coming when they will be thrust out as intruders. *Friend, how camest thou in hither?* 2. They are charged with transgressing and violating the laws and precepts of religion. (1.) They are charged with a daring contempt of the word of God (v. 17): *Thou hatest instruction.* They loved to give instruction, and to tell

others what they should do, for this fed their pride and made them look great, and by this craft they got their living; but they hated to receive instruction from God himself, for that would be a check upon them and a mortification to them. "Thou hatest discipline, the reproofs of the word and the rebukes of Providence." No wonder that those who hate to be reformed hate the means of reformation. *Thou castest my words behind thee.* They seemed to set God's words before them, when they sat in Moses's seat, and undertook to teach others out of the law (Rom. ii. 19); but in their conversations they cast God's word behind them, and did not care for seeing that rule which they were resolved not to be ruled by. This is despising the commandment of the Lord. (2.) A close confederacy with the worst of sinners (v. 18): "*When thou sawest a thief, instead of reproofing him and witnessing against him, as those should do that declare God's statutes, thou consentedst with him, didst approve of his practices, and desire to be a partner with him and to share in the profits of his cursed trade; and thou hast been partaker with adulterers, hast done as they did, and encouraged them to go on in their wicked courses, hast done these things and hast had pleasure in those that do them,*" Rom. i. 32. (3.) A constant persisting in the worst of tongue-sins (v. 19): "*Thou givest thy mouth to evil, not only allowest thyself in, but addictest thyself wholly to, all manner of evil-speaking.*" [1.] Lying: *Thy tongue frames deceit*, which denotes contrivance and deliberation in lying. *It knits or links deceit*, so some. One lie begets another, and one fraud requires another to cover it. [2.] Slandering (v. 20): "*Thou sittest, and speakest against thy brother, dost basely abuse and misrepresent him, magisterially judge and censure him, and pass sentence upon him, as if thou wert his master to whom he must stand or fall, whereas he is thy brother, as good as thou art, and upon the level with thee, for he is thy own mother's son. He is thy near relation, whom thou oughtest to love, to vindicate, and stand up for, if others abused him; yet thou dost thyself abuse him, whose faults thou oughtest to cover and make the best of; if really he had done amiss, yet thou dost most falsely and unjustly charge him with that which he is innocent of; thou sittest and doest this, as a judge upon the bench, with authority; thou sittest in the seat of the scornful, to deride and backbite those whom thou oughtest to respect and be kind to.*" Those that do ill themselves commonly delight in speaking ill of others.

II. The proof of this charge (v. 21): "*These things thou hast done; the fact is too plain to be denied, the fault too bad to be excuse*;" these things God knows, and thy own heart knows, thou hast done." The sins of sinners will be proved upon them, beyond contradiction, in the judgment of the great day: "I

will reprove thee, or convince thee, so that thou shalt have not one word to say for thyself." The day is coming when impenitent sinners will have their mouths forever stopped and be struck speechless. What confusion will they be filled with when God shall set their sins in order before their eyes! They would not see their sins to their humiliation, but cast them behind their backs, covered them, and endeavoured to forget them, nor would they suffer their own consciences to put them in mind of them; but the day is coming when God will make them see their sins to their everlasting shame and terror; he will set them in order, original sin, actual sins, sins against the law, sins against the gospel, against the first table, against the second table, sins of childhood and youth, of riper age, and old age. He will set them in order, as the witnesses are set in order, and called in order, against the criminal, and asked what they have to say against him.

III. The Judge's patience, and the sinner's abuse of that patience: *I kept silence*, did not give thee any disturbance in thy sinful way, but let thee alone to take thy course; sentence against thy evil works was respited, and not executed speedily." Note, The patience of God is very great towards provoking sinners. He sees their sins and hates them; it would be neither difficulty nor damage to him to punish them, and yet he waits to be gracious and gives them space to repent, that he may render them inexcusable if they repent not. His patience is the more wonderful because the sinner makes such an ill use of it: "*Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself*, as weak and forgetful as thyself, as false to my word as thyself, nay, as much a friend to sin as thyself." Sinners take God's silence for consent and his patience for connivance; and therefore the longer they are reprieved the more are their hearts hardened; but, if they turn not, they shall be made to see their error when it is too late, and that the God they provoke is just, and holy, and terrible, and not such a one as themselves.

IV. The fair warning given of the dreadful doom of hypocrites (v. 22): "*Now consider this, you that forget God*, consider that God knows and keeps account of all your sins, that he will call you to an account for them, that patience abused will turn into the greater wrath, that though you forget God and your duty to him he will not forget you and your rebellions against him: consider this in time, before it be too late; for if these things be not considered, and the consideration of them improved, he will tear you in pieces, and there will be none to deliver." It is the doom of hypocrites to be cut asunder, Matt. xxiv. 51. Note, 1. Forgetfulness of God is at the bottom of all the wickedness of the wicked. Those that know God, and yet do not obey him, do certainly forget him. 2. Those that forget God forget themselves; and it will

never be right with them till they consider, and so recover themselves. Consideration is the first step towards conversion. 3. Those that will not consider the warnings of God's word will certainly be torn in pieces by the executions of his wrath. 4. When God comes to tear sinners in pieces, there is no delivering them out of his hand. They cannot deliver themselves, nor can any friend they have in the world deliver them.

V. Full instructions given to us all how to prevent this fearful doom. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; we have it, v. 23, which directs us what to do that we may attain our chief end. 1. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and we are here told that *whoso offers praise glorifies him*; whether he be Jew or Gentile, those spiritual sacrifices shall be accepted from him. We must praise God, and we must sacrifice praise, direct it to God, as every sacrifice was directed; put it into the hands of the priest, our Lord Jesus, who is also the altar; see that it be made by fire, sacred fire, that it be kindled with the flame of holy and devout affection; we must be fervent in spirit, praising the Lord. This he is pleased, in infinite condescension, to interpret as glorifying him. Hereby we give him the glory due to his name and do what we can to advance the interests of his kingdom among men. 2. Man's chief end, in conjunction with this, is to enjoy God; and we are here told that those who *order their conversation aright shall see his salvation*. (1.) It is not enough for us to offer praise, but we must withal order our conversation aright. Thanksgiving is good, but thanks-living is better. (2.) Those that would have their conversation right must take care and pains to order it, to dispose it according to rule, to understand their way and to direct it. (3.) Those that take care of their conversation make sure their salvation; them God will make to see his salvation, for it is a salvation ready to be revealed; he will make them to see it and enjoy it, to see it, and to see themselves happy for ever in it. Note, The right ordering of the conversation is the only way, and it is a sure way, to obtain the great salvation.

PSALM LI.

Though David penned this psalm upon a very particular occasion, yet it is of general use as any of David's psalms; it is the most eminent of the penitential psalms, and most expressive of the cares and desires of a repenting sinner. It is a pity indeed that in our devout addresses to God we should have any thing else to do than to praise God, for that is the work of heaven; but we make other work for ourselves by our own sins and follies: we must come to the throne of grace in the posture of penitents, to confess our sins and sue for the grace of God; and, if therein we would take with us words, we can nowhere find any more apposite than in this psalm, which is the record of David's repentance for his sin in the matter of Uriah, which was the greatest blemish upon his character: all the rest of his faults were nothing to this; it is said of him (1 Kings xv. 5), That "he turned not aside from the commandment of the Lord all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite." In this psalm, I. He confesses his sin, ver. 3.—6. II. He prays earnestly for the pardon of his sin, ver. 1. 2, 7, 9. III. For peace of conscience, ver. 8, 12. IV. For grace to go and sin no more, ver. 10, 11, 14. V. For liberty of access to God, ver. 15. VI. He promises to do what he could for the good of the souls of others (ver. 13) and for the glory of God, ver. 16, 17, 19. And, lastly, concludes with a prayer for Zion and Jerusalem, ver. 18. Those whose consciences charge them with any gross sin should, with a bolting regard to Jesus Christ, the Mediator, again and

again pray over this psalm; nay, though we have not been guilty of adultery and murder, or any the like enormous crime, yet in singing it, and praying over it, we may very sensibly apply it all to ourselves, which if we do with suitable affections we shall, through Christ, find mercy to pardon and grace for seasonable help.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

HAVE mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. 3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. 4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. 5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. 6 Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden *part* thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

The title has reference to a very sad story, that of David's fall. But, though he fell, he was not utterly cast down, for God graciously upheld him and raised him up. 1. The sin which, in this psalm, he laments, was the folly and wickedness he committed with his neighbour's wife, a sin not to be spoken of, nor thought of, without detestation. His debauching of Bathsheba was the inlet to all the other sins that followed; it was as the letting forth of water. This sin of David's is recorded for warning to all, that he who thinks he stands may take heed lest he fall. 2. The repentance which, in this psalm, he expresses, he was brought to by the ministry of Nathan, who was sent of God to convince him of his sin, after he had continued above nine months (for aught that appears) without any particular expressions of remorse and sorrow for it. But though God may suffer his people to fall into sin, and to lie a great while in it, yet he will, by some means or other, recover them to repentance, bring them to himself and to their right mind again. Herein, generally, he uses the ministry of the word, which yet he is not tied to. But those that have been overtaken in any fault ought to reckon a faithful reproof the greatest kindness that can be done them and a wise reprover their best friend. *Let the righteous smite me, and it shall be excellent oil.* 3. David, being convinced of his sin, poured out his soul to God in prayer for mercy and grace. Whither should backsliding children return, but to the Lord their God, from whom they have backslidden, and who alone can heal their backslidings? 4. He drew up, by divine inspiration, the workings of his heart towards God, upon this occasion

into a psalm, that it might be often repeated, and long after reviewed; and this he committed to the chief musician, to be sung in the public service of the church. (1.) As a profession of his own repentance, which he would have to be generally taken notice of, his sin having been notorious, that the plaster might be as wide as the wound. Those that truly repent of their sins will not be ashamed to own their repentance; but, having lost the honour of innocents, they will rather covet the honour of penitents. (2.) As a pattern to others, both to bring them to repentance by his example and to instruct them in their repentance what to do and what to say. Being converted himself, he thus *strengthens his brethren* (Luke xxii. 32), and *for this cause he obtained mercy*, 1 Tim. i. 16.

In these words we have,

I. David's humble petition, v. 1, 2. His prayer is much the same with that which our Saviour puts into the mouth of his penitent publican in the parable: *God be merciful to me a sinner!* Luke xviii. 13. David was, upon many accounts, a man of great merit; he had not only done much, but suffered much, in the cause of God; and yet, when he is convinced of sin, he does not offer to balance his evil deeds with his good deeds, nor can he think that his services will atone for his offences; but he flies to God's infinite mercy, and depends upon that only for pardon and peace: *Have mercy upon me, O God!* He owns himself obnoxious to God's justice, and therefore casts himself upon his mercy; and it is certain that the best man in the world will be undone if God be not merciful to him. Observe,

1. What his plea is for this mercy. "*Have mercy upon me, O God!* not according to the dignity of my birth, as descended from the prince of the tribe of Judah, not according to my public services as Israel's champion, or my public honours as Israel's king;" his plea is not, *Lord, remember David and all his afflictions, how he vowed to build a place for the ark* (cxxxii. 1, 2); a true penitent will make no mention of any such thing; but "*Have mercy upon me for mercy's sake. I have nothing to plead with thee but,*" (1.) "*The freeness of thy mercy, according to thy lovingkindness, thy clemency, the goodness of thy nature, which inclines thee to pity the miserable.*" (2.) "*The fulness of thy mercy. There are in thee not only lovingkindness and tender mercies, but abundance of them, a multitude of tender mercies for the forgiveness of many sinners, of many sins, to multiply pardons as we multiply transgressions.*"

2. What is the particular mercy that he begs—the pardon of sin. *Blot out my transgressions*, as a debt is blotted or crossed out of the book, when either the debtor has paid it or the creditor has remitted it. "*Wipe out my transgressions, that they may not appear to demand judgment against me, nor stare*

me in the face to my confusion and terror." The blood of Christ, sprinkled upon the conscience, to purify and pacify that, blots out the transgression, and, having reconciled us to God, reconciles us to ourselves, v. 2. "*Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity; wash my soul from the guilt and stain of my sin by thy mercy and grace, for it is only from a ceremonial pollution that the water of separation will avail to cleanse me. Multiply to wash me; the stain is deep, for I have lain long soaking in the guilt, so that it will not easily be got out. O wash me much, wash me thoroughly. Cleanse me from my sin.*" Sin defiles us, renders us odious in the sight of the holy God, and uneasy to ourselves; it unfits us for communion with God in grace or glory. When God pardons sin he cleanses us from it, so that we become acceptable to him, easy to ourselves, and have liberty of access to him. Nathan had assured David, upon his first profession of repentance, that his sin was pardoned. *The Lord has taken away thy sin; thou shalt not die*, 2 Sam. xii. 13. Yet he prays, *Wash me, cleanse me, blot out my transgressions*; for God will be sought unto even for that which he has promised; and those whose sins are pardoned must pray that the pardon may be more and more cleared up to them. God had forgiven him, but he could not forgive himself; and therefore he is thus importunate for pardon, as one that thought himself unworthy of it and knew how to value it.

II. David's penitential confessions, v. 3—5.

1. He was very free to own his guilt before God: *I acknowledge my transgressions*; this he had formerly found the only way of easing his conscience, xxxii. 4, 5. Nathan said, *Thou art the man. I am*, says David; *I have sinned*.

2. He had such a deep sense of it that he was continually thinking of it with sorrow and shame. His contrition for his sin was not a slight sudden passion, but an abiding grief: "*My sin is ever before me, to humble me and mortify me, and make me continually blush and tremble. It is ever against me*" (so some); "*I see it before me as an enemy, accusing and threatening me.*" David was, upon all occasions, put in mind of his sin, and was willing to be so, for his further abasement. He never walked on the roof of his house without a penitent reflection on his unhappy walk there when thence he saw Bathsheba; he never lay down to sleep without a sorrowful thought of the bed of his uncleanness, never sat down to meat, never sent his servant on an errand, or took his pen in hand, but it put him in mind of his making Uriah drunk, the treacherous message he sent by him, and the fatal warrant he wrote and signed for his execution. Note, The acts of repentance, even for the same sin, must be often repeated. It will be of good use for us to have our sins ever before us, that by the remembrance of our past sins we may be kept humble, may be armed against temptation,

quicken to duty, and made patient under the cross.

(1.) He confesses his actual transgressions (v. 4): *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.* David was a very great man, and yet, having done amiss, submits to the discipline of a penitent, and thinks not his royal dignity will excuse him from it. Rich and poor must here meet together; there is one law of repentance for both; the greatest must be judged shortly, and therefore must judge themselves now. David was a very good man, and yet, having sinned, he willingly accommodates himself to the place and posture of a penitent. The best men, if they sin, should give the best example of repentance. [1.] His confession is particular: "*I have done this evil*, this that I am now reproved for, this that my own conscience now upbraids me with." Note, It is good to be particular in the confession of sin, that we may be the more express in praying for pardon, and so may have the more comfort in it. We ought to reflect upon the particular heads of our sins of infirmity and the particular circumstances of our gross sins. [2.] He aggravates the sin which he confesses and lays a load upon himself for it: *Against thee, and in thy sight.* Hence our Saviour seems to borrow the confession which he puts into the mouth of the returning prodigal: *I have sinned against heaven, and before thee*, Luke xv. 18. Two things David laments in his sin:—*First*, That it was committed against God. To him the affront is given, and he is the party wronged. It is his truth that by wilful sin we deny, his conduct that we despise, his command that we disobey, his promise that we distrust, his name that we dishonour, and it is with him that we deal deceitfully and disingenuously. From this topic Joseph fetched the great argument against sin (Gen. xxxix. 9), and David here the great aggravation of it: *Against thee only.* Some make this to intimate the prerogative of his crown, that, as a king, he was not accountable to any but God; but it is more agreeable to his present temper to suppose that it expresses the deep contrition of his soul for his sin, and that it was upon right grounds. He here sinned against Bathsheba and Uriah, against his own soul, and body, and family, against his kingdom, and against the church of God, and all this helped to humble him; but none of these were sinned against so as God was, and therefore this he lays the most sorrowful accent upon: *Against thee only have I sinned.* *Secondly*, That it was committed in God's sight: "This not only proves it upon me, but renders it exceedingly sinful." This should greatly humble us for all our sins, that they have been committed under the eye of God, which argues either a disbelief of his omniscience or a contempt of his justice. [3.] He justifies God in the sentence passed upon him—that *the sword should never depart from his house*, 2 Sam. xii. 10,

11. He is very forward to own his sin, and aggravate it, not only that he might obtain the pardon of it himself, but that by his confession he might give honour to God. *First*, That God might be justified in the threatenings he had spoken by Nathan. "Lord, I have nothing to say against the justice of them; I deserve what is threatened, and a thousand times worse." Thus Eli acquiesced in the like threatenings (1 Sam. ii. 18), *It is the Lord.* And Hezekiah (2 Kings xx. 19), *Good is the word of the Lord, which thou hast spoken.* *Secondly*, That God might be clear when he judged, that is, when he executed those threatenings. David published his confession of sin that when hereafter he should come into trouble none might say God had done him any wrong; for he owns the Lord is righteous: thus will all true penitents justify God by condemning themselves. *Thou art just in all that is brought upon us.* (2.) He confesses his original corruption (v. 5): *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity.* He does not call upon God to behold it, but upon himself. "Come, my soul, look unto the rock out of which I was hewn, and thou wilt find I was shapen in iniquity. Had I duly considered this before, I find I should not have made so bold with the temptation, nor have ventured among the sparks with such tinder in my heart; and so the sin might have been prevented. Let me consider it now, not to excuse or extenuate the sin—*Lord, I did so; but indeed I could not help it, my inclination led me to it*" (for as that plea is false, with due care and watchfulness, and improvement of the grace of God, he might have helped it, so it is what a true penitent never offers to put in), "but let me consider it rather as an aggravation of the sin: Lord, I have not only been guilty of adultery and murder, but I have an adulterous murderous nature; therefore I abhor myself." David elsewhere speaks of the admirable structure of his body (cxxxix. 14, 15); it was *curiously wrought*; and yet here he says it was shapen in iniquity, sin was twisted in with it; not as it came out of God's hands, but as it comes through our parents' loins. He elsewhere speaks of the piety of his mother, that she was God's handmaid, and he pleads his relation to her (cxvi. 16, lxxxvi. 16), and yet here he says *she conceived him in sin*; for though she was, by grace, a child of God, she was, by nature, a daughter of Eve, and not excepted from the common character. Note, It is to be sadly lamented by every one of us that we brought into the world with us a corrupt nature, wretchedly degenerated from its primitive purity and rectitude; we have from our birth the snares of sin in our bodies, the seeds of sin in our souls, and a stain of sin upon both. This is what we call *original sin*, because it is as ancient as our original, and because it is the original of all our actual transgressions. This is that foolishness which is bound in the heart of a child, that proneness

to evil and backwardness to good which is the burden of the regenerate and the ruin of the unregenerate; it is a bent to backslide from God.

III. David's acknowledgment of the grace of God (v. 6), both his good-will towards us (*thou desirest truth in the inward parts, thou wouldst have us all honest and sincere, and true to our profession*?) and his good work in us—"In the hidden part thou hast made," or shalt make, "*me to know wisdom*." Note, 1. Truth and wisdom will go very far towards making a man a good man. A clear head and a sound heart (prudence and sincerity) bespeak the man of God perfect. 2. What God requires of us he himself works in us, and he works it in the regular way, enlightening the mind, and so gaining the will. But how does this come in here? (1.) God is hereby justified and cleared: "Lord, thou wast not the author of my sin; there is no blame to be laid upon thee; but I alone must bear it; for thou hast many a time admonished me to be sincere, and hast made me to know that which, if I had duly considered it, would have prevented my falling into this sin; had I improved the grace thou hast given me, I should have kept my integrity." (2.) The sin is hereby aggravated: "Lord, thou desirest truth; but where was it when I dissembled with Uriah? *Thou hast made me to know wisdom*; but I have not lived up to what I have known." (3.) He is hereby encouraged, in his repentance, to hope that God would graciously accept him; for, [1.] God had made him sincere in his resolutions never to return to folly again: *Thou desirest truth in the inward part*; this is that which God has an eye to in a returning sinner, that in his spirit there be no guile, xxxii. 2. David was conscious to himself of the uprightness of his heart towards God in his repentance, and therefore doubted not but God would accept him. [2.] He hoped that God would enable him to make good his resolutions, that in the hidden part, in the new man, which is called the *hidden man of the heart* (1 Pet. iii. 4), he would make him to know wisdom, so as to discern and avoid the designs of the tempter another time. Some read it as a prayer: "Lord, in this instance, I have done foolishly; for the future make me to know wisdom." Where there is truth God will give wisdom; those that sincerely endeavour to do their duty shall be taught their duty.

7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. 8 Make me to hear joy and gladness; *that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice*. 9 Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. 11 Cast me not away from thy presence; and

take not thy holy spirit from me. 12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me *with thy* free spirit. 13 *Then* will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

1. See here what David prays for. Many excellent petitions he here puts up, to which if we do but add, "*for Christ's sake*," they are as evangelical as any other.

1. He prays that God would cleanse him from his sins and the defilement he had contracted by them (v. 7): *Purge me with hyssop*; that is, pardon my sins, and let me know that they are pardoned, that I may be restored to those privileges which by sin I have forfeited and lost." The expression here alludes to a ceremonial distinction, that of cleansing the leper, or those that were unclean by the touch of a body by sprinkling water, or blood, or both upon them with a bunch of hyssop, by which they were, at length, discharged from the restraints they were laid under by their pollution. "Lord, let me be as well assured of my restoration to thy favour, and to the privilege of communion with thee, as they were thereby assured of their re-admission to their former privileges." But it is founded upon gospel-grace: *Purge me with hyssop*, that is, with the blood of Christ applied to my soul by a lively faith, as water of purification was sprinkled with a bunch of hyssop. It is the blood of Christ (which is therefore called the *blood of sprinkling*, Heb. xii. 24), that purges the conscience from dead works, from that guilt of sin and dread of God which shut us out of communion with him, as the touch of a dead body, under the law, shut a man out from the courts of God's house. If this blood of Christ, which cleanses from all sin, cleanse us from our sin, then we shall be clean indeed, Heb. x. 2. If we be washed in this fountain opened, we shall be whiter than snow, not only acquitted but accepted; so those are that are justified. Isa. i. 16, *Though your sins have been as scarlet, they shall be white as snow*.

2. He prays that, his sins being pardoned, he might have the comfort of that pardon. He asks not to be comforted till first he is cleansed; but if sin, the bitter root of sorrow, be taken away, he can pray in faith, "*Make me to hear joy and gladness* (v. 8), that is, let me have a well-grounded peace, of thy creating, thy speaking, so that the bones which thou hast broken by convictions and threatenings may rejoice, may not only be set again, and eased from the pain, but may be sensibly comforted, and, as the prophet speaks, may flourish as a herb." Note, (1.) The pain of a heart truly broken for sin may well be compared to that of a broken bone; and it is the same Spirit who as a Spirit of bondage smites and wounds and as a

Spirit of adoption heals and binds up. (2.) The comfort and joy that arise from a sealed pardon to a penitent sinner are as refreshing as perfect ease from the most exquisite pain. (3.) It is God's work, not only to speak this joy and gladness, but to make us hear it and take the comfort of it. He earnestly desires that God would lift up the light of his countenance upon him, and so put gladness into his heart, that he would not only be reconciled to him, but, which is a further act of grace, let him know that he was so.

3. He prays for a complete and effectual pardon. This is that which he is most earnest for as the foundation of his comfort (v. 9): "*Hide thy face from my sins, that is, be not provoked by them to deal with me as I deserve; they are ever before me, let them be cast behind thy back. Blot out all my iniquities out of the book of thy account; blot them out, as a cloud is blotted out and dispelled by the beams of the sun,*" Isa. xlii. 22.

4. He prays for sanctifying grace; and this every true penitent is as earnest for as for pardon and peace, v. 10. He does not pray, "Lord, preserve me my reputation," as Saul, *I have sinned, yet honour me before this people*. No; his great concern is to get his corrupt nature changed. the sin he had been guilty of was, (1.) An evidence of its impurity, and therefore he prays, *Create in me a clean heart, O God!* He now saw, more than ever, what an unclean heart he had, and sadly laments it, but sees it is not in his own power to amend it, and therefore begs of God (whose prerogative it is to create) that he would create in him a clean heart. He only that made the heart can new-make it; and to his power nothing is impossible. He created the world by the word of his power as the God of nature, and it is by the word of his power as the God of grace that *we are clean* (John xv. 3), that *we are sanctified*, John xvii.

17. (2.) It was the cause of its disorder, and undid much of the good work that had been wrought in him; and therefore he prays, "*Lord, renew a right spirit within me; repair the decays of spiritual strength which this sin has been the cause of, and set me to rights again. Renew a constant spirit within me, so some.* He had, in this matter, discovered much inconstancy and inconsistency with himself, and therefore he prays, "Lord, fix me for the time to come, that I may never in like manner depart from thee."

5. He prays for the continuance of God's good-will towards him and the progress of his good work in him, v. 11. (1.) That he might never be shut out from God's favour: "*Cast me not away from thy presence, as one whom thou abhorrest and canst not endure to look upon.*" He prays that he might not be thrown out of God's protection, but that, wherever he went, he might have the divine presence with him, might be under the guidance of his wisdom and in the custody of his power, and that he might not be forbid-

den communion with God: "Let me not be banished thy courts, but always have liberty of access to thee by prayer." He does not deprecate the temporal judgments which God by Nathan had threatened to bring upon him. "God's will be done; but, Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath. If the sword come into my house never to depart from it, yet let me have a God to go to in my distresses, and all shall be well." (2.) That he might never be deprived of God's grace. *Take not thy Holy Spirit from me.* He knew he had by his sin grieved the Spirit and provoked him to withdraw, and that because he also was flesh God might justly have said that his Spirit should no more strive with him nor work upon him, Gen. vi. 3. This he dreads more than any thing. We are undone if God take his Holy Spirit from us. Saul was a sad instance of this. How exceedingly sinful, how exceedingly miserable, was he, when the Spirit of the Lord had departed from him! David knew it, and therefore begs thus earnestly: "Lord, whatever thou take from me, my children, my crown, my life, yet take not thy Holy Spirit from me" (see 2 Sam. vii. 15), "but continue thy Holy Spirit with me, to perfect the work of my repentance, to prevent my relapse into sin, and to enable me to discharge my duty both as a prince and as a psalmist."

6. He prays for the restoration of divine comforts and the perpetual communications of divine grace, v. 12. David finds two ill effects of his sin:—(1.) It had made him sad, and therefore he prays, *Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.* A child of God knows no true nor solid joy but the joy of God's salvation, joy in God his Saviour and in the hope of eternal life. By wilful sin we forfeit this joy and deprive ourselves of it: our evidences cannot but be clouded and our hopes shaken. When we give ourselves so much cause to doubt of our interest in the salvation, how can we expect the joy of it? But, when we truly repent, we may pray and hope that God will restore to us those joys. Those that sow in penitential tears shall reap in the joys of God's salvation when the times of refreshing shall come. (2.) It had made him weak, and therefore he prays, "*Uphold me with thy free Spirit: I am ready to fall, either into sin or into despair; Lord, sustain me; my own spirit*" (though the spirit of a man will go far towards the sustaining of his infirmity) "*is not sufficient; if I be left to myself, I shall certainly sink; therefore uphold me with thy Spirit, let him counterwork the evil spirit that would cast me down from my excellency. Thy Spirit is a free spirit, a free agent himself, working freely*" (and that makes those free whom he works upon, for where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty)—"*thy ingenuous princely Spirit.*" He was conscious to himself of having acted, in the matter of Uriah, very disingenuously and unlike a prince; his be-

haviour was base and paltry: "Lord," says he, "let thy Spirit inspire my soul with noble and generous principles, that I may always act as becomes me." A free spirit will be a firm and fixed spirit, and will uphold us. The more cheerful we are in our duty the more constant we shall be to it.

II. See what David here promises, v. 13. Observe,

1. What good work he promises to do: *I will teach transgressors thy ways.* David had been himself a transgressor, and therefore could speak experimentally to transgressors, and resolves, having himself found mercy with God in the way of repentance, to teach others God's ways, that is, (1.) Our way to God by repentance; he would teach others that had sinned to take the same course that he had taken, to humble themselves, to confess their sins, and seek God's face; and, (2.) God's way towards us in pardoning mercy; how ready he is to receive those that return to him. He taught the former by his own example, for the direction of sinners in repenting; he taught the latter by his own experience, for their encouragement. By this psalm he is, and will be to the world's end, teaching transgressors, telling them what God had done for his soul. Note, Penitents should be preachers. Solomon was so, and blessed Paul.

2. What good effect he promises himself from his doing this: "*Sinners shall be converted unto thee*, and shall neither persist in their wanderings from thee, nor despair of finding mercy in their returns to thee." The great thing to be aimed at in teaching transgressors is their conversion to God; that is a happy point gained, and happy are those that are instrumental to contribute towards it, Jam. v. 20.

14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: *and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.* 15 O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth thy praise. 16 For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. 18 Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem. 19 Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.

I. David prays against the guilt of sin, and prays for the grace of God, enforcing both petitions from a plea taken from the glory of God, which he promises with thankfulness to show forth. 1. He prays against

the guilt of sin, that he might be delivered from that, and promises that then he would praise God, v. 14. The particular sin he prays against is blood-guiltiness, the sin he had now been guilty of, having slain Uriah with the sword of the children of Ammon. Hitherto perhaps he had stopped the mouth of conscience with that frivolous excuse, that he did not kill him himself; but now he was convinced that he was the murderer, and, hearing the blood cry to God for vengeance, he cries to God for mercy: "*Deliver me from blood-guiltiness*; let me not lie under the guilt of this kind which I have contracted, but let it be pardoned to me, and let me never be left to myself to contract the like guilt again." Note, It concerns us all to pray earnestly against the guilt of blood. In this prayer he eyes God as the God of salvation. Note, Those to whom God is the God of salvation he will deliver from guilt; for the salvation he is the God of is salvation from sin. We may therefore plead this with him, "Lord, thou art the God of my salvation, therefore deliver me from the dominion of sin." He promises that, if God would deliver him, *his tongue should sing aloud of his righteousness*; God should have the glory both of pardoning mercy and of preventing grace. God's righteousness is often put for his grace, especially in the great business of justification and sanctification. (This he would comfort himself in and therefore sing of; and this he would endeavour both to acquaint and to affect others with; he would sing aloud of it. This all those should do that have had the benefit of it, and owe their all to it. 2. He prays for the grace of God and promises to improve that grace to his glory (v. 15): "*O Lord! open thou my lips*, not only that I may teach and instruct sinners" (which the best preacher cannot do to any purpose unless God give him the opening of the mouth, and the tongue of the learned), "*but that my mouth may show forth thy praise*, not only that I may have abundant matter for praise, but a heart enlarged in praise." Guilt had closed his lips, had gone near to stop the mouth of prayer; he could not for shame, he could not for fear, come into the presence of that God whom he knew he had offended, much less speak to him; his heart condemned him, and therefore he had little confidence towards God. It cast a damp particularly upon his praises; when he had lost the joys of his salvation his harp was hung upon the willow-trees; therefore he prays, "*Lord, open my lips*, put my heart in tune for praise again." To those that are tongue-tied by reason of guilt the assurance of the forgiveness of their sins says effectually, *Ephphatha—Be opened*; and, when the lips are opened, what should they speak but the praises of God, as Zacharias did? Luke i. 64.

II. David offers the sacrifice of a penitent contrite heart, as that which he knew God would be pleased with. 1. He knew well

that the sacrificing of beasts was in itself of no account with God (v. 16): *Thou desirest not sacrifice (else would I give it with all my heart to obtain pardon and peace); thou delightest not in burnt-offering.* Here see how glad David would have been to give thousands of rams to make atonement for sin. Those that are thoroughly convinced of their misery and danger by reason of sin would spare no cost to obtain the remission of it, Mic. vi. 6, 7. But see how little God valued this. As trials of obedience, and types of Christ, he did indeed require sacrifices to be offered; but he had no delight in them for any intrinsic worth or value they had. *Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not.* As they cannot make satisfaction for sin, so God cannot take any satisfaction in them, any otherwise than as the offering of them is expressive of love and duty to him. 2. He knew also how acceptable true repentance is to God (v. 17): *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit.* See here, (1.) What the good work is that is wrought in every true penitent—a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart. It is a work wrought upon the heart; that is it that God looks at, and requires, in all religious exercises, particularly in the exercises of repentance. It is a sharp work wrought there, no less than the breaking of the heart; not in despair (as we say, when a man is undone, His heart is broken), but in necessary humiliation and sorrow for sin. It is a heart breaking with itself, and breaking from its sin; it is a heart pliable to the word of God, and patient under the rod of God, a heart subdued and brought into obedience; it is a heart that is tender, like Josiah's, and trembles at God's word. Oh that there were such a heart in us! (2.) How graciously God is pleased to accept of this. *It is the sacrifices of God,* not one, but many; it is instead of all burnt-offering and sacrifice. The breaking of Christ's body for sin is the only sacrifice of atonement, for no sacrifice but that could take away sin; but the breaking of our hearts for sin is a sacrifice of acknowledgment, a sacrifice of God, for to him it is offered up; he requires it, he prepares it (he provides this lamb for a burnt-offering), and he will accept of it. That which pleased God was not the feeding of a beast, and making much of it, but killing it; so it is not the pampering of our flesh, but the mortifying of it, that God will accept. The sacrifice was bound, was bled, was burnt; so the penitent heart is bound by convictions, bleeds in contrition, and then burns in holy zeal against sin and for God. The sacrifice was offered upon the altar that sanctified the gift; so the broken heart is acceptable to God only through Jesus Christ; there is no true repentance without faith in him; and this is the sacrifice which he will not despise. Men despise that which is broken, but God will not. He despised the sacrifice of torn and broken beasts, but he will not despise

that of a torn and broken heart. He will not overlook it; he will not refuse or reject it; though it make God no satisfaction for the wrong done him by sin, yet he does not despise it. The proud Pharisee despised the broken-hearted publican, and he thought very meanly of himself; but God did not despise him. More is implied than is expressed; the great God overlooks heaven and earth, to look with favour upon a *broken and contrite heart*, Isa. lxvi. 1, 2; lvii. 15.

III. David intercedes for Zion and Jerusalem, with an eye to the honour of God. See what a concern he had,

1. For the good of the church of God (v. 18): *Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion,* that is, (1.) "To all the particular worshippers in Zion, to all that love and fear thy name; keep them from falling into such wounding wasting sins as these of mine; defend and succour all that fear thy name." Those that have been in spiritual troubles themselves know how to pity and pray for those that are in like manner afflicted. Or, (2.) To the public interests of Israel. David was sensible of the wrong he had done to Judah and Jerusalem by his sin, how it had weakened the hands and saddened the hearts of good people, and opened the mouths of their adversaries; he was likewise afraid lest, he being a public person, his sin should bring judgments upon the city and kingdom, and therefore he prays to God to secure and advance those public interests which he had damaged and endangered. He prays that God would prevent those national judgments which his sin had deserved, that he would continue those blessings, and carry on that good work, which it had threatened to retard and put a stop to. He prays, not only that God would do good to Zion, as he did to other places, by his providence, but that he would do it in his *good pleasure*, with the peculiar favour he bore to that place which he had chosen to put his name there, that the walls of Jerusalem, which perhaps were now in the building, might be built up, and that good work finished. Note, [1.] When we have most business of our own, and of greatest importance at the throne of grace, yet then we must not forget to pray for the church of God; nay, our Master has taught us in our daily prayers to begin with that, *Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come.* [2.] The consideration of the prejudice we have done to the public interests by our sins should engage us to do them all the service we can, particularly by our prayers.

2. For the honour of the churches of God, v. 19. If God would show himself reconciled to him and his people, as he had prayed, then they should go on with the public services of his house, (1.) Cheerfully to themselves. The sense of God's goodness to them would enlarge their hearts in all the instances and expressions of thankfulness and obedience. They will then come to his tabernacle with

burnt-offerings, with whole burnt-offerings, which were intended purely for the glory of God, and they shall offer, not lambs and rams only, but bullocks, the costliest sacrifices, upon his altar. (2.) Acceptably to God: "*Thou shalt be pleased with them*, that is, we shall have reason to hope so when we perceive the sin taken away which threatened to hinder thy acceptance." Note, It is a great comfort to a good man to think of the communion that is between God and his people in their public assemblies, how he is honoured by their humble attendance on him and they are happy in his gracious acceptance of it.

PSALM LII.

David, no doubt, was in very great grief when he said to Abiathar (1 Sam. xxi. 2), "I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house," who were put to death upon Doeg's malicious information; to give some vent to that grief, and to gain some relief to his mind under it, he penned this psalm, wherein, as a prophet, and therefore with as good an authority as if he had been now a prince upon the throne, I. He arraigns Doeg for what he had done, ver. 1. II. He accuses him, convicts him, and aggravates his crimes, ver. 2-4. III. He passes sentence upon him, ver. 5. IV. He foretells the triumphs of the righteous in the execution of the sentence, ver. 6, 7. V. He comforts himself in the mercy of God and the assurance he had that he should yet praise him, ver. 8, 9. In singing this psalm we should conceive a detestation of the sin of lying, forswear the ruin of those that persist in it, and please ourselves with the assurance of the preservation of God's church and people, in spite of all the malicious designs of the children of Satan, that father of lies.

To the chief musician, Maschil. *A psalm of David*, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said unto him, David has come to the house of Ahimelech.

WHY boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? the goodness of God *endureth continually*. 2 Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. 3 Thou lovest evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak righteousness. Selah. 4 Thou lovest all devouring words, O thou deceitful tongue. 5 God shall likewise destroy thee for ever, he shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of *thy dwelling place*, and root thee out of the land of the living. Selah.

The title is a brief account of the story which the psalm refers to. David now, at length, saw it necessary to quit the court, and shift for his own safety, for fear of Saul, who had once and again attempted to murder him. Being unprovided with arms and victuals, he, by a wife, got Ahimelech the priest to furnish him with both. Doeg an Edomite happened to be there, and he went and informed Saul against Ahimelech, representing him as confederate with a traitor, upon which accusation Saul grounded a very bloody warrant, to kill all the priests; and Doeg, the prosecutor, was the executioner, 1 Sam. xxii. 9, &c. In these verses,

I. David argues the case fairly with this proud and mighty man, v. 1. Doeg, it is probable, was mighty in respect of bodily strength; but, if he was, he gained no reputation to it by his easy victory over the unarmed priests of the Lord; it is no honour for

those that wear a sword to hector those that wear an ephod. However, he was, by his office, a *mighty man*, for he was set over the servants of Saul, chamberlain of the household. This was he that boasted himself, not only in the power he had to do mischief, but in the mischief he did. Note, It is bad to do ill, but it is worse to boast of it and glory in it when we have done, not only not to be ashamed of a wicked action, but to justify it, not only to justify it, but to magnify it and value ourselves upon it. Those that glory in their sin glory in their shame, and then it becomes yet more shameful; mighty men are often mischievous men, and *boast of their heart's desire*, x. 3. It is uncertain how the following words come in: *The goodness of God endures continually*. Some make it the wicked man's answer to this question. The patience and forbearance of God (those great proofs of his goodness) are abused by sinners to the hardening of their hearts in their wicked ways: because sentence against their evil works is not executed speedily, nay, because God is continually doing them good, therefore they boast in mischief; as if their prosperity in their wickedness were an evidence that there is no harm in it. But it is rather to be taken as an argument against him, to show, 1. The sinfulness of his sin: "God is continually doing good, and those that therein are like him have reason to glory in their being so; but thou art continually doing mischief, and therein art utterly unlike him, and contrary to him, and yet gloriest in being so." 2. The folly of it: "Thou thinkest, with the mischief which thou boastest of (so artfully contrived and so successfully carried on), to run down and ruin the people of God; but thou wilt find thyself mistaken: *the goodness of God endures continually* for their preservation, and then they need not fear what man can do unto them." The enemies in vain boast in their mischief while we have God's mercy to boast in.

II. He draws up a high charge against him in the court of heaven, as he had drawn up a high charge against Ahimelech in Saul's court, v. 2-4. He accuses him of the wickedness of his tongue (that unruly evil, full of deadly poison) and the wickedness of his heart, which that was an evidence of. Four things he charges him with:—1. Malice. His tongue does *mischief*, not only pricking like a needle, but cutting like a sharp razor. Scornful bantering words would not content him; he loved devouring words, words that would ruin the priests of the Lord, whom he hated. 2. Falsehood. It was a *deceitful tongue* that he did this mischief with (v. 4); he loved lying (v. 3), and this sharp razor did *work deceitfully* (v. 2), that is, before he had this occasion given him to discover his malice against the priests, he had acted very plausibly towards them; though he was an Edomite, he attended the altars, and brought his offerings, and paid his respects to the priests, as decently as any Israelite; therein he put a force

come filthy; *there is none that doeth good, no, not one.* 4 Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people *as they eat bread*: they have not called upon God. 5 There were they in great fear, *where* no fear was: for God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth *against* thee: thou hast put *them* to shame, because God hath despised them. 6 Oh that the salvation of Israel *were* come out of Zion! When God bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, *and* Israel shall be glad.

This psalm was opened before, and therefore we shall here only observe, in short, some things concerning sin, in order to the increasing of our sorrow for it and hatred of it. 1 The fact of sin. Is that proved? Can the charge be made out? Yes, God is a witness to it, an unexceptionable witness: from the place of his holiness he looks on the children of men, and sees how little good there is among them, *v. 2.* All the sinfulness of their hearts and lives is naked and open before him. 2 The fault of sin. Is there any harm in it? Yes, it is iniquity (*v. 1, 4*); it is an unrighteous thing; it is that which there is no good in (*v. 1, 3*); it is an evil thing; it is the worst of evils; it is that which makes this world such an evil world as it is; it is going back from God, *v. 3.* 3 The fountain of sin. How comes it that men are so bad? Surely it is because *there is no fear of God before their eyes: they say in their hearts, "There is no God at all to call us to an account, none that we need to stand in awe of."* Men's bad practices flow from their bad principles; if they profess to know God, yet in works, because in thoughts, they deny him. 4 The folly of sin. He is a fool (in the account of God, whose judgment we are sure is right) that harbours such corrupt thoughts. Atheists, whether in opinion or practice, are the greatest fools in the world. Those that do not seek God do not understand; they are like brute-beasts that have no understanding; for man is distinguished from the brutes, not so much by the powers of reason as by a capacity for religion. *The workers of iniquity, whatever they pretend to, have no knowledge*; those may truly be said to know nothing that do not know God, *v. 4.* 5 The filthiness of sin. Sinners are corrupt (*v. 1*); their nature is vitiated and spoiled, and the more noble the nature is the more vile it is when it is depraved, as that of the angels. *Corruptio optimi est pessima—The best things, when corrupted, become the worst.* Their iniquity is abominable; it is odious to the holy God, and it renders them so; whereas otherwise he *hates nothing that he has made.* It makes men filthy, altogether filthy. Wilful sinners are offensive in the nostrils of the God of

heaven and of the holy angels. What decency soever proud sinners pretend to, it is certain that wickedness is the greatest defilement in the world. 6 The fruit of sin. See to what a degree of barbarity it brings men at last; when men's hearts are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin see their cruelty to their brethren, that are bone of their bone—because they will not *run with them to the same excess of riot, they eat them up as they eat bread*; as if they had not only become beasts, but beasts of prey. And see their contempt of God at the same time. *They have not called upon him, but scorn to be beholden to him.* 7 The fear and shame that attend sin (*v. 5*): *There were those in great fear* who had made God their enemy; their own guilty consciences frightened them, and filled them with horror, though otherwise there was no apparent cause of fear. *The wicked flees when none pursues.* See the ground of this fear; it is because God has formerly scattered the bones of those that encamped against his people, not only broken their power and dispersed their forces, but slain them, and reduced their bodies to dry bones, like those scattered at the grave's mouth, *cxli.* 7. Such will be the fate of those that lay siege to the camp of the saints and the beloved city, *Rev. xx. 9.* The apprehensions of this cannot but put those into frights that eat up God's people. This enables the virgin, the daughter of Zion, to put them to shame, and expose them, *because God has despised them*, to laugh at them, because he that sits in heaven laughs at them. We need not look upon those enemies with fear whom God looks upon with contempt. If he despises them, we may. 8 The faith of the saints, and their hope and power touching the cure of this great evil, *v. 6.* There will come a Saviour, a great salvation, a salvation from sin. Oh that it might be hastened! for it will bring in glorious and joyful times. There were those in the Old-Testament times that looked and hoped, that prayed and waited, for this redemption. (1.) God will, in due time, save his church from the sinful malice of its enemies, which will bring joy to Jacob and Israel, that have long been in a mournful melancholy state. Such salvations were often wrought, and all typical of the everlasting triumphs of the glorious church. (2.) He will save all believers from their own iniquities, that they may not be led captive by them, which will be everlasting matter of joy to them. From this work the Redeemer had his name—*Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins*, *Matt. i. 21.*

PSALM LIV.

The key of this psalm hangs at the door, for the title tells us upon what occasion it was penned—when the inhabitants of Ziph, men of Judah (types of Judas the traitor), betrayed David to Saul, by informing him where he was and putting him in a way how to seize him. This they did twice (1 Sam. xxiii. 19; xxv. 1), and it is upon record to their everlasting infamy. The psalm is sweet; the former part of it, perhaps, was meditated when he was in his distress and put into writing when the danger was over, with the addition of the last two verses, which express his thankfulness for the deliverance, which yet might be written in faith, even when he was in the midst of his fright. Here, 1. He

complaints to God of the malice of his enemies, and prays for help against them, ver. 1-3. 11. He comforts himself with an assurance of the divine favour and protection, and that, in due time, his enemies should be confounded and he delivered, ver. 4-7. What time we are in distress we may comfortably sing this psalm.

To the chief musician on Neginoth, Maschil.

A psalm of David, when the Ziphim came and said to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us?

SAVE me, O God, by thy name, and judge me by thy strength. 2 Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth. 3 For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul: they have not set God before them. Selah.

We may observe here, 1. The great distress that David was now in, which the title gives an account of. The Ziphim came of their own accord, and informed Saul where David was, with a promise to deliver him into his hand. One would have thought that when David had retired into the country he would not be pursued, into a desert country he would not be discovered, and into his own country he would not be betrayed; and yet it seems he was. Never let a good man expect to be safe and easy till he comes to heaven. How treacherous, how officious, were these Ziphim! It is well that God is faithful, for men are not to be trusted, Mic. vii. 5. 2. His prayer to God for succour and deliverance, v. 1, 2. He appeals to God's strength, by which he was able to help him, and to his name, by which he was engaged to help him, and begs he would save him from his enemies and judge him, that is, plead his cause and judge for him. David has no other plea to depend upon than God's name, no other power to depend upon than God's strength, and those he makes his refuge and confidence. This would be the effectual answer of his prayers (v. 2), which even in his flight, when he had not opportunity for solemn address to God, he was ever and anon lifting up to heaven: *Hear my prayer*, which comes from my heart, and *give ear to the words of my mouth*. 3. His plea, which is taken from the character of his enemies, v. 3. (1.) They are *strangers*; such were the Ziphites, unworthy the name of Israelites. "They have used me more basely and barbarously than the Philistines themselves would have done." The worst treatment may be expected from those who, having broken through the bonds of relation and alliance, make themselves strangers. (2.) They are *oppressors*; such was Saul, who, as a king, should have used his power for the protection of all his good subjects, but abused it for their destruction. Nothing is so grievous as oppression in the seat of judgment, Eccl. iii. 16. Paul's greatest perils were by his own countrymen and by false brethren (2 Cor. xi. 26), and so were David's. (3.) They were very formidable and threatening; they not only hated him and wished him ill, but they

rose up against him in a body, joining their power to do him a mischief. (4.) They were very spiteful and malicious: *They seek after my soul*; they hunt for the precious life; no less will satisfy them. We may, in faith, pray that God would not by his providence give success, lest it should look like giving countenance, to such cruel bloody men. (5.) They were very profane and atheistical, and, for this reason, he thought God was concerned in honour to appear against them: *They have not set God before them*, that is, they have quite cast off the thoughts of God; they do not consider that his eye is upon them, that, in fighting against his people, they fight against him, nor have they any dread of the certain fatal consequences of such an unequal engagement. Note, From those who do not set God before them no good is to be expected; nay, what wickedness will not such men be guilty of? What bonds of nature, or friendship, or gratitude, or covenant, will hold those that have broken through the fear of God? *Selah—Mark this*. Let us all be sure to set God before us at all times; for, if we do not we are in danger of becoming desperate.

4 Behold, God is mine helper: the Lord is with them that uphold my soul. 5 He shall reward evil unto mine enemies: cut them off in thy truth. 6 I will freely sacrifice unto thee: I will praise thy name, O Lord; for it is good. 7 For he hath delivered me out of all trouble: and mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies.

We have here the lively actings of David's faith in his prayer, by which he was assured that the issue would be comfortable, though the attempt upon him was formidable.

I. He was sure that he had God on his side, that God took his part (v. 4); he speaks it with an air of triumph and exultation, *Behold, God is my helper*. If we be for him, he is for us; and, if he be for us, we shall have such help in him that we need not fear any power engaged against us. Though men and devils aim to be our destroyers, they shall not prevail while God is our helper: *The Lord is with those that uphold my soul*. Compare cxviii. 7, "*The Lord taketh my part with those that help me*. There are some that uphold me, and God is one of them; he is the principal one; none of them could help me if he did not help them." Every creature is that to us (and no more) that God makes it to be. He means, "The Lord is he that upholds my soul, and keeps me from tiring in my work and sinking under my burdens." He that by his providence upholds all things by his grace upholds the souls of his people. God, who will in due time save his people, does, in the mean time, sustain them and

nestly coveted, and the more when they have been vexed and wearied with the noise and clamour of those about them. Gracious souls wish to retire from the hurry and bustle of this world, that they may sweetly enjoy God and themselves; and, if there be any true peace on this side heaven, it is they that enjoy it in those retirements. This makes death desirable to a child of God, that it is a final escape from all the storms and tempests of this world to perfect and everlasting rest.

9 Destroy, O Lord, *and divide* their tongues: for I have seen violence and strife in the city. 10 Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof: mischief also and sorrow *are* in the midst of it. 11 Wickedness *is* in the midst thereof: deceit and guile depart not from her streets. 12 For *it was* not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne *it*: neither *was it* he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: 13 But *it was* thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. 14 We took sweet counsel together, *and* walked unto the house of God in company. 15 Let death seize upon them, *and* let them go down quick into hell: for wickedness *is* in their dwellings, *and* among them.

David here complains of his enemies, whose wicked plots had brought him, though not to his faith's end, yet to his wits' end, and prays against them by the spirit of prophecy. Observe here,

I. The character he gives of the enemies he feared. They were of the worst sort of men, and his description of them agrees very well with Absalom and his accomplices. 1. He complains of the city of Jerusalem, which strangely fell in with Absalom and fell off from David, so that he had none there but his own guards and servants that he could repose any confidence in: *How has that faithful city become a harlot!* David did not take the representation of it from others; but with his own eyes, and with a sad heart, did himself see nothing but *violence and strife in the city* (v. 9); for, when they grew disaffected and disloyal to David, they grew mischievous one to another. If he walked the rounds upon the walls of the city, he saw that violence and strife went about it day and night, and mounted its guards, v. 10. All the arts and methods which the rebels used for the fortifying of the city were made up of violence and strife, and there were no remains of honesty or love among them. If he looked into the heart of the city, mischief and injury, mutual wrong and vexation, were

in the midst of it: *Wickedness*, all manner of wickedness, *is in the midst thereof*. *Jusque datum sceleri—Wickedness was legalized*. Deceit and guile, and all manner of treacherous dealing, *departed not from her streets*, v. 11. It may be meant of their base and barbarous usage of David's friends and such as they knew were firm and faithful to him; they did them all the mischief they could; by fraud or force. Is this the character of Jerusalem, the royal city, and, which is more, the holy city, and in David's time too, so soon after the thrones of judgment and the testimony of Israel were both placed there? *Is this the city that men call the perfection of beauty?* Lam. ii. 15. Is Jerusalem, the head-quarters of God's priests, so ill taught? Can Jerusalem be ungrateful to David himself, its own illustrious founder, and be made too hot for him, so that he cannot reside in it? Let us not be surprised at the corruptions and disorders of this church on earth, but long to see the New Jerusalem, where there is no violence nor strife, no mischief nor guile, and into which no unclean thing shall enter, nor any thing that disquiets. 2. He complains of one of the ringleaders of the conspiracy, that had been very industrious to foment jealousies, to misrepresent him and his government, and to incense the city against him. It was one that reproached him, as if he either abused his power or neglected the use of it, for that was Absalom's malicious suggestion. *There is no man deputed of the king to hear thee*, 2 Sam. xv. 3. That and similar accusations were industriously spread among the people; and who was most active in it? "Not a sworn enemy, not Shimei, nor any of the nonjurors; then I could have borne it, for I should not have expected better from them" (and we find how patiently he did bear Shimei's curses); "not one that professed to hate me, then I would have stood upon my guard against him, would have hidden myself and counsels from him, so that it would not have been in his power to betray me. *But it was thou, a man, my equal*," v. 13. The Chaldee-paraphrase names Ahithophel as the person here meant, and nothing in that plot seems to have discouraged David so much as to hear that Ahithophel was among the conspirators with Absalom (2 Sam. xv. 31), for he was the king's counsellor, 1 Chron. xxvii. 33. "*It was thou, a man, my equal*, one whom I esteemed as myself, a friend as my own soul, whom I had laid in my bosom and made equal with myself, to whom I had communicated all my secrets and who knew my mind as well as I myself did,—my guide, with whom I advised and by whom I was directed in all my affairs, whom I made president of the council and prime-minister of state,—my intimate acquaintance and familiar friend; this is the man that now abuses me. I have been kind to him, but I find him thus basely ungrateful. I have put a trust in him, but I find

him thus basely treacherous; *may*, and he could not have done me the one-half of the mischief he does if I had not shown him so much respect." All this must needs be very grievous to an ingenuous mind, and yet this was not all; this traitor had seemed a saint, else he had never been David's bosom-friend (v. 14): "*We took counsel together*, spent many an hour together, with a great deal of pleasure, in religious discourse," or, as Dr. Hammond reads it, "*We joined ourselves together to the assembly*; I gave him the right hand of fellowship in holy ordinances, and then *we walked to the house of God in company*, to attend the public service." Note, (1.) There always has been, and always will be, a mixture of good and bad, sound and unsound, in the visible church, between whom, perhaps for a long time, we can discern no difference; but the searcher of hearts does. David, who went to the house of God in his sincerity, had Ahithophel in company with him, who went in his hypocrisy. The Pharisee and the publican went together to the temple to pray; but, sooner or later, those that are perfect and those that are not will be made manifest. (2.) Carnal policy may carry men on very far and very long in a profession of religion while it is in fashion, and will serve a turn. In the court of pious David none was more devout than Ahithophel, and yet his heart was not right in the sight of God. (3.) We must not wonder if we be sadly deceived in some that have made great pretensions to those two sacred things, religion and friendship; David himself, though a very wise man, was thus imposed upon, which may make similar disappointments the more tolerable to us.

II. His prayers against them, which we are both to stand in awe of and to comfort ourselves in, as prophecies, but not to copy into our prayers against any particular enemies of our own. He prays, 1. That God would disperse them, as he did the Babel-builders (v. 9): "*Destroy, O Lord! and divide their tongues*"; that is, blast their counsels, by making them to disagree among themselves, and clash with one another. Send an evil spirit among them, that they may not understand one another, but be envious and jealous one of another." This prayer was answered in the turning of Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness, by setting up the counsel of Hushai against it. God often destroys the church's enemies by dividing them; nor is there a surer way to the destruction of any people than their division. A kingdom, an interest, divided against itself, cannot long stand. 2. That God would destroy them, as he did Dathan and Abiram, and their associates, who were confederate against Moses, whose throat being an open sepulchre, the earth therefore opened and swallowed them up. This was then a new thing which God executed, Num. xvi. 30. But David prays that it might now be repeated, or something equi-

valent (v. 15): "*Let death seize upon them by divine warrant, and let them go down quickly into hell*; let them be dead, and buried, and so utterly destroyed, in a moment; for wickedness is wherever they are; it is in the midst of them." The souls of impenitent sinners go down quick, or alive, into hell, for they have a perfect sense of their miseries, and shall therefore live still, that they may be still miserable. This prayer is a prophecy of the utter, the final, the everlasting ruin of all those who, whether secretly or openly, oppose and rebel against the Lord's Messiah.

16 As for me, I will call upon God; and the LORD shall save me. 17 Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice. 18 He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle *that was against me*: for there were many with me. 19 God shall hear, and afflict them, even he that abideth of old. Selah. Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God. 20 He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him: he hath broken his covenant. 21 *The words of his mouth were smoother than butter*, but war *was* in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet *were* they drawn swords. 22 Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. 23 But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in thee.

In these verses,

I. David perseveres in his resolution to call upon God, being well assured that he should not seek him in vain (v. 16): "*As for me*, let them take what course they please to secure themselves, let violence and strife be their guards, prayer shall be mine; this I have found comfort in, and therefore this will I abide by: *I will call upon God*, and commit myself to him, and the LORD shall save me;" for whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, in a right manner, shall be saved, Rom. x. 13. He resolves to be both fervent and frequent in this duty. 1. He will pray fervently: "*I will pray and cry aloud. I will meditate*" (so the former word signifies); "I will speak with my own heart, and the prayer shall come thence." Then we pray aright when we pray with all that is within us, think first and then pray over our thoughts; for the true nature of prayer is lifting up the heart to God. Having meditated, he will cry, he will cry aloud; the fervour of

before the shearers, and a pattern to Christians, who, wherever they are and whatever injuries are done them, ought to be as silent doves. In this former part of the psalm,

I. He complains to God of the malice and wickedness of his enemies, to show what reason he had to fear them, and what cause, what need, there was that God should appear against them (v. 1): *Be merciful unto me, O God!* That petition includes all the good we come to the throne of grace for; if we obtain mercy there, we obtain all we can desire, and need no more to make us happy. It implies likewise our best plea, not our merit, but God's mercy, his free rich mercy. He prays that he might find mercy with God, for with men he could find no mercy. When he fled from the cruel hands of Saul he fell into the cruel hands of the Philistines. "Lord" (says he), "be thou merciful to me now, or I am undone." The mercy of God is what we may flee to and trust to, and in faith pray for, when we are surrounded on all sides with difficulties and dangers. He complains, 1. That his enemies were very numerous (v. 2): "*They are many that fight against me, and think to overpower me with numbers; take notice of this, O thou Most High! and make it to appear that wherein they deal proudly, thou art above them.*" It is a point of honour to come in to the help of one against many. And, if God be on our side, how many soever they are that fight against us, we may, upon good grounds, boast that there are more with us; for (as that great general said) "How many do we reckon him for?" 2. That they were very barbarous: they would *swallow him up*, v. 1 and again v. 2. They sought to devour him; no less would serve; they came upon him with the utmost fury, like beasts of prey, to eat up his flesh, xxvii. 2. *Man* would swallow him up, those of his own kind, from whom he might have expected humanity. The ravenous beasts prey not upon those of their own species; yet a bad man would devour a good man if he could. "They are men, weak and frail; make them to know that they are so," ix. 20. 3. That they were very unanimous (v. 6): *They gather themselves together*; though they were many, and of different interests among themselves, yet they united and combined against David, as Herod and Pilate against the Son of David. 4. That they were very powerful, quite too hard for him if God did not help him: "*They fight against me* (v. 2); *they oppress me*, v. 1. I am almost overcome and borne down by them, and reduced to the last extremity." 5. That they were very subtle and crafty (v. 6): "*They hide themselves*; they industriously cover their designs, that they may the more effectually prosecute and pursue them. They hide themselves as a lion in his den, that they may mark my steps;" that is, "they observe every thing I say and do with a critical eye, that they may have something to accuse

me of" (thus Christ's enemies watched him, Luke xx. 20), or "they have an eye upon all my motions, that they may gain an opportunity to do me a mischief, and may lay their snares for me." 6. That they were very spiteful and malicious. They put invidious constructions upon every thing he said, though ever so honestly meant and prudently expressed (v. 5): "*They wrest my words, put them upon the rack, to extort that out of them which was never in them;*" and so they made him an offender for a word (Isa. xxix. 21), misrepresenting it to Saul, and aggravating it, to incense him yet more against him. They made it their whole business to ruin David; all their thoughts were against him for evil, which put evil interpretations upon all his words. 7. That they were very restless and unwearied. They continually waited for his soul; it was the life, the precious life, they hunted for; it was his death they longed for, v. 6. They fought daily against him (v. 1), and would daily swallow him up (v. 2), and every day they wrested his words, v. 5. Their malice would not admit the least cessation of arms, or the acts of hostility, but they were continually pushing at him. Such as this is the enmity of Satan and his agents against the kingdom of Christ and the interests of his holy religion, which if we cordially espouse, we must not think it strange to meet with such treatment as this, as though some strange thing happened to us. Our betters have been thus used. So persecuted they the prophets.

II. He encourages himself in God, and in his promises, power, and providence, v. 3, 4. In the midst of his complaints, and before he has said what he has to say of his enemies, he triumphs in the divine protection. 1. He resolves to make God his confidence, then when dangers were most threatening and all other confidences failed: "*What time I am afraid, in the day of my fear, when I am most terrified from without and most timorous within, then I will trust in thee, and thereby my fears shall be silenced.*" Note, There are some times which are, in a special manner, times of fear with God's people; in these times it is their duty and interest to trust in God as their God, and to know whom they have trusted. This will fix the heart and keep it in peace. 2. He resolves to make God's promises the matter of his praises, and so we have reason to make them (v. 4): "*In God I will praise, not only his work which he has done, but his word which he has spoken; I will give him thanks for a promise, though not yet performed.*" In God (in his strength and by his assistance) I will both glory in his word and give him the glory of it. Some understand by *his word* his providences, every event that he orders and appoints: "When I speak well of God I will with him speak well of every thing that he does." 3. Thus supported, he will bid defiance to all adverse powers: "*When*

in God I have put my trust, I am safe, I am easy, and I will not fear what flesh can do unto me; it is but flesh, and cannot do much; nay, it can do nothing but by divine permission." As we must not trust to an arm of flesh when it is engaged for us, so we must not be afraid of an arm of flesh when it is stretched out against us.

III. He foresees and foretels the fall of those that fought against him, and of all others that think to establish themselves in and by any wicked practices (v. 7): *Shall they escape by iniquity?* They hope to escape God's judgments, as they escape men's, by violence and fraud, and the arts of injustice and treachery; but shall they escape? No, certainly they shall not. The sin of sinners will never be their security, nor will either their impudence or their hypocrisy bring them off at God's bar; God will in his anger cast down and cast out such people, Rom. ii. 3. None are raised so high, or settled so firmly, but that the justice of God can bring them down, both from their dignities and from their confidences. *Who knows the power of God's anger*, how high it can reach, and how forcibly it can strike?

8 Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: *are they not in thy book?* 9 When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back: this I know; for God is for me. 10 In God will I praise his word: in the LORD will I praise his word. 11 In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me. 12 Thy vows are upon me, O God: I will render praises unto thee. 13 For thou hast delivered my soul from death: *wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling*, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?

Several things David here comforts himself with in the day of his distress and fear.

I. That God took particular notice of all his grievances and all his griefs, v. 8. 1. Of all the inconveniences of his state: *Thou tellest my wanderings*, my *flittings*, so the old translation. David was now but a young man (under thirty) and yet he had had many removes, from his father's house to the court, thence to the camp, and now driven out to sojourn where he could find a place, but not allowed to rest any where; he was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains; continual terrors and toils attended him; but this comforted him, that God kept a particular account of all his motions, and numbered all the weary steps he took, by night or by day. Note, God takes cognizance of all the afflictions of his people; and he does not cast out from his care and love those whom men have cast out from their acquaintance

and converse. 2. Of all the impressions thus made upon his spirit. When he was wandering he was often weeping, and therefore prays, "*Put thou my tears into thy bottle*, to be preserved and looked upon; nay, I know they are in *thy book*, the book of thy remembrance." God has a bottle and a book for his people's tears, both those for their sins and those for their afflictions. This intimates, (1.) That he observes them with compassion and tender concern; he is afflicted in their afflictions, and knows their souls in adversity. As the blood of his saints, and their deaths, are precious in the sight of the Lord, so are their tears, not one of them shall fall to the ground. *I have seen thy tears*, 2 Kings xx. 5. *I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself*, Jer. xxxi. 18. (2.) That he will remember them and review them, as we do the accounts we have booked. Paul was mindful of Timothy's tears (2 Tim. i. 4), and God will not forget the sorrows of his people. The tears of God's persecuted people are bottled up and sealed among God's treasures; and, when these books come to be opened, they will be found vials of wrath, which will be poured out upon their persecutors, whom God will surely reckon with for all the tears they have forced from his people's eyes; and they will be breasts of consolation to God's mourners, whose sackcloth will be turned into garments of praise. God will comfort his people according to the time wherein he has afflicted them, and give to those to reap in joy who sowed in tears. What was sown a tear will come up a pearl.

II. That his prayers would be powerful for the defeat and discomfiture of his enemies, as well as for his own support and encouragement (v. 9): "*When I cry unto thee, then shall my enemies turn back*; I need no other weapons than prayers and tears; *this I know, for God is for me*, to plead my cause, to protect and deliver me; and, if God be for me, who can be against me so as to prevail?" The saints have God for them; they may know it; and to him they must cry when they are surrounded with enemies; and, if they do this in faith, they shall find a divine power exerted and engaged for them; their enemies shall be made to turn back, their spiritual enemies, against whom we fight best upon our knees, Eph. vi. 18.

III. That his faith in God would set him above the fear of man, v. 10, 11. Here he repeats, with a strong pathos, what he had said (v. 4), "*In God will I praise his word*; that is, I will firmly depend upon the promise for the sake of him that made it, who is true and faithful, and has wisdom, power, and goodness enough to make it good." When we give credit to a man's bill we honour him that drew it; so when we do, and suffer, for God, in a dependence upon his promise, not staggering at it, we give glory to God, we praise his word, and so give praise to him. Having thus put his trust in

pointed their designs against me hitherto, and therefore he will perfect my deliverance. (3.) What he will ascribe his salvation to: *God shall send forth his mercy and truth.* God is good in himself and faithful to every word that he has spoken, and so he makes it appear when he works deliverance for his people. We need no more to make us happy than to have the benefit of the mercy and truth of God, xxv. 10.

II. He represents the power and malice of his enemies (v. 4): *My soul is among lions.* So fierce and furious was Saul, and those about him, against David, that he might have been as safe in a den of lions as among such men, who were continually roaring against him and ready to make a prey of him. They are set on fire, and breathe nothing but flame; they set on fire the course of nature, inflaming one another against David, and *they were themselves set on fire of hell*, Jam. iii. 6. They were sons of men, from whom one might have expected something of the reason and compassion of a man; but they were beasts of prey in the shape of men; their *teeth*, which they gnashed upon him, and with which they hoped to tear him to pieces and to eat him up, *were spears and arrows* fitted for mischiefs and murders; and their *tongue*, with which they cursed him and wounded his reputation, was *as a sharp sword* to cut and kill; see xlii. 10. A spiteful tongue is a dangerous weapon, wherewith Satan's instruments fight against God's people. He describes their malicious projects against him (v. 6) and shows the issue of them: "*They have prepared a net for my steps*, in which to take me, that I might not again escape out of their hands; *they have digged a pit before me*, that I might, ere I was aware, run headlong into it." See the policies of the church's enemies; see the pains they take to do mischief. But let us see what comes of it. 1. It is indeed some disturbance to David: *My soul is bowed down.* It made him droop, and hang the head, to think that there should be those that bore him so much ill-will. But, 2. It was destruction to themselves; they dug a pit for David, *into the midst whereof they have fallen.* The mischief they designed against David returned upon themselves, and they were embarrassed in their counsels; then when Saul was pursuing David the Philistines were invading him; nay, in the cave, when Saul thought David should fall into his hands, he fell into the hands of David, and lay at his mercy.

III. He prays to God to glorify himself and his own great name (v. 5): "*Whatever becomes of me and my interest, be thou exalted, O God! above the heavens*, be thou praised by the holy angels, those glorious inhabitants of the upper world; *and let thy glory be above or over all the earth*; let all the inhabitants of this earth be brought to know and praise thee." Thus God's glory should lie nearer our hearts, and we should be more concerned

for it, than for any particular interests of our own. When David was in the greatest distress and disgrace he did not pray, *Lord, exalt me*, but, *Lord, exalt thy own name.* Thus the Son of David, when his soul was troubled, and he prayed, *Father, save me from this hour*, immediately withdrew that petition, and presented this in the room of it, *For this cause came I to this hour; Father, glorify thy name*, John xii. 27, 28. Or it may be taken as a plea to enforce his petition for deliverance: "*Lord, send from heaven to save me*, and thereby thou wilt glorify thyself as the God both of heaven and earth." Our best encouragement in prayer is taken from the glory of God, and to that therefore, more than our own comfort, we should have an eye in all our petitions for particular mercies; for this is made the first petition in the Lord's prayer, as that which regulates and directs all the rest, *Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name.*

7 My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise. 8 Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early. 9 I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations. 10 For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds. 11 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: let thy glory be above all the earth.

How strangely is the tune altered here! David's prayers and complaints, by the lively actings of faith, are here, all of a sudden, turned into praises and thanksgivings; his sackcloth is loosed, he is girded with gladness, and his hallelujahs are as fervent as his hosannas. This should make us in love with prayer, that, sooner or later, it will be swallowed up in praise. Observe,

I. How he prepares himself for the duty of praise (v. 7): *My heart is fixed, O God: my heart is fixed.* My heart is erect, or lifted up (so some), which was bowed down, v. 6. *My heart is fixed*, 1. With reference to God's providences; it is prepared for every event, being *stayed upon God*, cxii. 7; Isa. xxvi. 3. *My heart is fixed*, and then *none of these things move me*, Acts xx. 24. If by the grace of God we be brought into this even composed frame of spirit, we have great reason to be thankful. 2. With reference to the worship of God: *My heart is fixed to sing and give praise.* It is implied that the heart is the main thing required in all acts of devotion; nothing is done to purpose, in religion, further than it is done with the heart. The heart must be fixed, fixed for the duty, fitted and put in frame for it, fixed in the duty by a close application, attending on the Lord without distraction

II. How he excites himself to the duty of

praise (v. 8): *Awake up my glory*, that is, my tongue (our tongue is our glory, and never more so than when it is employed in praising God), or my soul, that must be first awakened; dull and sleepy devotions will never be acceptable to God. We must stir up ourselves, and all that is within us, to praise God; with a holy fire must that sacrifice be kindled, and ascend in a holy flame. David's tongue will lead, and his psaltery and harp will follow, in these hymns of praise. *I myself will awake*, not only. "I will not be dead, and drowsy, and careless, in this work," but, "I will be in the most lively frame, as one newly awakened out of a refreshing sleep." He will awake early to this work, early in the morning, to begin the day with God, early in the beginnings of a mercy. When God is coming towards us with his favours we must go forth to meet him with our praises.

III. How he pleases himself, and (as I may say) even prides himself, in the work of praise; so far is he from being ashamed to own his obligations to God, and dependence upon him, that he resolves to *praise him among the people* and to *sing unto him among the nations*, v. 9. This intimates, 1. That his own heart was much affected and enlarged in praising God; he would even make the earth ring with his sacred songs, that all might take notice how much he thought himself indebted to the goodness of God. 2. That he desired to bring others in to join with him in praising God. He will publish God's praises *among the people*, that the knowledge, and fear, and love of God might be propagated, and the ends of the earth might see his salvation. When David was driven out into heathen lands he would not only not worship their gods, but he would openly avow his veneration for the God of Israel, would take his religion along with him wherever he went, would endeavour to bring others in love with it, and leave the sweet savour of it behind him. David, in his psalms, which fill the universal church, and will to the end of time, may be said to be still *praising God among the people* and *singing to him among the nations*; for all good people make use of his words in praising God. Thus St. John, in his writings, is said to *prophesy again before many peoples and nations*, Rev. x. 11.

IV. How he furnishes himself with matter for praise, v. 10. That which was the matter of his hope and comfort (*God shall send forth his mercy and his truth*, v. 3) is here the matter of his thanksgiving: *Thy mercy is great unto the heavens*, great beyond conception and expression; and *thy truth unto the clouds*, great beyond discovery, for what eye can reach that which is wrapped up in the clouds? God's mercy and truth reach to the heavens, for they will bring all such to heaven as lay up their treasure in them and build their hopes upon them. God's mercy and truth are praised even to the heavens, that is, by all the bright and blessed inhabitants of

the upper world, who are continually exalting God's praises to the highest, while David, on earth, is endeavouring to spread his praises to the furthest, v. 9.

V. How he leaves it at last to God to glorify his own name (v. 11): *Be thou exalted, O God!* The same words which he had used (v. 5) to sum up his prayers in he here uses again (and no vain repetition) to sum up his praises in: "Lord, I desire to exalt thy name, and that all the creatures may exalt it; but what can the best of us do towards it? Lord, take the work unto thy own hands; do it thyself: *Be thou exalted, O God!* In the praises of the church triumphant thou art exalted to the heavens, and in the praises of the church militant thy glory is throughout all the earth; but thou art above all the blessing and praise of both (Neh. ix. 5), and therefore, Lord, exalt thyself *above the heavens and above all the earth*. *Father, glorify thy own name. Thou hast glorified it, glorify it yet again.*"

PSALM LVIII.

It is the probable conjecture of some (Amyraldus particularly) that before Saul began to persecute David by force of arms, and raised the militia to seize him, he formed a process against him by course of law, upon which he was condemned unheard, and attainted as a traitor, by the great council, or supreme court of judicature, and then proclaimed "qui caput gerit lupinum—an outthrew wolf," whom any man might kill and no man might protect. The elders, in order to curry favour with Saul, having passed this bill of attainder, it is supposed that David penned this psalm on the occasion. 1. He describes their sin, and aggravates that, ver. 1-5. 2. He imprecates and foretells their ruin, and the judgments which the righteous God would bring upon them for their injustice (ver. 6-9), which would redound, 1. To the comfort of the saints, ver. 10. 2. To the glory of God, ver. 11. Sin appears here both exceedingly sinful and exceedingly dangerous, and God a just avenger of wrong, with which we should be affected in singing this psalm.

To the chief musician, Al-taschith, Michtam of David.

DO ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation? do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men? 2 Yea, in heart ye work wickedness; ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth. 3 The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. 4 Their poison is like the poison of a serpent: *they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear*; 5 Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely.

We have reason to think that this psalm refers to the malice of Saul and his janizaries against David, because it bears the same inscription (*Al-taschith*, and *Michtam of David*) with that which goes before and that which follows, both which appear, by the title, to have been penned with reference to that persecution through which God preserved him (*Al-taschith—Destroy not*), and therefore the psalms he then penned were precious to him, *Michtams—David's jewels*, as Dr. Hammond translates it.

In these verses David, not as a king, for

ners away, dead or alive, they cannot contest with him. *The wicked are driven away in their wickedness.* Now,

2. There are two things which the psalmist promises himself as the good effects of sinners' destruction:—(1.) That saints would be encouraged and comforted by it (v. 10): *The righteous shall rejoice when he sees the vengeance.* The pomp and power, the prosperity and success, of the wicked, are a discouragement to the righteous; they sadden their hearts, and weaken their hands, and are sometimes a strong temptation to them to question their foundations, lxxiii. 2, 13. But when they see the judgments of God hurrying them away, and just vengeance taken on them for all the mischief they have done to the people of God, they rejoice in the satisfaction thereby given to their doubts and the confirmation thereby given to their faith in the providence of God and his justice and righteousness in governing the world; they shall rejoice in the victory thus gained over that temptation by seeing *their end*, lxxiii.

17. *He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked;* that is, there shall be abundance of bloodshed (lxviii. 23), and it shall be as great a refreshment to the saints to see God glorified in the ruin of sinners as it is to a weary traveller to have his feet washed. It shall likewise contribute to their sanctification; the sight of the vengeance shall make them tremble before God (cxix. 120) and shall convince them of the evil of sin, and the obligations they lie under to that God who pleads their cause and will suffer no man to do them wrong and go unpunished for it. The joy of the saints in the destruction of the wicked is then a holy joy, and justifiable, when it helps to make them holy and to purify them from sin. (2.) That sinners would be convinced and converted by it, v. 11. The vengeance God sometimes takes on the wicked in this world will bring men to say, *Verily, there is a reward for the righteous.* Any man may draw this inference from such providences, and many a man shall, who before denied even these plain truths or doubted of them. Some shall have this confession extorted from them, others shall have their minds so changed that they shall willingly own it, and thank God who has given them to see it and see it with satisfaction, That God is, and, [1.] That he is the bountiful rewarder of his saints and servants: *Verily (however it be, so it may be read) there is a fruit to the righteous;* whatever damage a man may sustain, whatever hazard he may run, and whatever hardship he may undergo for his religion, he shall not only be no loser by it, but an unspeakable gainer in the issue. Even in this world there is a reward for the righteous; they shall be recompensed in the earth. Those shall be taken notice of, honoured, and protected, that seemed slighted, despised, and abandoned. [2.] That he is the righteous governor of the world, and will

surely reckon with the enemies of his kingdom: *Verily, however it be, though wicked people prosper, and bid defiance to divine justice, yet it shall be made to appear, to their confusion, that the world is not governed by chance, but by a Being of infinite wisdom and justice; there is a God that judges in the earth,* though he has prepared his throne in the heavens. He presides in all the affairs of the children of men, and directs and disposes them according to the counsel of his will, to his own glory; and he will punish the wicked, not only in the world to come, but *in the earth*, where they have laid up their treasure and promised themselves a happiness—in the earth, that the Lord may be known by the judgments which he executes, and that they may be taken as earnest of a judgment to come. *He is a God* (so we read it), not a weak man, not an angel, not a mere name, not (as the atheists suggest) a creature of men's fear and fancy, not a deified hero, not the sun and moon, as idolaters imagined, but a God, a self-existent perfect Being; he it is that judges the earth; his favour therefore let us seek, from whom every man's judgment proceeds, and to him let all judgment be referred.

PSALM LIX.

This psalm is of the same nature and scope with six or seven foregoing psalms: they are all filled with David's complaints of the malice of his enemies and of their cursed and cruel designs against him, his prayers and prophecies against them, and his comfort and confidence in God as his God. The first is the language of nature, and may be allowed; the second of a prophetic spirit, looking forward to Christ and the enemies of his kingdom, and therefore not to be drawn into a precedent; the third of grace and a most holy faith, which ought to be imitated by every one of us. In this psalm, 1. He prays to God to defend and deliver him from his enemies, representing them as very bad men, barbarous, malicious, and atheistical, ver. 1—7. 2. He foresees and foretells the destruction of his enemies, which he would give to God the glory of, ver. 8—17. As far as it appears that any of the particular enemies of God's people fall under these characters, we may, in singing this psalm, read their doom and foresee their ruin.

To the chief musician, Al-taschith, Michtam of David, when Saul sent and they watched the house to kill him.

DELIVER me from mine enemies, O my God: defend me from them that rise up against me. 2 Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloody men. 3 For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul: the mighty are gathered against me; not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O LORD. 4 They run and prepare themselves without my fault: awake to help me, and behold. 5 Thou therefore, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel, awake to visit all the heathen: be not merciful to any wicked transgressors. Selah. 6 They return at evening: they make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city. 7 Behold, they belch out with their

mouth : swords *are* in their lips : for who, *say they*, doth hear ?

The title of this psalm acquaints us particularly with the occasion on which it was penned; it was when Saul sent a party of his guards to beset David's house in the night, that they might seize him and kill him; we have the story 1 Sam. xix. 11. It was when his hostilities against David were newly begun, and he had but just before narrowly escaped Saul's javelin. These first eruptions of Saul's malice could not but put David into disorder and be both grievous and terrifying, and yet he kept up his communion with God, and such a composure of mind as that he was never out of frame for prayer and praises; happy are those whose intercourse with heaven is not intercepted nor broken in upon by their cares, or griefs, or fears, or any of the hurries (whether outward or inward) of an afflicted state. In these verses,

I. David prays to be delivered out of the hands of his enemies, and that their cruel designs against him might be defeated (v. 1, 2): "*Deliver me from my enemies, O my God! thou art God, and canst deliver me, my God, under whose protection I have put myself; and thou hast promised me to be a God all-sufficient, and therefore, in honour and faithfulness, thou wilt deliver me. Set me on high out of the reach of the power and malice of those that rise up against me, and above the fear of it. Let me be safe, and see myself so, safe and easy, safe and satisfied. O deliver me! and save me.*" He cries out as one ready to perish, and that had his eye to God only for salvation and deliverance. He prays (v. 4), "*Awake to help me, take cognizance of my case, behold that with an eye of pity, and exert thy power for my relief.*" Thus the disciples, in the storm, awoke Christ, saying, *Master, save us, we perish.* And thus earnestly should we pray daily to be defended and delivered from our spiritual enemies, the temptations of Satan, and the corruptions of our own hearts, which war against our spiritual life.

II. He pleads for deliverance. Our God gives us leave not to pray, but to plead with him, to order our cause before him and to fill our mouth with arguments, not to move him, but to move ourselves. David does so here.

1. He pleads the bad character of his enemies. They are *workers of iniquity*, and therefore not only his enemies, but God's enemies; they are *bloody men*, and therefore not only his enemies, but enemies to all mankind. "Lord, let not the workers of iniquity prevail against one that is a worker of righteousness, nor bloody men against a merciful man."

2. He pleads their malice against him, and the imminent danger he was in from them, v. 3. "Their spite is great; they aim at my soul, my life, my better part. They are subtle and very politic: *They lie in wait*, taking an

opportunity to do me a mischief. They are all mighty, men of honour and estates, and interest in court and country. They are in a confederacy; they are united by league, and actually gathered together against me, combined both in consultation and action. They are very ingenious in their contrivances, and very industrious in the prosecution of them (v. 4): *They run and prepare themselves*, with the utmost speed and fury, to do me a mischief." He takes particular notice of the brutish conduct of the messengers that Saul sent to take him (v. 6): "*They return at evening from the posts assigned them in the day, to apply themselves to their works of darkness (their night-work, which may well be their day-shame), and then they make a noise like a hound in pursuit of the hare.*" Thus did David's enemies, when they came to take him, raise an out-cry against him as a rebel, a traitor, a man not fit to live; with this clamour they went round about the city, to bring a bad reputation upon David, if possible to set the mob against him, at least to prevent their being incensed against them, which otherwise they had reason to fear they would be, so much was David their darling. Thus the persecutors of our Lord Jesus, who are compared to dogs (xxii. 16), ran him down with noise; for else they could not have taken him, at least not on the feast-day, for there would have been an uproar among the people. *They belch out with their mouth* the malice that boils in their hearts, v. 7. *Swords are in their lips*; that is, reproaches that wound my heart with grief (xlii. 10), and slanders that stab and wound my reputation. They were continually suggesting that which drew and whetted Saul's sword against him, and the fault is laid upon the false accusers. The sword perhaps would not have been in Saul's hand if it had not been first in their lips.

3. He pleads his own innocence, not as to God (he was never backward to own himself guilty before him), but as to his persecutors; what they charged him with was utterly false, nor had he ever said or done any thing to deserve such treatment from them (v. 3): "*Not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O Lord! thou knowest, who knowest all things.*" And again (v. 4), *without my fault.* Note, (1.) The innocence of the godly will not secure them from the malignity of the wicked. Those that are harmless like doves, yet, for Christ's sake, are hated of all men, as if they were noxious like serpents, and obnoxious accordingly. (2.) Though our innocence will not secure us from troubles, yet it will greatly support and comfort us under our troubles. The testimony of our conscience for us that we have behaved ourselves well towards those that behave themselves ill towards us will be very much our rejoicing in the day of evil. (3.) If we are conscious to ourselves of our innocence, we may with humble confidence appeal to God and beg of

ing people may take the general deliverances of the church as answers to their prayers in particular. If we improve what interest we have at the throne of grace for blessings for the public, and those blessings be bestowed, besides the share we have with others in the benefit of them we may each of us say, with peculiar satisfaction, "God has therein heard me, and answered me."

6 God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. 7 Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine; Ephraim also is the strength of mine head; Judah is my lawgiver; 8 Moab is my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe: Philistia, triumph thou because of me. 9 Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom? 10 *Wilt* not thou, O God, which hadst cast us off? and thou, O God, which didst not go out with our armies? 11 Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man. 12 Through God we shall do valiantly: for he *it is that* shall tread down our enemies.

David is here rejoicing in hope and praying in hope; such are the triumphs of the saints, not so much upon the account of what they have in possession as of what they have in prospect (v. 6): "*God has spoken in his holiness* (that is, he has given me his word of promise, has sworn by his holiness, and he will not lie unto David, lxxix. 35), therefore *I will rejoice*, and please myself with the hopes of the performance of the promise, which was intended for more than a pleasing promise." Note, God's word of promise, being a firm foundation of hope, is a full fountain of joy to all believers.

I. David here rejoices; and it is in prospect of two things:—

1. The perfecting of this revolution in his own kingdom. God having *spoken in his holiness* that David shall be king, he doubts not but the kingdom is all his own, as sure as if it were already in his hand: *I will divide Shechem* (a pleasant city in Mount Ephraim) *and mete out the valley of Succoth*, as my own. *Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine*, and both are entirely reduced, v. 7. Ephraim would furnish him with soldiers for his life-guards and his standing forces; Judah would furnish him with able judges for his courts of justice; and thus Ephraim would be the strength of his head and Judah his lawgiver. Thus may an active believer triumph in the promises, and take the comfort of all the good contained in them; for they are all yea and amen in Christ. "*God has spoken in his holiness*, and then pardon is mine, peace mine, grace mine, Christ mine, heaven mine, God

himself mine." *All is yours, for you are Christ's*, 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23.

2. The conquering of the neighbouring nations, which had been vexatious to Israel, were still dangerous, and opposed the throne of David, v. 8. Moab shall be enslaved, and put to the meanest drudgery. *The Moabites became David's servants*, 2 Sam. viii. 2. Edom shall be made a dunghill to throw old shoes upon; at least David shall take possession of it as his own, which was signified by *drawing off his shoe* over it, Ruth iv. 7. As for the Philistines, let them, if they dare, triumph over him as they had done; he will soon force them to change their note. Rather let those that know their own interest triumph because of him; for it would be the greatest kindness imaginable to them to be brought into subjection to David and communion with Israel. But the war is not yet brought to an end; there is a *strong city*, Rabbah (perhaps) of the children of Ammon, which yet holds out; Edom is not yet subdued. Now, (1.) David is here enquiring for help to carry on the war: "*Who will bring me into the strong city?*" What allies, what auxiliaries, can I depend upon, to make me master of the enemies' country and their strongholds?" Those that have begun a good work cannot but desire to make a thorough work of it, and to bring it to perfection. (2.) He is expecting it from God only: "*Wilt not thou, O God?*" For thou hast *spoken in thy holiness*; and wilt not thou be as good as thy word?" He takes notice of the frowns of Providence they had been under: *Thou hadst, in appearance, cast us off; thou didst not go forth with our armies*. When they were defeated and met with disappointments, they owned it was because they wanted (that is, because they had forfeited) the gracious presence of God with them; yet they do not therefore fly off from him, but rather take so much the faster hold of him; and the less he has done for them of late the more they hoped he would do. At the same time that they own God's justice in what was past they hope in his mercy for what was to come. "*Though thou hadst cast us off*, yet thou wilt not contend for ever, thou wilt not always chide; though *thou hadst cast us off*, yet thou hast begun to show mercy; and wilt thou not perfect what thou hast begun?" The Son of David, in his sufferings, seemed to be cast off by his Father when he cried out, *Why hast thou forsaken me?* and yet even then he obtained a glorious victory over the powers of darkness and their strong city, a victory which will undoubtedly be completed at last; for he has gone forth conquering and to conquer. The Israel of God, his spiritual Israel, are likewise, through him, more than conquerors. Though sometimes they may be tempted to think that God has cast them off, and may be foiled in particular conflicts, yet God will bring them into the strong city at last. *Vincimur in prælio, sed non in bello*

—We are foiled in a battle, but not in the whole war. A lively faith in the promise will assure us, not only that the God of peace shall tread Satan under our feet shortly, but that it is our Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom.

II. He prays in hope. His prayer is, *Give us help from trouble*, v. 11. Even in the day of their triumph they see themselves in trouble, because still in war, which is troublesome even to the prevailing side. None therefore can delight in war but those that love to fish in troubled waters. The *help from trouble* they pray for is preservation from those they were at war with. Though now they were conquerors, yet (so uncertain are the issues of war), unless God gave them help in the next engagement, they might be defeated; therefore, *Lord, send us help from the sanctuary. Help from trouble is rest from war, which they prayed for, as those that contended for equity, not for victory. Sic querimus pacem—Thus we seek for peace.* The hope with which they support themselves in this prayer has two things in it:—1. A diffidence of themselves and all their creature-confidences: *Vain is the help of man.* Then only we are qualified to receive help from God when we are brought to own the insufficiency of all creatures to do that for us which we expect him to do. 2. A confidence in God, and in his power and promise (v. 12): *Through God we shall do valiantly*, and so we shall do victoriously; for *he it is*, and he only, *that shall tread down our enemies*, and shall have the praise of doing it." Note, (1.) Our confidence in God must be so far from superseding that it must encourage and quicken our endeavours in the way of our duty. Though *it is God that performs all things for us*, yet there is something to be done by us. (2.) Hope in God is the best principle of true courage. Those that do their duty under his conduct may afford to do it valiantly; for what need those fear who have God on their side? (3.) It is only through God, and by the influence of his grace, that we do valiantly; it is he that puts strength into us, and inspires us, who of ourselves are weak and timorous, with courage and resolution. (4.) Though we do ever so valiantly, the success must be attributed entirely to him; for *he it is that shall tread down our enemies*, and not we ourselves. All our victories, as well as our valour, are from him, and therefore at his feet all our crowns must be cast.

PSALM LXI.

David, in this psalm, as in many others, begins with a sad heart, but concludes with an air of pleasantness—begins with prayers and tears, but ends with songs of praise. Thus the soul, by being lifted up to God, returns to the enjoyment of itself. It should seem David was driven out and banished when he penned this psalm, whether by Saul or Absalom is uncertain; some think by Absalom, because he calls himself "the king" (ver. 6), but that refers to the King Messiah. David, in this psalm, resolves to persevere in his duty, encouraged thereto both by his experience and by his expectations. I. He will call upon God because God had protected him, ver. 1—3. II. He will call upon God because God had provided well for him, ver. 4, 5. III. He will praise God because he had an assurance of the continuance of God's favour to him, ver. 6—8. So that, in singing this psalm, we may find that which is very expressive both of our faith and

of our hope, of our prayers and of our praises; and some passages in this psalm are very peculiar.

To the chief musician upon Neginah. *A psalm* of David.

HEAR my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer. 2 From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I. 3 For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy. 4 I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever: I will trust in the covert of thy wings. Selah.

In these verses we may observe,

I. David's close adherence and application to God by prayer in the day of his distress and trouble: "Whatever comes, *I will cry unto thee* (v. 2),—not cry unto other gods, but to thee only,—not fall out with thee because thou afflictest me, but still look unto thee, and wait upon thee,—not speak to thee in a cold and careless manner, but cry to thee with the greatest importunity and fervency of spirit, as one that will not let thee go except thou bless me." This he will do, 1. Notwithstanding his distance from the sanctuary, the house of prayer, where he used to attend as in the court of requests: *"From the end of the earth, or of the land, from the most remote and obscure corner of the country, will I cry unto thee."* Note, Wherever we are we may have liberty of access to God, and may find a way open to the throne of grace. *Undique ad celos tantundem est via—Heaven is equally accessible from all places.* "Nay, because I am here in the end of the earth, in sorrow and solitude, therefore *I will cry unto thee.*" Note, That which separates us from our other comforts should drive us so much the nearer to God, the fountain of all comfort. 2. Notwithstanding the dejection and despondency of his spirit: "Though *my heart is overwhelmed*, it is not so sunk, so burdened, but that it may be lifted up to God in prayer; if it is not capable of being thus raised, it is certainly too much cast down. Nay, because my heart is ready to be overwhelmed, therefore *I will cry unto thee*, for by that means it will be supported and relieved." Note, Weeping must quicken praying, and not deaden it. *Is any afflicted? Let him pray*, Jam. v. 13; Ps. cii., title.

II. The particular petition he put up to God when his heart was overwhelmed and he was ready to sink: *Lead me to the rock that is higher than I*; that is, 1. "To the rock which is too high for me to get up to unless thou help me to it. Lord, give me such an assurance and satisfaction of my own safety as I can never attain to but by thy special grace working such a faith in me." 2. "To the rock on the top of which I shall be set further out of the reach of my trou-

bles, and nearer the serene and quiet region, than I can be by any power or wisdom of my own." God's power and promise are a rock that is higher than we. This rock is Christ; those are safe that are in him. We cannot get upon this rock unless God by his power lead us. *I will put thee in the cleft of the rock*, Exod. xxxiii. 22. We should therefore by faith and prayer put ourselves under the divine management, that we may be taken under the divine protection.

III. His desire and expectation of an answer of peace. He begs in faith (v. 1): "*Hear my cry, O God! attend unto my prayer*; that is, let me have the present comfort of knowing that I am heard (xx. 6), and in due time let me have that which I pray for."

IV. The ground of this expectation, and the plea he uses to enforce his petition (v. 3): "*Thou hast been a shelter for me*; I have found in thee a rock higher than I: therefore I trust thou wilt still lead me to that rock." Note, Past experiences of the benefit of trusting in God, as they should engage us still to keep close to him, so they should encourage us to hope that it will not be in vain. "*Thou hast been my strong tower from the enemy*, and thou art as strong as ever, and thy name is as much a refuge to the righteous as ever it was," Prov. xviii. 10.

V. His resolution to continue in the way of duty to God and dependence on him, v. 4. 1. The service of God shall be his constant work and business. All those must make it so who expect to find God their shelter and strong tower: none but his menial servants have the benefit of his protection. *I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever*. David was now banished from the tabernacle, which was his greatest grievance, but he is assured that God by his providence would bring him back to his tabernacle, because he had by his grace wrought in him such a kindness for the tabernacle as that he was resolved to make it his perpetual residence, xxvii. 4. He speaks of abiding in it *for ever* because that tabernacle was a type and figure of heaven, Heb. ix. 8, 9, 24. Those that dwell in God's tabernacle, as it is a house of duty, during their short *ever* on earth, shall dwell in that tabernacle which is the house of glory during an endless *ever*. 2. The grace of God and the covenant of grace shall be his constant comfort: *I will make my refuge in the covert of his wings*, as the chickens seek both warmth and safety under the wings of the hen. Those that have found God a shelter to them ought still to have recourse to him in all their straits. This advantage those have that abide in God's tabernacle, that in the time of trouble he shall there hide them.

5 For thou, O God, hast heard my vows: thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name. 6 Thou wilt prolong the king's life: and his years as many generations. 7 He shall

abide before God for ever: O prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve him. 8 So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever, that I may daily perform my vows.

In these verses we may observe,

I. With what pleasure David looks back upon what God had done for him formerly (v. 5): *Thou, O God! hast heard my vows*, that is, 1. "The vows themselves which I made, and with which I bound my soul: thou hast taken notice of them; thou hast accepted them, because made in sincerity, and been well pleased with them; thou hast been mindful of them, and put me in mind of them." God put Jacob in mind of his vows, Gen. xxxi. 13; xxxv. 1. Note, God is a witness to all our vows, all our good purposes, and all our solemn promises of new obedience. He keeps an account of them, which should be a good reason with us, as it was with David here, why we should perform our vows, v. 8. For he that hears the vows we made will make us hear respecting them if they be not made good. 2. "The prayers that went along with those vows; those thou hast graciously heard and answered," which encouraged him now to pray, *O God! hear my cry*. He that never did say to the seed of Jacob, Seek you me in vain, will not now begin to say so. "Thou hast heard my vows, and given a real answer to them; for *thou hast given me a heritage of those that fear thy name*." Note, (1.) There is a peculiar people in the world that fear God's name, that with a holy awe and reverence accept of and accommodate themselves to all the discoveries he is pleased to make of himself to the children of men. (2.) There is a heritage peculiar to that peculiar people, present comforts, earnest of their future bliss. God himself is their inheritance, their portion for ever. The Levites that had God for their inheritance must take up with him, and not expect a lot like their brethren; so those that fear God have enough in him, and therefore must not complain if they have but little of the world. (3.) We need desire no better heritage than that of those who fear God. If God deal with us as he uses to deal with those that love his name we need not desire to be any better dealt with.

II. With what assurance he looks forward to the continuance of his life (v. 6): *Thou shalt prolong the king's life*. This may be understood either, 1. Of himself. If it was penned before he came to the crown, yet, being anointed by Samuel, and knowing what God had spoken in his holiness, he could in faith call himself *the king*, though now persecuted as an out-law; or perhaps it was penned when Absalom sought to dethrone him, and force him into exile. There were those that aimed to shorten his life, but he trusted to God to prolong his life, which he

did to the age of man set by Moses (namely, seventy years), which, being spent in serving his generation according to the will of God (Acts. xiii. 36), might be reckoned as *many generations*, because many generations would be the better for him. His resolution was to abide in God's tabernacle for ever (v. 4), in a way of duty; and now his hope is that he shall abide before God for ever, in a way of comfort. Those abide to good purpose in this world that abide before God, that serve him and walk in his fear; and those that do so shall abide before him for ever. He speaks of himself in the third person, because the psalm was delivered to the chief musician for the use of the church, and he would have the people, in singing it, to be encouraged with an assurance that, notwithstanding the malice of his enemies, their king, as they wished, should live for ever. Or, 2. Of the Messiah, the King of whom he was a type. It was a comfort to David to think, whatever became of him, that the years of the Lord's Anointed would be as many generations, and that *of the increase of his government and peace there should be no end*. The Mediator shall abide before God for ever, for he always appears in the presence of God for us, and ever lives, making intercession; and, because he lives, we shall live also.

III. With what importunity he begs of God to take him and keep him always under his protection: *O prepare mercy and truth which may preserve him!* God's promises and our faith in them are not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage prayer. David is sure that God will prolong his life, and therefore prays that he would preserve it, not that he would prepare him a strong life-guard, or a well-fortified castle, but that he would prepare mercy and truth for his preservation; that is, that God's goodness would provide for his safety according to the promise. We need not desire to be better secured than under the protection of God's mercy and truth. This may be applied to the Messiah: "Let him be sent in the fulness of time, in performance of the truth to Jacob and the mercy to Abraham." Micah. vii. 20; Luke i. 72, 73.

IV. With what cheerfulness he vows the grateful returns of duty to God (v. 8): *So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever*. Note, God's preservation of us calls upon us to praise him; and therefore we should desire to live, that we may praise him: *Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee*. We must make praising God the work of our time, even to the last (as long as our lives are prolonged we must continue praising God), and then it shall be made the work of our eternity, and we shall be praising him for ever. *That I may daily perform my vows*. His praising God was itself the performance of his vows, and it disposed his heart to the performance of his vows in other instances. Note, 1. The vows we have made we must conscientiously

perform. 2. Praising God and paying our vows to him must be our constant daily work; every day we must be doing something towards it, because it is all but little in comparison with what is due, because we daily receive fresh mercies, and because, if we think much to do it daily, we cannot expect to be doing it eternally.

PSALM LXII.

This psalm has nothing in it directly either of prayer or praise, nor does it appear upon what occasion it was penned, nor whether upon any particular occasion, whether mournful or joyful. But in it, 1. David with a great deal of pleasure professes his own confidence in God and dependence upon him, and encourages himself to continue waiting on him, ver. 1-7. 11. With a great deal of earnestness he excites and encourages others to trust in God likewise, and not in any creature, ver. 8-12. In singing it we should stir up ourselves to wait on God.

To the chief musician, to Jeduthun. A psalm of David.

TRULY my soul waiteth upon God: from him *cometh* my salvation. 2 He only *is* my rock and my salvation; *he is* my defence; I shall not be greatly moved. 3 How long will ye imagine mischief against a man? ye shall be slain all of you: as a bowing wall *shall ye be, and as a tottering fence*. 4 They only consult to cast *him* down from his excellency: they delight in lies: they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly. Selah. 5 My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation *is* from him. 6 He only *is* my rock and my salvation: *he is* my defence; I shall not be moved. 7 In God *is* my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, *is* in God.

In these verses we have,

I. David's profession of dependence upon God, and upon him only, for all good (v. 1): *Truly my soul waiteth upon God*. Nevertheless (so some) or "However it be, whatever difficulties or dangers I may meet with, though God frown upon me and I meet with discouragements in my attendance on him, yet still my soul waits upon God" (or *is silent to God*, as the word is), "says nothing against what he does, but quietly expects what he will do." We are in the way both of duty and comfort when our souls wait upon God, when we cheerfully refer ourselves, and the disposal of all our affairs, to his will and wisdom, when we acquiesce in and accommodate ourselves to all the dispensations of his providence, and patiently expect a doubtful event, with an entire satisfaction in his righteousness and goodness, *however it be*. *Is not my soul subject to God?* So the LXX. So it is, certainly so it ought to be; our wills must be melted into his will. *My soul has respect to God, for from him cometh my salvation*. He doubts not but his salvation will come, though now he was threatened and in danger,

and he expects it to come from God, and from him only; for *in vain is it hoped for from hills and mountains*, Jer. iii. 23; Ps. cxxi. 1, 2. "From him I know it will come, and therefore on him will I patiently wait till it does come, for his time is the best time." We may apply it to our eternal salvation, which is called *the salvation of God* (1. 23); from him it comes; he prepared it for us, he prepares us for it, and preserves us to it, and therefore let our souls wait on him, to be conducted through this world to that eternal salvation, in such way as he thinks fit.

II. The ground and reason of this dependence (v. 2): *He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence*. 1. He has been so many a time; in him I have found shelter, and strength, and succour. He has by his grace supported me and borne me up under my troubles, and by his providence defended me from the insults of my enemies and delivered me out of the troubles into which I was plunged; and therefore *I trust he will deliver me*, 2 Cor. i. 10. 2. "He only can be my rock and my salvation. Creatures are insufficient; they are nothing without him, and therefore I will look above them to him." 3. "He has by covenant undertaken to be so. Even he that is the rock of ages is my rock; he that is the God of salvation is my salvation; he that is the Most High is my high place; and therefore I have all the reason in the world to confide in him."

III. The improvement he makes of his confidence in God.

1. Trusting in God, his heart is fixed. "If God is my strength and mighty deliverer, *I shall not be greatly moved* (that is, I shall not be undone and ruined); I may be shocked, but I shall not be sunk." Or, "I shall not be much disturbed and disquieted in my own breast. I may be put into some fright, but I shall not be afraid with any amazement, nor so as to be put out of the possession of my own soul. I may be perplexed, but not in despair," 2 Cor. iv. 8. This hope in God will be an anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast.

2. His enemies are slighted, and all their attempts against him looked upon by him with contempt, v. 3, 4. If God be for us, we need not fear what man can do against us, though ever so mighty and malicious. He here, (1.) Gives a character of his enemies: *They imagine mischief*, design it with a great deal of the serpent's venom and contrive it with a great deal of the serpent's subtlety, and this *against a man*, one of their own kind, against one single man, that is not an equal match for them, for they are many; they continued their malicious persecution though Providence had often defeated their mischievous designs. "How long will you do it? Will you never be convinced of your error? Will your malice never have spent itself?" They are unanimous in their consultations to cast an excellent man down from his excellency, to

draw an honest man from his integrity, to entangle him in sin, which is the only thing that can effectually cast us down from our excellency, to thrust a man, whom God has exalted, down from his dignity, and so to fight against God. Envy was at the bottom of their malice; they were grieved at David's advancement, and therefore plotted, by diminishing his character and blackening that (which was casting him down from his excellency) to hinder his preferment. In order to this they calumniate him, and love to hear such bad characters given of him and such bad reports raised and spread concerning him as they themselves know to be false: *They delight in lies*. And as they make no conscience of lying concerning him, to do him a mischief, so they make no conscience of lying to him, to conceal the mischief they design, and accomplish it the more effectually: *They bless with their mouth* (they compliment David to his face), *but they curse inwardly*; in their hearts they wish him all mischief, and privately they are plotting against him and in their cabals carrying on some evil design or other, by which they hope to ruin him. It is dangerous putting our trust in men who are thus false; but God is faithful. (2.) He reads their doom, pronounces a sentence of death upon them, not as a king, but as a prophet: *You shall be slain all of you*, by the righteous judgments of God. Saul and his servants were slain by the Philistines on Mount Gilboa, according to this prediction. Those who seek the ruin of God's chosen are but preparing ruin for themselves. God's church is built upon a rock which will stand, but those that fight against it, and its patrons and protectors, shall be *as a bowing wall and a tottering fence*, which, having a rotten foundation, sinks with its own weight, falls of a sudden, and buries those in the ruins of it that put themselves under the shadow and shelter of it. David, having put his confidence in God, thus foresees the overthrow of his enemies, and, in effect, sets them at defiance and bids them do their worst.

3. He is himself encouraged to continue waiting upon God (v. 5—7): *My soul, wait thou only upon God*. Note, The good we do we should stir up ourselves to continue doing, and to do yet more and more, as those that have, through grace, experienced the comfort and benefit of it. We have found it good to wait upon God, and therefore should charge our souls, and even charm them, into such a constant dependence upon him as may make us always easy. He had said (v. 1), *From him cometh my salvation*; he says (v. 5), *My expectation is from him*. His salvation was the principal matter of his expectation; let him have that from God, and he expects no more. His salvation being from God, all his other expectations are from him. "If God will save my soul, as to every thing else let him do what he pleases with me,

and I will acquiesce in his disposals, knowing they shall all turn to my salvation," Phil. i. 19. He repeats (v. 6) what he had said concerning God (v. 2), as one that was not only assured of it, but greatly pleased with it, and that dwelt much upon it in his thoughts: *He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence*, I know he is; but there he adds, *I shall not be greatly moved*, here, *I shall not be moved at all*. Note, The more faith is acted the more active it is. *Crescit eundo*—It grows by being exercised. The more we meditate upon God's attributes and promises, and our own experience, the more ground we get of our fears, which, like Haman, when they begin to fall, shall fall before us, and we shall be kept in perfect peace, Isa. xxvi. 3. And, as David's faith in God advances to an unshaken stayedness, so his joy in God improves itself into a holy triumph (v. 7): *In God is my salvation and my glory*. Where our salvation is there our glory is; for what is our salvation but the glory to be revealed, the eternal weight of glory? And there our glorying must be. In God let us boast all the day long. "The rock of my strength (that is, my strong rock, on which I build my hopes and stay myself) and my refuge, to which I flee for shelter when I am pursued, is in God, and in him only. I have no other to flee to, no other to trust to; the more I think of it the better satisfied I am in the choice I have made." Thus does he *delight himself in the Lord, and then ride upon the high places of the earth*, Isa. lviii. 14.

8 Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah. 9 Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity. 10 Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, set not your heart upon them. 11 God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God. 12 Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy: for thou renderest to every man according to his work.

Here we have David's exhortation to others to trust in God and wait upon him, as he had done. Those that have found the comfort of the ways of God themselves will invite others into those ways; there is enough in God for all the saints to draw from, and we shall have never the less for others sharing with us.

I. He counsels all to wait upon God, as he did, v. 8. Observe,

1. To whom he gives this good counsel: *You people* (that is, all people); all shall be welcome to trust in God, for he is the confi-

dence of all the ends of the earth, lxxv. 5. *You people of the house of Israel* (so the Chaldee); they are especially engaged and invited to trust in God, for he is the God of Israel; and should not a people seek unto their God?

2. What the good counsel is which he gives. (1.) To confide in God: "*Trust in him*; deal with him, and be willing to deal upon trust; depend upon him to perform all things for you, upon his wisdom and goodness, his power and promise, his providence and grace. Do this at all times." We must have an habitual confidence in God always, must live a life of dependence upon him, must so trust in him at all times as not at any time to put that confidence in ourselves, or in any creature, which is to be put in him only; and we must have an actual confidence in God upon all occasions, trust in him upon every emergency, to guide us when we are in doubt, to protect us when we are in danger, to supply us when we are in want, to strengthen us for every good word and work. (2.) To converse with God: *Pour out your heart before him*. The expression seems to allude to the pouring out of the drink-offerings before the Lord. When we make a penitent confession of sin our hearts are therein poured out before God, 1 Sam. vii. 6. But here it is meant of prayer, which, if it be as it should be, is the pouring out of the heart before God. We must lay our grievances before him, offer up our desires to him with all humble freedom, and then entirely refer ourselves to his disposal, patiently submitting our wills to his: this is pouring out our hearts.

3. What encouragement he gives us to take this good counsel: *God is a refuge for us*, not only my refuge (v. 7), but a refuge for us all, even as many as will flee to him and take shelter in him.

II. He cautions us to take heed of misplacing our confidence, in which, as much as in any thing, *the heart is deceitful*, Jer. xvii. 5—9. Those that trust in God truly (v. 1) will trust in him only, v. 5. 1. Let us not trust in the men of this world, for they are broken reeds (v. 9): *Surely men of low degree are vanity*, utterly unable to help us, and *men of high degree are a lie*, that will deceive us if we trust to them. Men of low degree, one would think, might be relied on for their multitude and number, their bodily strength and service, and men of high degree for their wisdom, power, and influence; but neither the one nor the other are to be depended on. Of the two, men of high degree are mentioned as the more deceiving; for they are a lie, which denotes not only vanity, but iniquity. We are not so apt to depend upon men of low degree as upon the king and the captain of the host, who, by the figure they make, tempt us to trust in them, and so, when they fail us, prove a lie. But lay them in the balance, the balance of the scripture, or rather make trial of them, see how they

will prove, whether they will answer your expectations from them or no, and you will write *Tekel* upon them; they are alike *lighter than vanity*; there is no depending upon their wisdom to advise us, their power to act for us, their good-will to us, no, nor upon their promises, in comparison with God, nor otherwise than in subordination to him. 2. Let us not trust in the wealth of this world, let not that be made our strong city (v. 10): *Trust not in oppression*; that is, in riches got by fraud and violence, because where there is a great deal it is commonly got by indirect scraping or saving (our Saviour calls it the *mammon of unrighteousness*, Luke xvi. 9), or in the arts of getting riches. "Think not, either because you have got abundance or are in the way of getting, that therefore you are safe enough; for this is becoming *vain in robbery*, that is, cheating yourselves while you think to cheat others." He that *trusted in the abundance of his riches strengthened himself in his wickedness* (lii. 7); but at his end he will be a fool, Jer. xvii. 11. Let none be so stupid as to think of supporting themselves in their sin, much less of supporting themselves in this sin. Nay, because it is hard to have riches and not to trust in them, if they increase, though by lawful and honest means, we must take heed lest we let out our affections inordinately towards them: "*Set not your heart upon them*"; be not eager for them, do not take a complacency in them as the rest of your souls, nor put a confidence in them as your portion; be not over-solicitous about them; do not value yourselves and others by them; make not the wealth of the world your chief good and highest end: in short, do not make an idol of it." This we are most in danger of doing when riches increase. When the grounds of the rich man brought forth plentifully, then he said to his soul, *Take thy ease* in these things, Luke xii. 19. It is a smiling world that is most likely to draw the heart away from God, on whom only it should be set.

III. He gives a very good reason why we should make God our confidence, because he is a God of infinite power, mercy, and righteousness, v. 11, 12. This he himself was well assured of and would have us be assured of it: *God has spoken once; twice have I heard this*; that is, 1. "God has spoken it, and I have heard it, once, yea, twice. He has spoken it, and I have heard it by the light of reason, which easily infers it from the nature of the infinitely perfect Being and from his works both of creation and providence. He has spoken it, and I have heard once, yea, twice (that is, many a time), by the events that have concerned me in particular. He has spoken it and I have heard it by the light of revelation, by dreams and visions (Job iv. 15), by the glorious manifestation of himself upon Mount Sinai" (to which, some think, it does especially refer), "and by the written word." God has often told us

what a great and good God he is, and we ought as often to take notice of what he has told us. Or, 2. "Though God spoke it but once, I heard it twice, heard it diligently, not only with my outward ears, but with my soul and mind." To some God speaks twice and they will not hear once; but to others he speaks but once, and they hear twice. Compare Job xxxiii. 14. Now what is it which is thus spoken and thus heard? (1.) That the God with whom we have to do is infinite in power. *Power belongs to God*; he is almighty, and can do every thing; with him nothing is impossible. All the powers of all the creatures are derived from him, depend upon him, and are used by him as he pleases. His is the power, and to him we must ascribe it. This is a good reason why we should trust in him at all times and live in a constant dependence upon him; for he is able to do all that for us which we trust in him for. (2.) That he is a God of infinite goodness. Here the psalmist turns his speech to God himself; as being desirous to give him the glory of his goodness, which is his glory: *Also unto thee, O Lord! belongeth mercy*. God is not only the greatest, but the best, of beings. Mercy is with him, cxxx. 4, 7. He is merciful in a way peculiar to himself; he is the *Father of mercies*, 2 Cor. i. 3. This is a further reason why we should trust in him, and answers the objections of our sinfulness and unworthiness; though we deserve nothing but his wrath, yet we may hope for all good from his mercy, which is over all his works. (3.) That he never did, nor ever will do, any wrong to any of his creatures: *For thou renderest to every man according to his work*. Though he does not always do this visibly in this world, yet he will do it in the day of recompence. No service done him shall go unrewarded, nor any affront given him unpunished, unless it be repented of. By this it appears that power and mercy belong to him. If he were not a God of power, there are sinners that would be too great to be punished. And if he were not a God of mercy there are services that would be too worthless to be rewarded. This seems especially to bespeak the justice of God in judging upon appeals made to him by wronged innocency; he will be sure to judge according to truth, in giving redress to the injured and avenging them on those that have been injurious to them, 1 Kings viii. 32. Let those therefore that are wronged commit their cause to him and trust to him to plead it.

PSALM LXIII.

This psalm has in it as much of warmth and lively devotion as any of David's psalms in so little a compass. As the sweetest of Paul's epistles were those that bore date out of a prison, so some of the sweetest of David's psalms were those that were penned, as this was, in a wilderness. That which grieved him most in his banishment was the want of public ordinances; these he here longs to be restored to the enjoyment of; and the present want did but whet his appetite. Yet it is not the ordinances, but the God of the ordinances, that his heart is upon. And here we have, I. His desire towards God, ver. 1, 2. II. His extream of God, ver. 3, 4. III. His satisfaction in God, ver. 5. IV. His secret communion with God, ver. 6. V. His joyful dependence upon God, ver. 7, 8. VI. His holy triumph in God over his enemies and in the assurance of his own safety, ver. 9-11. A de-

vout and pious soul has little need of direction how to sing this psalm, so naturally does it speak its own genuine language; and an unsanctified soul, that is unacquainted and unaffected with divine things, is scarcely capable of singing it with understanding.

A psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.

O GOD, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; 2 To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.

The title tells us when the psalm was penned, when David was in the wilderness of Judah; that is, in the forest of Hareth (1 Sam. xxii. 5) or in the wilderness of Ziph, 1 Sam. xxiii. 15. 1. Even in Canaan, though a fruitful land and the people numerous, yet there were wildernesses, places less fruitful and less inhabited than other places. It will be so in the world, in the church, but not in heaven; there it is all city, all paradise, and no desert ground; the wilderness there shall blossom as the rose. 2. The best and dearest of God's saints and servants may sometimes have their lot cast in a wilderness, which speaks them lonely and solitary, desolate and afflicted, wanting, wandering, and unsettled, and quite at a loss what to do with themselves. 3. All the straits and difficulties of a wilderness must not put us out of tune for sacred songs; but even then it is our duty and interest to keep up a cheerful communion with God. There are psalms proper for a wilderness, and we have reason to thank God that it is the wilderness of Judah we are in, not the wilderness of Sin.

David, in these verses, stirs up himself to take hold on God,

I. By a lively active faith: *O God! thou art my God.* Note, In all our addresses to God we must eye him as God, and our God, and this will be our comfort in a wilderness-state. We must acknowledge that God is, that we speak to one that really exists and is present with us, when we say, *O God!* which is a serious word; pity it should ever be used as a by-word. And we must own his authority over us and propriety in us, and our relation to him: *"Thou art my God, mine by creation and therefore my rightful owner and ruler, mine by covenant and my own consent."* We must speak it with the greatest pleasure to ourselves, and thankfulness to God, as those that are resolved to abide by it: *O God! thou art my God.*

II. By pious and devout affections, pursuant to the choice he had made of God and the covenant he had made with him.

1. He resolves to seek God, and his favour and grace. *Thou art my God, and therefore I will seek thee; for should not a people seek unto their God?* Isa. viii. 19. We must seek him; we must covet his favour as our chief good and consult his glory as our

highest end; we must seek acquaintance with him by his word and seek mercy from him by prayer. We must seek him, (1.) Early, with the utmost care, as those that are afraid of missing him; we must begin our days with him, begin every day with him: *Early will I seek thee.* (2.) Earnestly: *"My soul thirsteth for thee and my flesh longeth for thee* (that is, my whole man is affected with this pursuit) *here in a dry and thirsty land."* Observe, [1.] His complaint in the want of God's favourable presence. He was in a dry and thirsty land; so he reckoned it, not so much because it was a wilderness as because it was at a distance from the ark, from the word and sacraments. This world is a weary land (so the word is); it is so to the worldly that have their portion in it—it will yield them no true satisfaction; it is so to the godly that have their passage through it—it is a valley of Baca; they can promise themselves little from it. [2.] His importunity for that presence of God: *My soul thirsteth, longeth, for thee.* His want quickened his desires, which were very intense; he thirsted as the hunted hart for the water-brooks; he would take up with nothing short of it. His desires were almost impatient; he longed, he languished, till he should be restored to the liberty of God's ordinances. Note, Gracious souls look down upon the world with a holy disdain and look up to God with a holy desire.

2. He longs to enjoy God. What is it that he does so passionately wish for? What is his petition and what is his request? It is this (v. 2), *To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.* That is, (1.) "To see it here in this wilderness as I have seen it in the tabernacle, to see it in secret as I have seen it in the solemn assembly." Note, When we are deprived of the benefit of public ordinances we should desire and endeavour to keep up the same communion with God in our retirements that we have had in the great congregation. A closet may be turned into a little sanctuary. Ezekiel had the visions of the Almighty in Babylon, and John in the isle of Patmos. When we are alone we may have the Father with us, and that is enough. (2.) "To see it again in the sanctuary as I have formerly seen it there." He longs to be brought out of the wilderness, not that he might see his friends again and be restored to the pleasures and gaieties of the court, but that he might have access to the sanctuary, not to see the priests there, and the ceremony of the worship, but to see thy power and glory (that is, thy glorious power, or thy powerful glory, which is put for all God's attributes and perfections), "that I may increase in my acquaintance with them and have the agreeable impressions of them made upon my heart"—so to behold the glory of the Lord as to be changed into the same image, 2 Cor. iii. 18. "That I may see thy power and glory," he does not say, as I have seen them,

but "as I have seen thee." We cannot see the essence of God, but we see him in seeing by faith his attributes and perfections. These sights David here pleases himself with the remembrance of. Those were precious minutes which he spent in communion with God; he loved to think them over again; these he lamented the loss of, and longed to be restored to. Note, That which has been the delight and is the desire of gracious souls, in their attendance on solemn ordinances, is to see God and his power and glory in them.

3 Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. 4 Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name. 5 My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: 6 When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches.

How soon are David's complaints and prayers turned into praises and thanksgivings! After two verses that express his desire in seeking God, here are some that express his joy and satisfaction in having found him. Faithful prayers may quickly be turned into joyful praises, if it be not our own fault. *Let the hearts of those rejoice that seek the Lord* (cv. 3), and let them praise him for working those desires in them, and giving them assurance that he will satisfy them. David was now in a wilderness, and yet had his heart much enlarged in blessing God. Even in affliction we need not want matter for praise, if we have but a heart to it. Observe,

I. What David will praise God for (v. 3): *Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, than lives, life and all the comforts of life, life in its best estate, long life and prosperity.* God's lovingkindness is in itself, and in the account of all the saints, better than life. It is our spiritual life, and that is better than temporal life, xxx. 5. It is better, a thousand times, to die in God's favour than to live under his wrath. David in the wilderness finds, by comfortable experience, that God's lovingkindness is better than life; and therefore (says he) *my lips shall praise thee.* Note, Those that have their hearts refreshed with the tokens of God's favour ought to have them enlarged in his praises. A great deal of reason we have to bless God that we have better provisions and better possessions than the wealth of this world can afford us, and that in the service of God, and in communion with him, we have better employments and better enjoyments than we can have in the business and converse of this world.

II. How he will praise God, and how long, v. 4. He resolves to live a life of thankful-

ness to God and dependence on him. Observe, 1. His manner of blessing God: *"Thus will I bless thee,* thus as I have now begun; the present devout affections shall not pass away, like the morning cloud, but shine more and more, like the morning sun." Or, "I will bless thee with the same earnestness and fervency with which I have prayed to thee." 2. His continuance and perseverance therein: *I will bless thee while I live.* Note, Praising God must be the work of our whole lives; we must always retain a grateful sense of his former favours and repeat our thanksgivings for them. We must every day give thanks to him for the benefits with which we are daily loaded. We must in every thing give thanks, and not be put out of frame for this duty by any of the afflictions of this present time. Whatever days we live to see, how dark and cloudy soever, though the days come of which we say, *We have no pleasure in them,* yet still every day must be a thanksgiving-day, even to our dying-day. In this work we must spend our time because in this work we hope to spend a blessed eternity. 3. His constant regard to God upon all occasions, which should accompany his praises of him: *I will lift up my hands in thy name.* We must have an eye to God's name (to all that by which he has made himself known) in all our prayers and praises, which we are taught to begin with,—*Hallowed be thy name,* and to conclude with,—*Thine is the glory.* This we must have an eye to in our work and warfare; we must lift up our hands to our duty and against our special enemies in God's name, that is, in the strength of his Spirit and grace, lxxi. 16; Zech. x. 12. We must make all our vows in God's name; to him we must engage ourselves and in a dependence upon his grace. And when we lift up the hands that hang down, in comfort and joy, it must be in God's name; from him our comforts must be fetched, and to him they must be devoted. *In thee do we boast all the day long.*

III. With what pleasure and delight he would praise God, v. 5. 1. With inward complacency: *My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness,* not only as with bread, which is nourishing, but as with marrow, which is pleasant and delicious, Isa. xxv. 6. David hopes he shall return again to the enjoyment of God's ordinances, and then he shall thus be satisfied, and the more for his having been for a time under restraint. Or, if not, yet in God's loving kindness, and in conversing with him in solitude, he shall be thus satisfied. Note, There is that in a gracious God, and in communion with him, which gives abundant satisfaction to a gracious soul, xxxvi. 8; lxxv. 4. And there is that in a gracious soul which takes abundant satisfaction in God and communion with him. The saints have a contentment with God; they desire no more than his favour to make them happy: and they have a trans-

cedent complacency in God, in comparison with which all the delights of sense are sappiness and without relish, as puddle-water in comparison with the wine of this consolation. 2. With outward expressions of this satisfaction; he will praise God *with joyful lips*. He will praise him, (1.) Openly. His mouth and lips shall praise God. When with the heart man believes and is thankful, with the mouth confession must be made of both, to the glory of God; not that the performances of the mouth are accepted without the heart (Matt. xv. 8), but out of the abundance of the heart the mouth must speak (xlv. 1), both for the exciting of our own devout affections and for the edification of others. (2.) Cheerfully. We must praise God with joyful lips; we must address ourselves to that and other duties of religion with great cheerfulness, and speak forth the praises of God from a principle of holy joy. Praising lips must be joyful lips.

IV. How he would entertain himself with thoughts of God when he was most retired (v. 6): I will praise thee *when I remember thee upon my bed*. We must praise God upon every remembrance of him. Now that David was shut out from public ordinances he abounded the more in secret communion with God, and so did something towards making up his loss. Observe here, 1. How David employed himself in thinking of God. God was in all his thoughts, which is the reverse of the wicked man's character, x. 4. The thoughts of God were ready to him: "*I remember thee*; that is, when I go to think, I find thee at my right hand, present to my mind." This subject should first offer itself, as that which we cannot forget or overlook. And they were fixed in him: *I meditate on thee*." Thoughts of God must not be transient thoughts, passing through the mind, but abiding thoughts, dwelling in the mind. 2. When David employed himself *thus upon his bed* and in the night-watches. David was now wandering and unsettled, but, wherever he came, he brought his religion along with him. Upon my beds (so some); being hunted by Saul, he seldom lay two nights together in the same bed; but wherever he lay, if, as Jacob, upon the cold ground and with a stone for his pillow, good thoughts of God lay down with him. David was so full of business all day, shifting for his own safety, that he had scarcely leisure to apply himself solemnly to religious exercises, and therefore, rather than want time for them, he denied himself his necessary sleep. He was now in continual peril of his life, so that we may suppose care and fear many a time held his eyes waking and gave him wearisome nights; but then he entertained and comforted himself with thoughts of God. Sometimes we find David in tears upon his bed (vi. 6), but thus he wiped away his tears. When sleep departs from our eyes (through pain, or sickness of body, or any disturbance

in the mind) our souls, by remembering God, may be at ease, and repose themselves. Perhaps an hour's pious meditation will do us more good than an hour's sleep would have done. See xvi. 7; xvii. 3; iv. 4; cxix. 62. There were night-watches kept in the tabernacle for praising God (cxxxiv. 1), in which, probably, David, when he had liberty, joined with the Levites; and now that he could not keep place with them he kept time with them, and wished himself among them.

7 Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. 8 My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me. 9 But those *that* seek my soul, to destroy *it*, shall go into the lower parts of the earth. 10 They shall fall by the sword: they shall be a portion for foxes. 11 But the king shall rejoice in God; every one that sweareth by him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.

David, having expressed his desires towards God and his praises of him, here expresses his confidence in him and his joyful expectations from him (v. 7): *In the shadow of thy wings I will rejoice*, alluding either to the wings of the cherubim stretched out over the ark of the covenant, between which God is said to dwell ("I will rejoice in thy oracles, and in covenant and communion with thee"), or to the wings of a fowl, under which the helpless young ones have shelter, as the eagle's young ones (Exod. xix. 4, Deut. xxxii. 11), which speaks the divine power, and the young ones of the common hen (Matt. xxiii. 37), which speaks more of divine tenderness. It is a phrase often used in the psalms (xvii. 8; xxxvi. 7; lvii. 1; lxi. 4; xci. 4), and nowhere else in this sense, except Ruth ii. 12, where Ruth, when she became a proselyte, is said to *trust under the wings of the God of Israel*. It is our duty to rejoice in the shadow of God's wings, which denotes our recourse to him by faith and prayer, as naturally as the chickens, when they are cold or frightened, run by instinct under the wings of the hen. It intimates also our reliance upon him as able and ready to help us and our refreshment and satisfaction in his care and protection. Having committed ourselves to God, we must be easy and pleased, and quiet from the fear of evil. Now let us see further,

I. What were the supports and encouragements of David's confidence in God. Two things were as props to that hope which the word of God was the only foundation of:—

1. His former experiences of God's power in relieving him: "*Because thou hast been my help* when other helps and helpers failed me, therefore I will still rejoice in thy salva-

It is bad to do a wrong thing, but worse to encourage ourselves and one another in doing α ; this is doing the devil's work for him. It is a sign that the heart is hardened to the highest degree when it is thus fully set to do evil and fears no colours. It is the office of conscience to discourage men in an evil matter, but, when that is baffled, the case is desperate. (2.) They consult with themselves and one another how to do the most mischief and most effectually: *They commune of laying snares privily*. All their communion is in sin and all their communication is how to sin securely. They hold councils of war for finding out the most effectual expedients to do mischief; every snare they lay was talked of before, and was laid with all the contrivance of their wicked wits combined. (3.) They please themselves with an atheistical conceit that God himself takes no notice of their wicked practices: *They say, Who shall see them?* A practical disbelief of God's omniscience is at the bottom of all the wickedness of the wicked.

3. They are very industrious in putting their projects in execution (v. 6): "*They search out iniquity*; they take a great deal of pains to find out some iniquity or other to lay to my charge; they dig deep, and look far back, and put things to the utmost stretch, that they may have something to accuse me of;" or, "They are industrious to find out new arts of doing mischief to me; in this they accomplish a diligent search; they go through with it, and spare neither cost nor labour. *Evil men dig up mischief*. Half the pains that many take to damn their souls would serve to save them. They are masters of all the arts of mischief and destruction, for *the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart, are deep, deep as hell*, desperately wicked, who can know it? By the unaccountable wickedness of their wit and of their will, they show themselves to be, both in subtlety and malignity, the genuine offspring of the old serpent.

7 But God shall shoot at them *with* an arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded. 8 So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves: all that see them shall flee away. 9 And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God; for they shall wisely consider of his doing. 10 The righteous shall be glad in the LORD, and shall trust in him; and all the upright in heart shall glory.

We may observe here,

I. The judgments of God which should certainly come upon these malicious persecutors of David. Though they encouraged themselves in their wickedness, here is that which, if they would believe and consider it, was enough to discourage them. And it is

observable how the punishment answers the sin. 1. They shot at David secretly and suddenly, to wound him; but God shall shoot at them, for he *ordains his arrows against the persecutors* (vii. 13), *against the face of them*, xxi. 12. And God's arrows will hit surer, and fly swifter, and pierce deeper, than theirs do or can. They have many arrows, but they are only bitter words, and words are but wind: the curse causeless shall not come. But God has one arrow that will be their death, his curse which is never causeless, and therefore shall come; with it they shall be suddenly wounded, that is, their wound by it will be a surprise upon them, because they were secure and not apprehensive of any danger. 2. Their tongues fell upon him, but God shall *make their tongues to fall upon themselves*. They do it by the desert of their sin; God does it by the justice of his wrath, v. 8. When God deals with men according to the desert of their tongue-sins, and brings those mischiefs upon them which they have passionately and maliciously imprecated upon others, then he makes their own tongues to fall upon them; and it is weight enough to sink a man to the lowest hell, like a talent of lead. Many have cut their own throats, and many more have damned their own souls, with their tongues, and it will be an aggravation of their condemnation. *O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself, art snared in the words of thy mouth*. If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it. Those that love cursing, it shall come unto them. Sometimes men's secret wickedness is brought to light by their own confession, and then their own tongue falls upon them.

II. The influence which these judgments should have upon others; for it is done *in the open sight of all*, Job xxxiv. 26.

1. Their neighbours shall shun them and shift for their own safety. *They shall flee away*, for fear of partaking in their plagues and being involved in their ruin, so dreadful will it be and such a noise will it make in the country. They shall flee away, as the men of Israel did from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, Num. xvi. 27. Some think this was fulfilled in the death of Saul, when not only his army was dispersed, but the inhabitants of the neighbouring country were so terrified with the fall, not only of their king but of his three sons, that they quitted their cities and fled, 1 Sam. xxxi. 7.

2. Spectators shall reverence the providence of God therein, v. 9. (1.) They shall understand and observe God's hand in all (and, unless we do so, we are not likely to profit by the dispensations of Providence, Hos. xiv. 9): *They shall wisely consider his doing*. There is need of consideration and serious thought rightly to apprehend the matter of fact, and need of wisdom to put a true interpretation upon it. God's doing is well worth our considering (Eccl. vii. 13), but it must be considered wisely, that we put not

a corrupt gloss upon a pure text. (2.) They shall be affected with a holy awe of God upon the consideration of it. All men (all that have any thing of the reason of a man in them) shall fear and tremble because of God's judgments, cxix. 120. They shall fear to do the like, fear being found persecutors of God's people. *Smite the scorner and the simple shall beware.* (3.) They shall declare the work of God. They shall speak to one another and to all about them of the justice of God in punishing persecutors. What we wisely consider ourselves we should wisely declare to others, for their edification and the glory of God. *This is the finger of God.*

3. Good people shall in a special manner take notice of it, and it shall affect them with a holy pleasure, v. 10. (1.) It shall increase their joy: *The righteous shall be glad in the Lord*, not glad of the misery and ruin of their fellow-creatures, but glad that God is glorified, and his word fulfilled, and the cause of injured innocency pleaded effectually. (2.) It shall encourage their faith. They shall commit themselves to him in the way of duty and be willing to venture for him with an entire confidence in him. (3.) Their joy and faith shall both express themselves in a holy boasting: *All the upright in heart*, that keep a good conscience and approve themselves to God, *shall glory*, not in themselves, but in the favour of God, in his righteousness and goodness, their relation to him and interest in him. *Let him that glories glory in the Lord.*

PSALM LXV.

In this psalm we are directed to give to God the glory of his power and goodness, which appear, 1. In the kingdom of grace (ver. 1), hearing prayer (ver. 2), pardoning sin (ver. 3), satisfying the souls of the people (ver. 4), protecting and supporting them, ver. 5. 11. In the kingdom of Providence, fixing the mountains (ver. 6), calming the sea (ver. 7), preserving the regular succession of day and night (ver. 8), and making the earth fruitful, ver. 9—13. These are blessings we are all indebted to God for, and therefore we may easily accommodate this psalm to ourselves in singing it.

To the chief musician. A psalm and song of David.

PRAISE waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed. 2 O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come. 3 Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away. 4 Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple. 5 By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation; who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea.

The psalmist here has no particular concern of his own at the throne of grace, but

begins with an address to God, as the master of an assembly and the mouth of a congregation; and observe,

I. How he gives glory to God, v. 1. 1. By humble thankfulness: *Praise waiteth for thee, O God! in Zion*, waits in expectation of the mercy desired, waits till it arrives, that it may be received with thankfulness at its first approach. When God is coming towards us with his favours we must go forth to meet him with our praises, and wait till the day dawn. "Praise waits, with an entire satisfaction in thy holy will and dependence on thy mercy." When we stand ready in every thing to give thanks, then praise waits for God. "Praise waits thy acceptance" *The Levites by night stood in the house of the Lord*, ready to sing their songs of praise at the hour appointed (cxxxiv. 1, 2), and thus their praise waited for him. *Praise is silent unto thee* (so the word is), as wanting words to express the great goodness of God, and being struck with a silent admiration at it. As there are holy groanings which cannot be uttered, so there are holy adorings which cannot be uttered, and yet shall be accepted by him that searches the heart and knows what is the mind of the spirit. Our praise is silent, that the praises of the blessed angels, who excel in strength, may be heard. Let it not be told him that I speak, for if a man offer to speak forth all God's praise surely he shall be swallowed up, Job xxxvii. 20. Before thee praise is reputed as silence (so the Chaldee), so far exalted is God above all our blessing and praise. Praise is due to God from all the world, but it waits for him in Zion only, in his church, among his people. All his works praise him (they minister matter for praise), but only his saints bless him by actual adorations. The redeemed church sing their new song upon Mount Zion, Rev. xiv. 1, 3. In Zion was God's dwelling-place, lxxvi. 2. Happy are those who dwell with him there, for they will be still praising him. 2. By sincere faithfulness: *Unto thee shall the vow be performed*, that is, the sacrifice shall be offered up which was vowed. We shall not be accepted in our thanksgivings to God for the mercies we have received unless we make conscience of paying the vows which we made when we were in pursuit of the mercy; for better it is not to vow than to vow and not to pay.

II. What he gives him glory for.

1. For hearing prayer (v. 2): *Praise waits for thee*; and why is it so ready? (1.) "Because thou art ready to grant our petitions. O thou that hearest prayer! thou canst answer every prayer, for thou art able to do for us more than we are able to ask or think (Eph. iii. 20), and thou wilt answer every prayer of faith, either in kind or kindness." It is much for the glory of God's goodness, and the encouragement of ours, that he is a God hearing prayer, and has taken it among the titles of his honour to be so; and we are

much wanting to ourselves if we do not take all occasions to give him his title. (2.) Because, for that reason, we are ready to run to him when we are in our straits. *"Therefore, because thou art a God hearing prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come; justly does every man's praise wait for thee, because every man's prayer waits on thee when he is in want or distress, whatever he does at other times. Now only the seed of Israel come to thee, and the proselytes to their religion; but, when thy house shall be called a house of prayer to all people, then unto thee shall all flesh come, and be welcome,"* Rom. x. 12, 13. To him let us come, and come boldly, because he is a God that hears prayer.

2. For pardoning sin. In this *who is a God like unto him?* Micah vii. 18. By this he proclaims his name (Exod. xxiv. 7), and therefore, upon this account, praise waits for him, v. 3. *"Our sins reach to the heavens, iniquities prevail against us, and appear so numerous, so heinous, that when they are set in order before us we are full of confusion and ready to fall into despair. They prevail so against us that we cannot pretend to balance them with any righteousness of our own, so that when we appear before God our own consciences accuse us and we have no reply to make; and yet, as for our transgressions, thou shalt, of thy own free mercy and for the sake of a righteousness of thy own providing, purge them away, so that we shall not come into condemnation for them."* Note, The greater our danger is by reason of sin the more cause we have to admire the power and riches of God's pardoning mercy, which can invalidate the threatening force of our manifold transgressions and our mighty sins.

3. For the kind entertainment he gives to those that attend upon him and the comfort they have in communion with him. Iniquity must first be purged away (v. 3) and then we are welcome to compass God's altars, v. 4. Those that come into communion with God shall certainly find true happiness and full satisfaction in that communion.

(1.) They are blessed. Not only blessed is the nation (xxiii. 12), but *blessed is the man, the particular person, how mean soever, whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts; he is a happy man, for he has the surest token of the divine favour and the surest pledge and earnest of everlasting bliss.* Observe here, [1.] What it is to come into communion with God, in order to this blessedness. *First*, It is to approach to him by laying hold on his covenant, setting our best affections upon him, and letting out our desires towards him; it is to converse with him as one we love and value. *Secondly*, It is to dwell in his courts, as the priests and Levites did, that were at home in God's house; it is to be constant in the exercises of religion, and apply ourselves closely to them as we do

to that which is the business of our dwelling-place. [2.] How we come into communion with God, not recommended by any merit of our own, nor brought in by any management of our own, but by God's free choice: *"Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and so distinguishest from others who are left to themselves;"* and it is by his effectual special grace pursuant to that choice; whom he chooses he causes to approach, not only invites them, but inclines and enables them, to draw nigh to him. He draws them, John vi. 44.

(2.) They shall be satisfied. Here the psalmist changes the person, not, *He* shall be satisfied (the man whom thou choosest), but, *We* shall, which teaches us to apply the promises to ourselves and by an active faith to put our own names into them: *We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.* Note, [1.] God's holy temple is his house; there he dwells, where his ordinances are administered. [2.] God keeps a good house. There is abundance of goodness in his house, righteousness, grace, and all the comforts of the everlasting covenant; there is enough for all, enough for each; it is ready, always ready; and all on free cost, without money and without price. [3.] In those things there is that which is satisfying to a soul, and with which all gracious souls will be satisfied. Let them have the pleasure of communion with God, and that suffice them; they have enough, they desire no more.

4. For the glorious operations of his power on their behalf (v. 5): *By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation!* This may be understood of the rebukes which God in his providence sometimes gives to his own people; he often answers them by terrible things, for the awakening and quickening of them, but always in righteousness; he neither does them any wrong nor means them any hurt, for even then he is the God of their salvation. See Isa. xlv. 15. But it is rather to be understood of his judgments upon their enemies. God answers his people's prayers by the destructions made, for their sakes, among the heathen, and the recompence he renders to their proud oppressors, as a righteous God, the God to whom vengeance belongs, and as the God that protects and saves his people. *By wonderful things* (so some read it), things which are very surprising, and which we looked not for, Isa. lxiv. 3. Or, *"By things which strike an awe upon us thou wilt answer us."* The holy freedom that we are admitted to in God's courts, and the nearness of our approach to him, must not at all abate our reverence and godly fear of him; for he is *terrible in his holy places.*

5. For the care he takes of all his people, however distressed, and whithersoever dispersed. He is *the confidence of all the ends of the earth* that is, of all the saints all the world over and not theirs only that were of

the seed of Israel; for he is the God of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews, the confidence of those that are afar off from his holy temple and its courts, that dwell in the islands of the Gentiles, or that are in distress upon the sea. They trust in thee, and cry to thee, when they are at their wits' end, cvii. 27, 28. By faith and prayer we may keep up our communion with God, and fetch in comfort from him, wherever we are, not only in the solemn assemblies of his people, but also afar off upon the sea.

6 Which by his strength setteth fast the mountains; *being girded with power*: 7 Which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people. 8 They also that dwell in the uttermost parts are afraid at thy tokens: thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice. 9 Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, *which* is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it. 10 Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settlest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof. 11 Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness. 12 They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness: and the little hills rejoice on every side. 13 The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing.

That we may be the more affected with the wonderful condescensions of the God of grace, it is of use to observe his power and sovereignty as the God of nature, the riches and bounty of his providential kingdom.

I. He establishes the earth and it abides, cxix. 90. *By his own strength he setteth fast the mountains* (v. 6), did set them fast at first and still keeps them firm, though they are sometimes shaken by earthquakes.

— Feriuntque summos
Fulmina montes.

The lightning blasts the loftiest hills.

Hence they are called *everlasting mountains*, Hab. iii. 6. Yet God's covenant with his people is said to stand more firmly than they, Isa. liv. 10.

II. He stills the sea, and it is quiet, v. 7. The sea in a storm makes a great noise, which adds to its threatening terror; but, when God pleases, he commands silence among the waves and billows, and lays them to sleep, turns the storm into a calm quickly, cvii. 29. And by this change in the sea, as well as by the former instance of the unchangeableness

of the earth, it appears that he whose the sea and the dry land are is girded with power. And by this our Lord Jesus gave a proof of his divine power, that he *commanded the winds and waves, and they obeyed him*. To this instance of the quieting of the sea he adds, as a thing much of the same nature, that he stills *the tumult of the people*, the common people. Nothing is more unruly and disagreeable than the insurrections of the mob, the insults of the rabble; yet even these God can pacify, in secret ways, which they themselves are not aware of. Or it may be meant of the outrage of the people that were enemies to Israel, ii. 1. God has many ways to still them and will for ever silence their tumults.

III. He renews the morning and evening, and their revolution is constant, v. 8. This regular succession of day and night may be considered, 1. As an instance of God's great power, and so it strikes an awe upon all: *Those that dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth are afraid at thy signs or tokens*; they are by them convinced that there is a supreme deity, a sovereign monarch, before whom they ought to fear and tremble; for in these things the invisible things of God are clearly seen; and therefore they are said to be *set for signs*, Gen. i. 14. Many of those that dwell in the remote and dark corners of the earth were so afraid at these tokens that they were driven to worship them (Deut. iv. 19), not considering that they were God's tokens, undeniable proofs of his power and godhead, and therefore they should have been led by them to worship him. 2. As an instance of God's great goodness, and so it brings comfort to all: *Thou makest the outgoings of the morning*, before the sun rises, *and of the evening*, before the sun sets, *to rejoice*. As it is God that scatters the light of the morning and draws the curtains of the evening, so he does both in favour to man, and makes both to rejoice, gives occasion to us to rejoice in both; so that how contrary soever light and darkness are to each other, and how inviolable soever the partition between them (Gen. i. 4), both are equally welcome to the world in their season. It is hard to say which is more welcome to us, the light of the morning, which befriends the business of the day, or the shadows of the evening, which befriend the repose of the night. Does the watchman wait for the morning? So does the hireling earnestly desire the shadow. Some understand it of the morning and evening sacrifice, which good people greatly rejoiced in and in which God was constantly honoured. Thou makest them to *sing* (so the word is); for every morning and every evening songs of praise were sung by the Levites; it was that which the duty of every day required. We are to look upon our daily worship, alone and with our families, to be both the most needful of our daily occupations and the most delightful of our daily comforts; and, if therein we keep up our

communion with God, the outgoings both of the morning and of the evening are thereby made truly to rejoice.

IV. He waters the earth and makes it fruitful. On this instance of God's power and goodness he enlarges very much, the psalm being probably penned upon occasion either of a more than ordinarily plentiful harvest or of a seasonable rain after long drought. How much the fruitfulness of this lower part of the creation depends upon the influence of the upper is easy to observe; if the heavens be as brass, the earth is as iron, which is a sensible intimation to a stupid world that every good and perfect gift is from above, *omnia desuper—all from above*; we must lift up our eyes above the hills, lift them up to the heavens, where the original springs of all blessings are, out of sight, and thither must our praises return, as the first-fruits of the earth were in the heave-offerings lifted up towards heaven by way of acknowledgment that thence they were derived. All God's blessings, even spiritual ones, are expressed by his raining righteousness upon us. Now observe how the common blessing of rain from heaven and fruitful seasons is here described.

1. How much there is in it of the power and goodness of God, which is here set forth by a great variety of lively expressions. (1.) God that made the earth hereby visits it, sends to it, gives proof of his care of it, v. 9. It is a visit in mercy, which the inhabitants of the earth ought to return in praises. (2.) God, that made it dry land, hereby waters it, in order to its fruitfulness. Though the productions of the earth flourished before God had caused it to rain, yet even then there was a mist which answered the intention, and *watered the whole face of the ground*, Gen. ii. 5. 6. Our hearts are dry and barren unless God himself be as the dew to us and water us; and the plants of his own planting he will water and make them to increase. (3.) Rain is *the river of God, which is full of water*; the clouds are the springs of this river, which do not flow at random, but in the channel which God cuts out for it. The showers of rain, as the rivers of water, he turns which way soever he pleases. (4.) This river of God enriches the earth, which without it would quickly be a poor thing. The riches of the earth, which are produced out of its surface, are abundantly more useful and serviceable to man than those which are hidden in its bowels; we might live well enough without silver and gold, but not without corn and grass.

2. How much benefit is derived from it to the earth and to man upon it. (1.) To the earth itself. The rain in season gives it a new face; nothing is more reviving, more refreshing, than the *rain upon the new-mown grass*, lxxii. 6. Even the *ridges of the earth*, off which the rain seems to slide, are watered abundantly, for they drink in the rain which

comes often upon them; *the furrows of it* which are turned up by the plough, in order to the seedness, are settled by the rain and made fit to receive the seed (v. 10); they are settled by being made soft. That which makes the soil of the heart tender settles it; for the heart is established with that grace. Thus the springing of the year is blessed; and in the spring, that first quarter of the year, be blessed, that is an earnest of a blessing upon the whole year, which God is therefore said to *crown with his goodness* (v. 11), to compass it on every side as the head is compassed with a crown, and to complete the comforts of it as the end of a thing is said to crown it. And his paths are said to *drop fatness*, for whatever fatness there is in the earth, which impregnates its productions, it comes from the out-goings of the divine goodness. Wherever God goes he leaves the tokens of his mercy behind him (Joel ii. 13, 14) and makes his path thus to shine after him. These communications of God's goodness to this lower world are very extensive and diffusive (v. 12): *They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness*, and not merely upon the pastures of the inhabited land. The deserts, which man takes no care of and receives no profit from, are under the care of the divine Providence, and the profits of them redound to the glory of God, as the great benefactor of the whole creation, though not immediately to the benefit of man; and we ought to be thankful not only for that which serves us, but for that which serves any part of the creation, because thereby it turns to the honour of the Creator. The wilderness, which makes not such returns as the cultivated grounds do, receives as much of the rain of heaven as the most fruitful soil; for God does good to the evil and unthankful. So extensive are the gifts of God's bounty that in them the hills, *the little hills, rejoice on every side*, even the north side, that lies most from the sun. Hills are not above the need of God's providence; little hills are not below the cognizance of it. But as, when he pleases, he can make them tremble (cxiv. 6), so when he pleases he can make them rejoice. (2.) To man upon the earth. God, by providing rain for the earth, prepares corn for man, v. 9. *As for the earth, out of it comes bread* (Job xxviii. 5), for out of it comes corn; but every grain of corn that comes out of it God himself prepared; and therefore he provides rain for the earth, that thereby he may prepare corn for man, under whose feet he has put the rest of the creatures and for whose use he has fitted them. When we consider that the yearly produce of the corn is not only an operation of the same power that raises the dead, but an instance of that power not much unlike it (as appears by that of our Saviour, John xii. 24), and that the constant benefit we have from it is an instance of that goodness which endures forever, we shall have reason to think that it is

no less than a God that prepares corn for us. Corn and cattle are the two staple commodities with which the husbandman, who deals immediately in the fruits of the earth, is enriched; and both are owing to the divine goodness in watering the earth, *v. 13*. To this it is owing that the pastures are clothed with flocks, *v. 13*. So well stocked are the pastures that they seem to be covered over with the cattle that are laid in them, and yet the pasture not overcharged; so well fed are the cattle that they are the ornament and the glory of the pastures in which they are fed. The valleys are so fruitful that they seem to be covered over with corn, in the time of harvest. The lowest parts of the earth are commonly the most fruitful, and one acre of the humble valleys is worth five of the lofty mountains. But both corn-ground and pasture-ground, answering the end of their creation, are said to shout for joy and sing, because they are serviceable to the honour of God and the comfort of man, and because they furnish us with matter for joy and praise: as there is no earthly joy above the joy of harvest, so there was none of the feasts of the Lord, among the Jews, solemnized with greater expressions of thankfulness than the feast of in-gathering at the end of the year, *Exod. xxiii. 16*. Let all these common gifts of the divine bounty, which we yearly and daily partake of, increase our love to God as the best of beings, and engage us to glorify him with our bodies, which he thus provides so well for.

PSALM LXVI.

This is a thanksgiving-psalm, and it is of such a general use and application that we need not suppose it penned upon any particular occasion. All people are here called upon to praise God, I. For the general instances of his sovereign dominion and power in the whole creation, *ver. 1-7*. II. For the special tokens of his favour to the church, his peculiar people, *ver. 8-12*. And then, III. The psalmist praises God for his own experiences of his goodness to him in particular, especially in answering his prayers, *ver. 13-20*. If we have learned in every thing to give thanks for ancient and modern mercies, public and personal mercies, we shall know how to sing this psalm with grace and understanding.

To the chief musician. A song or psalm.

MAKE a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands: 2 Sing forth the honour of his name: make his praise glorious. 3 Say unto God, How terrible art thou in thy works! through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee. 4 All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee; they shall sing to thy name. Selah. 5 Come and see the works of God: he is terrible in his doing toward the children of men. 6 He turned the sea into dry land: they went through the flood on foot: there did we rejoice in him. 7 He ruleth by his power for ever; his eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah.

I. In these verses the psalmist calls upon all people to praise God, *all lands, all the earth*, all the inhabitants of the world that are capable of praising God, *v. 1*. 1. This speaks the glory of God, that he is worthy to be praised by all, for he is good to all and furnishes every nation with matter for praise. 2. The duty of man, that all are obliged to praise God; it is part of the law of creation, and therefore is required of every creature. 3. A prediction of the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ; the time should come when all lands should praise God, and this incense should in every place be offered to him. 4. A hearty good-will which the psalmist had to this good work of praising God. He will abound in it himself, and wishes that God might have his tribute paid him by all the nations of the earth and not by the land of Israel only. He excites all lands, (1.) To make a joyful noise to God. Holy joy is that devout affection which should animate all our praises; and, though it is not making a noise in religion that God will accept of (hypocrites are said to cause their voice to be heard on high, *Isa. lviii. 4*), yet, in praising God, [1.] We must be hearty and zealous, and must do what we do with all our might, with all that is within us. [2.] We must be open and public, as those that are not ashamed of our Master. And both these are implied in making a noise, a joyful noise. (2.) To sing with pleasure, and to sing forth, for the edification of others, the honour of his name, that is, of all that whereby he has made himself known, *v. 2*. That which is the honour of God's name ought to be the matter of our praise. (3.) To make his praise glorious as far as we can. In praising God we must do it so as to glorify him, and that must be the scope and drift of all our praises. Reckon it your greatest glory to praise God, so some. It is the highest honour the creature is capable of to be to the Creator for a name and a praise.

II. He had called upon all lands to praise God (*v. 1*), and he foretels (*v. 4*) that they shall do so: *All the earth shall worship thee*; some in all parts of the earth, even the remotest regions, for the everlasting gospel shall be preached to every nation and kindred; and this is the purport of it, *Worship him that made heaven and earth*, *Rev. xiv. 6, 7*. Being thus sent forth, it shall not return void, but shall bring all the earth, more or less, to worship God, and sing unto him. In gospel times God shall be worshipped by the singing of psalms. They shall sing to God, that is, sing to his name, for it is only to his declarative glory, that by which he has made himself known, not to his essential glory, that we can contribute any thing by our praises.

III. That we may be furnished with matter for praise, we are here called upon to come and see the works of God; for his own works praise him, whether we do or no; and the reason why we do not praise him more and better

is because we do not duly and attentively observe them. Let us therefore see God's works and observe the instances of his wisdom, power, and faithfulness in them (v. 5), and then speak of them, and speak of them to him (v. 3): *Say unto God, How terrible art thou in thy works, terrible in thy doings!* 1. God's works are wonderful in themselves, and such as, when duly considered, may justly fill us with amazement. God is *terrible* (that is, admirable) in his works, through the greatness of his power, which is such, and shines so brightly, so strongly, in all he does, that it may be truly said there are *not any works like unto his works*. Hence he is said to be *fearful in praises*, Exod. xv. 11. In all his doings towards the children of men he is terrible, and to be eyed with a holy awe. Much of religion lies in a reverence for the divine Providence. 2. They are formidable to his enemies, and have many a time forced and frightened them into a feigned submission (v. 3): *Through the greatness of thy power, before which none can stand, shall thy enemies submit themselves unto thee; they shall lie unto thee* (so the word is), that is, they shall be compelled, sorely against their wills, to make their peace with thee upon any terms. Subjection extorted by fear is seldom sincere, and therefore force is no proper means of propagating religion, nor can there be much joy of such proselytes to the church as will in the end be found liars unto it, Deut. xxxiii. 29. 3. They are comfortable and beneficial to his people, v. 6. When Israel came out of Egypt, *he turned the sea into dry land* before them, which encouraged them to follow God's guidance through the wilderness; and, when they were to enter Canaan, for their encouragement in their wars Jordan was divided before them, and *they went through that flood on foot*; and such foot, so signally owned by heaven, might well pass for cavalry, rather than infantry, in the wars of the Lord. There did the enemies tremble before them (Exod. xv. 14, 15, Josh. v. 1), but *there did we rejoice in him*, both trust his power (for relying on God is often expressed by rejoicing in him) and sing his praise, cvi. 12. There did we rejoice; that is, our ancestors did, and we in their loins. The joys of our fathers were our joys, and we ought to look upon ourselves as sharers in them. 4. They are commanding to all. God by his works keeps up his dominion in the world (v. 7): *He rules by his power for ever; his eyes behold the nations*. (1.) God has a commanding eye; from the height of heaven his eye commands all the inhabitants of the world, and he has a clear and full view of them all. *His eyes run to and fro through the earth*; the most remote and obscure nations are under his inspection. (2.) He has a commanding arm; his power rules, rules for ever, and is never weakened, never obstructed. *Strong is his hand, and high is his right hand*. Hence he infers, *Let not the rebellious exalt*

themselves; let not those that have revolting and rebellious hearts dare to rise up in any overt acts of rebellion against God, as Adonijah exalted himself, saying, *I will be king*. Let not those that are in rebellion against God exalt themselves as if there were any probability that they should gain their point. No; let them be still, for God hath said, *I will be exalted*, and man cannot gainsay it.

8 O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard: 9 Which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved. 10 For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried. 11 Thou broughtest us into the net; thou laidst affliction upon our loins. 12 Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.

In these verses the psalmist calls upon God's people in a special manner to praise him. Let all lands do it, but Israel's land particularly. Bless our God; bless him as ours, a God in covenant with us, and that takes care of us as his own. Let them *make the voice of his praise to be heard* (v. 8); for from whom should it be heard but from those who are his peculiar favourites and select attendants? Two things we have reason to bless God for:—

I. Common protection (v. 9): *He holdeth our soul in life*, that it may not drop away of itself; for, being continually in our hands, it is apt to slip through our fingers. We must own that it is the good providence of God that keeps life and soul together and his visitation that preserves our spirit. *He puts our soul in life*, so the word is. He that gave us our being, by a constant renewed act upholds us in our being, and his providence is a continued creation. When we are ready to faint and perish he restores our soul, and so puts it, as it were, into a new life, giving new comforts. *Non est vivere, sed valere, vita*—*It is not existence, but happiness, that deserves the name of life*. But we are apt to stumble and fall, and are exposed to many destructive accidents, killing disasters as well as killing diseases, and therefore as to these also we are guarded by the divine power. *He suffers not our feet to be moved*, preventing many unforeseen evils, which we ourselves were not aware of our danger from. To him we owe it that we have not, long ere this, fallen into endless ruin. *He will keep the feet of his saints*.

II. Special deliverance from great distress. Observe,

1. How grievous the distress and danger were, v. 11, 12. What particular trouble of the church this refers to does not appear; it

might be the trouble of some private persons or families only. But, whatever it was, they were surprised with it as a bird with a snare, enclosed and entangled in it as a fish in a net; they were pressed down with it, and kept under as with a load upon their loins, v. 11. But they owned the hand of God in it. We are never in the net but God brings us into it, never under affliction but God lays it upon us. Is any thing more dangerous than fire and water? *We went through both*, that is, afflictions of different kinds; the end of one trouble was the beginning of another; when we had got clear of one sort of dangers we found ourselves involved in dangers of another sort. Such may be the troubles of the best of God's saints, but he has promised, *When thou passest through the waters, through the fire, I will be with thee*, Isa. xliii. 2. Yet proud and cruel men may be as dangerous as fire and water, and more so. *Beware of men*, Matt. x. 17. When men rose up against us, that was fire and water, and all that is threatening (cxxiv. 2, 3, 4), and that was the case here: "*Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads, to trample upon us and insult over us, to hector and abuse us, nay, and to make perfect slaves of us; they have said to our souls, Bow down, that we may go over,*" Isa. li. 23. While it is the pleasure of good princes to rule in the hearts of their subjects it is the pride of tyrants to ride over their heads; yet the afflicted church in this also owns the hand of God: "*Thou hast caused them thus to abuse us;*" for the most furious oppressor has no power but what is given him from above.

2. How gracious God's design was in bringing them into this distress and danger. See what the meaning of it is (v. 10): *Thou, O God! hast proved us, and tried us*. Then we are likely to get good by our afflictions, when we look upon them under this notion, for then we may see God's grace, and love at the bottom of them and our own honour and benefit in the end of them. By afflictions we are proved as silver in the fire. (1.) That our graces, by being tried, may be made more evident and so we may be approved, as silver, when it is touched and marked sterling, and this will be to our praise at the appearing of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. i. 7) and perhaps in this world. Job's integrity and constancy were manifested by his afflictions. (2.) That our graces, by being exercised, may be made more strong and active, and so we may be improved, as silver when it is refined by the fire and made more clear from its dross; and this will be to our unspeakable advantage, for thus we are made partakers of God's holiness, Heb. xii. 10. Public troubles are for the purifying of the church, Dan. xi. 35; Rev. ii. 10; Deut. viii. 2.

3. How glorious the issue was at last. The troubles of the church will certainly end well; these do so, for (1.) The outlet of the trouble is happy. They are in fire and water; but

they get through them: "*We went through fire and water, and did not perish in the flames or floods.*" Whatever the troubles of the saints are, blessed be God, there is a way through them. (2.) The inlet to a better state is much more happy: *Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place, into a well-watered place* (so the word is), *like the gardens of the Lord*, and therefore fruitful. God brings his people into trouble that their comforts afterwards may be the sweeter and that their affliction may thus yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness, which will make the poorest place in the world a wealthy place.

13 I will go into thy house with burnt offerings: I will pay thee my vows, 14 Which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble. 15 I will offer unto thee burnt sacrifices of fatlings, with the incense of rams; I will offer bullocks with goats. Selah. 16 Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. 17 I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue. 18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me: 19 But verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. 20 Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.

The psalmist, having before stirred up all people, and all God's people in particular, to bless the Lord, here stirs up himself and engages himself to do it.

I. In his devotions to his God, v. 13—15. He had called upon others to sing God's praises and to make a joyful noise with them; but, for himself, his resolutions go further, and he will praise God, 1. By costly sacrifices, which, under the law, were offered to the honour of God. All people had not wherewithal to offer these sacrifices, or wanted zeal to be at such an expense in praising God; but David, for his part, being able, is as willing, in this chargeable way to pay his homage to God (v. 13): *I will go into thy house with burnt-offerings*. His sacrifices should be public, in the place which God had chosen: "*I will go into thy house with them.*" Christ is our temple, to whom we must bring our spiritual gifts, and by whom they are sanctified. They should be the best of the kind—*burnt-sacrifices*, which were wholly consumed upon the altar, to the honour of God, and of which the offerer had no share; and burnt-sacrifices of fatlings, not the lame or the lean, but the best fed, and such as would be most acceptable at his own table. God, who is the best, must be served with the best we have.

The feast God makes for us is a *feast of fat things, full of marrow* (Isa. xxv. 6), and such sacrifices should we bring to him. He will offer *bullocks with goats*, so liberal will he be in his return of praise, and not strait-handed: he would not offer that which cost him nothing, but that which cost him a great deal. And this *with the incense of rams*, that is, with the fat of rams, which being burnt upon the altar, the smoke of it would ascend like the smoke of incense. Or *rams with incense*. The incense typifies Christ's intercession, without which the fattest of our sacrifices will not be accepted. 2. By a conscientious performance of his vows. We do not acceptably praise God for our deliverance out of trouble unless we make conscience of paying the vows we made when we were in trouble. This was the psalmist's resolution (v. 13, 14), *I will pay thee my vows, which my lips have uttered when I was in trouble*. Note, (1.) It is very common, and very commendable, when we are under the pressure of any affliction, or in the pursuit of any mercy, to make vows, and solemnly to speak them before the Lord, to bind ourselves out from sin and bind ourselves more closely to our duty; not as if this were an equivalent, or valuable consideration, for the favour of God, but a qualification for receiving the tokens of that favour. (2.) The vows which we made when we were in trouble must not be forgotten when the trouble is over, but be carefully performed, for better it is not to vow than to vow and not pay.

II. In his declarations to his friends, v. 16. He calls together a congregation of good people to hear his thankful narrative of God's favours to him: *"Come and hear, all you that fear God, for, 1. You will join with me in my praises and help me in giving thanks."* And we should be as desirous of the assistance of those that fear God in returning thanks for the mercies we have received as in praying for those we want. 2. "You will be edified and encouraged by that which I have to say. *The humble shall hear of it and be glad*, xxxiv. 2. *Those that fear thee will be glad when they see me* (cxix. 74), and therefore let me have their company, and I will declare to them, not to vain carnal people that will banter it and make a jest of it" (pearls are not to be cast before swine); "but to those that fear God, and will make a good use of it, I will declare what God has done for my soul," not in pride and vain-glory, that he might be thought more a favourite of heaven than other people, but for the honour of God, to which we owe this as a just debt, and for the edification of others. Note, God's people should communicate their experiences to each other. We should take all occasions to tell one another of the great and kind things which God has done for us, especially which he has done for our souls, the spiritual blessings with which he has blessed us in heavenly things; these we should be most af-

fectured with ourselves, and therefore with these we should be desirous to affect others. Now what was it that God had done for his soul? (1.) He had wrought in him a love to the duty of prayer, and had by his grace enlarged his heart in that duty (v. 17): *I cried unto him with my mouth*. But if God, among other things done for our souls, had not given us the Spirit of adoption, teaching and enabling us to cry, *Abba, Father*, we should never have done it. That God has given us leave to pray, a command to pray, encouragements to pray, and (to crown all) a heart to pray, is what we have reason to mention with thankfulness to his praise; and the more if, when we cried to him with our mouth, *he was extolled with our tongue*, that is, if we were enabled by faith and hope to give glory to him when we were seeking for mercy and grace from him, and to praise him for mercy in prospect though not yet in possession. By crying to him we do indeed extol him. He is pleased to reckon himself honoured by the humble believing prayers of the upright, and this is a great thing which he has done for our souls, that he has been pleased so far to unite interests with us that, in seeking our own welfare, we seek his glory. *His exaltation was under my tongue* (so it may be read); that is, I was considering in my mind how I might exalt and magnify his name. When prayers are in our mouths praises must be in our hearts. (2.) He had wrought in him a dread of sin as an enemy to prayer (v. 18): *If I regard iniquity in my heart, I know very well the Lord will not hear me*. The Jewish writers, some of them that have the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy, put a very corrupt gloss upon these words: *If I regard iniquity in my heart*, that is (say they), If I allow myself only in heart-sins, and iniquity does not break out in my words and actions, *God will not hear me*, that is, he will not be offended with me, will take no notice of it, so as to lay it to my charge; as if heart-sins were no sins in God's account. The falsehood of this our Saviour has shown in his spiritual exposition of the law, Matt. v. But the sense of this place is plain: *If I regard iniquity in my heart*, that is, "If I have favourable thoughts of it, if I love it, indulge it, and allow myself in it, if I treat it as a friend and bid it welcome, make provision for it and am loth to part with it, if I roll it under my tongue as a sweet morsel, though it be but a heart-sin that is thus countenanced and made much of, if I delight in it after the inward man, God will not hear my prayer, will not accept it, nor be pleased with it, nor can I expect an answer of peace to it." Note, Iniquity, regarded in the heart, will certainly spoil the comfort and success of prayer; for *the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord*. Those that continue in love and league with sin have no interest either in the promise or in the Mediator, and therefore cannot expect to speed in prayer. (3.) He

had graciously granted him an answer of peace to his prayers (v. 19): "*But verily God has heard me*; though, being conscious to myself of much amiss in me, I began to fear that my prayers would be rejected, yet, to my comfort, I found that God was pleased to regard them." This God did for his soul, by answering his prayer, he gave him a token of his favour and an evidence that he had wrought a good work in him. And therefore he concludes (v. 20), *Blessed be God*. The two foregoing verses are the major and minor propositions of a syllogism: *If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear my prayer*; that is the proposition: *but verily God has heard me*; that is the assumption, from which he might have rationally inferred, "Therefore I do not regard iniquity in my heart;" but, instead of taking the comfort to himself, he gives the praise to God: *Blessed be God*. Whatever are the premises, God's glory must always be the conclusion. *God has heard me, and therefore blessed be God*. Note, What we win by prayer we must wear with praise. Mercies in answer to prayer do, in a special manner, oblige us to be thankful. He has not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy. Lest it should be thought that the deliverance was granted for the sake of some worthiness in his prayer, he ascribes it to God's mercy. This he adds by way of correction: "It was not my prayer that fetched the deliverance, but his mercy that sent it." Therefore God does not turn away our prayer, because he does not turn away his own mercy, for that is the foundation of our hopes and the fountain of our comforts, and therefore ought to be the matter of our praises.

PSALM LXVII.

This psalm relates to the church and is calculated for the public. Here is, I. A prayer for the prosperity of the church of Israel, ver. 1. II. A prayer for the conversion of the Gentiles and the bringing of them into the church, ver. 2-5. III. A prospect of happy and glorious times when God shall do this, ver. 6, 7. Thus was the psalmist carried out by the spirit of prophecy to foretell the glorious estate of the Christian church, in which Jews and Gentiles should unite in one flock, the beginning of which blessed work ought to be the matter of our joy and praise, and the completing of it of our prayer and hope, in singing this psalm.

To the chief musician on Neginoth. A psalm
or song.

GOD be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us. Selah. -2 That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. 3 Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. 4 O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth. Selah. 5 Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. 6 Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us. 7 God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.

The composition of this psalm is such as denotes the penman's affections to have been very warm and lively, by which spirit of devotion he was elevated to receive the spirit of prophecy concerning the enlargement of God's kingdom.

I. He begins with a prayer for the welfare and prosperity of the church then in being, in the happiness of which he should share, and think himself happy, v. 1. Our Saviour, in teaching us to say, *Our Father*, has intimated that we ought to pray with and for others; so the psalmist here prays not, *God be merciful to me, and bless me*, but to us, and bless us; for we must make supplication for all saints, and be willing and glad to take our lot with them. We are here taught, 1. That all our happiness comes from God's mercy and takes rise in that; and therefore the first thing prayed for is, *God be merciful to us, to us sinners, and pardon our sins* (Luke xviii. 13), to us miserable sinners, and help us out of our miseries. 2. That it is conveyed by God's blessing, and secured in that: *God bless us*; that is, give us an interest in his promises, and confer upon us all the good contained in them. God's speaking well to us amounts to his doing well for us. *God bless us* is a comprehensive prayer; it is a pity such excellent words should ever be used slightly and carelessly, and as a by-word. 3. That it is completed in the light of his countenance: *God cause his face to shine upon us*; that is, God by his grace qualify us for his favour and then give us the tokens of his favour. We need desire no more to make us happy than to have God's face shine upon us, to have God love us, and let us know that he loves us: *To shine with us* (so the margin reads it); *with us* doing our endeavour, and let it crown that endeavour with success. If we by faith walk with God, we may hope that his face will shine with us.

II. He passes from this to a prayer for the conversion of the Gentiles (v. 2): *That thy way may be known upon earth*. "Lord, I pray not only that thou wilt be merciful to us and bless us, but that thou wilt be merciful to all mankind, that thy way may be known upon earth." Thus public-spirited must we be in our prayers. *Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come*. We shall have never the less of God's mercy, and blessing, and favour, for others coming in to share with us. Or it may be taken thus: *God be merciful to us Jews, and bless us, that thereby thy way may be known upon earth, that by the peculiar distinguishing tokens of thy favour to us others may be allured to come and join themselves to us, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you*," Zechar. viii. 23.

1. These verses, which point at the conversion of the Gentiles, may be taken, (1.) As a prayer; and so it speaks the desire of the Old-Testament saints; so far were they from wishing to monopolize the privileges of the

church that they desired nothing more than the throwing down of the enclosure and the laying open of the advantages. See then how the spirit of the Jews, in the days of Christ and his apostles, differed from the spirit of their fathers. The Israelites indeed that were of old desired that God's name might be known among the Gentiles; those counterfeit Jews were enraged at the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles; nothing in Christianity exasperated them so much as that did. (2.) As a prophecy that it shall be as he here prays. Many scripture-prophecies and promises are wrapped up in prayers, to intimate that the answer of the church's prayer is as sure as the performance of God's promises.

2. Three things are here prayed for, with reference to the Gentiles:—

(1.) That divine revelation might be sent among them, v. 2. Two things he desires might be known upon earth, even among all nations, and not to the nation of the Jews only:—[1.] God's way, the rule of duty: "Let them all know, as well as we do, *what is good and what the Lord our God requires of them*; let them be blessed and honoured with the same righteous statutes and judgments which are so much the praise of our nation and the envy of all its neighbours," Deut. iv. 8. [2.] His saving health; or his salvation. The former is wrapped up in his law, this in his gospel. If God make known his way to us, and we walk in it, he will show us his saving health, 1. 23. Those that have themselves experimentally known the pleasantness of God's ways, and the comforts of his salvation, cannot but desire and pray that they may be known to others, even among all nations. All upon earth are bound to walk in God's way, all need his salvation, and there is in it enough for all; and therefore we should pray that both the one and the other may be made known to all.

(2.) That divine worship may be set up among them, as it will be where divine revelation is received and embraced (v. 3): "*Let the people praise thee, O God!* let them have matter for praise, let them have hearts for praise; yea, let not only some, but *all the people, praise thee*," all nations in their national capacity, some of all nations. It is again repeated (v. 5) as that which the psalmist's heart was very much upon. Those that delight in praising God themselves cannot but desire that others also may be brought to praise him, that *he* may have the honour of it and they may have the benefit of it. It is a prayer, [1.] That the gospel might be preached to them, and then they would have cause enough to praise God, as for the day-spring after a long and dark night. *Ortus est sol—The sun has risen.* Acts viii. 8. [2.] That they might be converted and brought into the church, and then they would have a disposition to praise God, the living and true God, and not the dumb and dunghill deities

they had worshipped, Dan. v. 4. Then their hard thoughts of God would be silenced, and they would see him, in the gospel glass, to be love itself, and the proper object of praise. [3.] That they might be incorporated into solemn assemblies, and might praise God in a body, that they might all together praise him with one mind and one mouth. Thus a face of religion appears upon a land when God is publicly owned and the ordinances of religious worship are duly celebrated in religious assemblies.

(3.) That the divine government may be acknowledged and cheerfully submitted to (v. 4): "*O let the nations be glad, and sing for joy!* Holy joy, joy in God and in his name, is the heart and soul of thankful praise. That all the people may praise thee, let the nations be glad. Those that rejoice in the Lord always will in every thing give thanks. The joy he wishes to the nations is holy joy; for it is joy in God's dominion, joy that *God has taken to himself his great power and has reigned*, which the unconverted nations are angry at, Rev. xi. 17, 18. Let them be glad, [1.] That the kingdom is the Lord's (xxii. 28.), that he, as an absolute sovereign, shall govern the nations upon earth, that by the kingdom of his providence he shall overrule the affairs of kingdoms according to the counsel of his will, though they neither know him nor own him, and that in due time he shall disciple all nations by the preaching of his gospel (Matt. xxviii. 19) and set up the kingdom of his grace among them upon the ruin of the devil's kingdom—that he shall make them a willing people in the day of his power, and even the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ.

[2.] That every man's judgment proceeds from the Lord. "Let them be glad that thou shalt judge the people righteously, that thou shalt give a law and gospel which shall be a righteous rule of judgment, and shalt pass an unerring sentence, according to that rule, upon all the children of men, against which there will lie no exception." Let us all be glad that we are not to be one another's judges, but that he that judges us is the Lord, whose judgment we are sure is according to truth.

III. He concludes with a joyful prospect of all good when God shall do this, when the nations shall be converted and brought to praise God.

1. The lower world shall smile upon them, and they shall have the fruits of that (v. 6); *Then shall the earth yield her increase.* Not but that God gave rain from heaven and fruitful seasons to the nations when they sat in darkness (Acts xiv. 17); but when they were converted the earth yielded its increase to God; the meat and the drink then became a meat-offering and a drink-offering to the Lord our God (Joel ii. 14); and then it was fruitful to some good purpose. Then it yielded its increase more than before to

the comfort of men, who through Christ acquired a covenant-title to the fruits of it and had a sanctified use of it. Note, The success of the gospel sometimes brings outward mercies along with it; righteousness exalts a nation. See Isa. iv. 2; lxii. 9.

2. The upper world shall smile upon them, and they shall have the favours of that, which is much better: *God, even our own God, shall bless us, v. 6.* And again (v. 7), *God shall bless us.* Note, (1.) There are a people in the world that can, upon good grounds, call God their God. (2.) Believers have reason to glory in their relation to God and the interest they have in him. It is here spoken with an air of triumph: *God, even our own God.* (3.) Those who through grace call God their own may with a humble confidence expect a blessing from him. If he be our God, he will bless us with special blessings. (4.) The blessing of God, as ours in covenant, is that which sweetens all our creature-comforts to us, and makes them comforts indeed; then we receive the increase of the earth as a mercy indeed when with it God, even our own God, gives us his blessing.

3. All the world shall hereby be brought to do like them: *The ends of the earth shall fear him*, that is, worship him, which is to be done with a godly fear. The blessings God bestows upon us call upon us not only to love him, but to fear him, to keep up high thoughts of him and to be afraid of offending him. When the gospel begins to spread it shall get ground more and more, till it reach to the ends of the earth. The heaven hidden in the meal shall diffuse itself, till the whole be leavened. And the many blessings which those will own themselves to have received that are brought into the church invite others to join themselves to them. It is good to cast in our lot with those that are the blessed of the Lord.

PSALM LXVIII.

This is a most excellent psalm, but in many places the genuine sense is not easy to come at; for in this, as in some other scriptures, there are things dark and hard to be understood. It does not appear when, or upon what occasion, David penned this psalm; but probably it was when, God having given him rest from all his enemies round about, he brought the ark (which was both the token of God's presence and a type of Christ's mediation) from the house of Obed-edom to the tent he had pitched for it in Zion; for the first words are the prayer which Moses used at the removing of the ark, Num. x. 35. From this he is led, by the Spirit of prophecy, to speak glorious things concerning the Messiah, his ascension into heaven, and the setting up of his kingdom in the world. 1. He begins with prayer, both against God's enemies (ver. 1, 2) and for his people, ver. 3. 11. He proceeds to praise, which takes up the rest of the psalm, calling upon all to praise God (ver. 4, 26, 32) and suggesting many things as matter for praise. 1. The greatness and goodness of God, ver. 4-6. 2. The wonderful works God had wrought for his people formerly, bringing them through the wilderness (ver. 7, 9), settling them in Canaan (ver. 9, 10), giving them victory over their enemies (ver. 11, 12), and delivering them out of the hands of their oppressors, ver. 13, 14. 3. The special presence of God in his church, ver. 15-17. 4. The ascension of Christ (ver. 18) and the salvation of his people by him, ver. 19, 20. 5. The victories which Christ would obtain over his enemies, and the favours he would bestow upon his church, ver. 21-28. 6. The enlargement of the church by the accession of the Gentiles to it, ver. 29-31. And so he concludes the psalm with an awful acknowledgment of the glory and grace of God, ver. 32-35. With all these great things we should endeavour to be duly affected in singing this psalm.

To the chief musician. A psalm or song of David.

LET God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him. 2 As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God. 3 But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God: yea, let them exceedingly rejoice. 4 Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him. 5 A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation. 6 God setteth the solitary in families: he bringeth out those which are bound with chains: but the rebellious dwell in a dry land.

In these verses,

I. David prays that God would appear in his glory,

1. For the confusion of his enemies (v. 1, 2): "*Let God arise*, as a judge to pass sentence upon them, as a general to take the field and do execution upon them; *and let them be scattered*, and flee before him, as unable to keep their ground, much less to make head against him. Let God arise, as the sun when he goes forth in his strength; and the children of darkness shall be scattered, as the shadows of the evening flee before the rising sun. Let them be driven away as smoke by the wind, which ascends as if it would eclipse the sun, but is presently dispelled, and there appears no remainder of it. Let them melt as wax before the fire, which is quickly dissolved." Thus does David comment upon Moses's prayer, and not only repeat it with application to himself and his own times, but enlarge upon it, to direct us how to make use of scripture-prayers. Nay, it looks further, to the Redeemer's victory over the enemies of his kingdom, for he was the angel of the covenant, that guided Israel through the wilderness. Note, (1.) There are, and have been, and ever will be, such as are enemies to God and hate him, that join in with the old serpent against the kingdom of God among men and against the seed of the woman. (2.) They are the wicked, and none but the wicked, that are enemies to God, the children of the wicked one. (3.) Though we are to pray for our enemies as such, yet we are to pray against God's enemies as such, against their enmity to him and all their attempts upon his kingdom. (4.) If God but arise, all his impenitent and implacable enemies, that will not repent to give him glory, will certainly and speedily be scattered, and driven away, and made to perish at his presence; for none ever hardened his heart against God and prospered. The day of judgment will be the day of the complete and final per-

dition of ungodly men (2 Pet. iii. 7), who shall melt like wax before that flaming fire in which the Lord shall then appear, 2 Thess. i. 8.

2. For the comfort and joy of his own people (v. 3): "*Let the righteous be glad, that are now in sorrow; let them rejoice before God, in his favourable presence.*" God is the joy of his people; let them rejoice whenever they come before God, yea, let them exceedingly rejoice, let them rejoice with gladness." Note, Those who rejoice in God have reason to rejoice with exceeding joy; and this joy we ought to wish to all the saints, for it belongs to them. *Light is sown for the righteous.*

II. He praises God for his glorious appearances, and calls upon us to praise him, to sing to his name, and extol him,

1. As a great God, infinitely great (v. 4): *He rides upon the heavens, by his name JAH.* He is the spring of all the motions of the heavenly bodies, directs and manages them, as he that rides in the chariot sets it a-going, has a supreme command of the influences of heaven; he rides upon the heavens for the help of his people (Deut. xxxiii. 26), so swiftly, so strongly, and so much above the reach of opposition. He rules these by his name *Jah*, or *Jehovah*, a self-existent self-sufficient being, the fountain of all being, power, motion, and perfection; this is his name for ever. When we thus extol God we must *rejoice before him.* Holy joy in God will very well consist with that reverence and godly fear wherewith we ought to worship him.

2. As a gracious God, a God of mercy and tender compassion. He is great, but he despises not any, no, not the meanest; nay, being a God of great power, he uses his power for the relief of those that are distressed, v. 5, 6. The fatherless, the widows, the solitary, find him a God all-sufficient to them. Observe how much God's goodness is his glory. He that *rides upon the heavens by his name Jah*, one would think, should immediately have been adored as King of kings and Lord of lords, and the sovereign director of all the affairs of states and nations; he is so, but this he rather glories in, that he is a *Father of the fatherless.* Though God be high, yet has he respect unto the lowly. Happy are those that have an interest in such a God as this. He that *rides upon the heavens* is a Father worth having; thrice happy are the people whose God is the Lord. (1.) When families are bereaved of their head God takes care of them, and is himself their head; and the widows and the fatherless children shall find that in him which they have lost in the relation that is removed, and infinitely more and better. He is a *Father of the fatherless*, to pity them, to bless them, to teach them, to provide for them, to portion them. He will *preserve them alive* (Jer. xlix. 11), and with him they shall *find mercy*, Hos. xiv. 3. They have liberty to call him Father, and to plead their relation to him as their guardian,

exlvi. 9; x. 14, 18. He is a judge or patron of the widows, to give them counsel and to redress their grievances, to own them and plead their cause, Prov. xxii. 23. He has an ear open to all their complaints and hand open to all their wants. He is so to *his holy habitation*, which may be understood either of the habitation of his glory in heaven (there he has prepared his throne of judgment, which the fatherless and widows have free recourse to, and are taken under the protection of, ix. 4, 7), or of the habitation of his grace on earth; and so it is in direction to the widows, and fatherless how to apply to God; let them go to his holy habitation, to his word and ordinances; there they may find him and find comfort in him (2.) When families are to be built up he is the founder of them: *God sets the solitary in families*, brings those into comfortable relations that were lonely, gives those a convenient settlement that were unsettled (exlii. 9); he *makes those dwell at home that were forced to seek for relief abroad* (so Dr. Hammond), putting those that were destitute into a way of getting their livelihood, which is a very good way for man's charity, as it is of God's bounty.

3. As a righteous God, (1.) In relieving the oppressed. He *brings out those that are bound with chains*, and sets those at liberty who were unjustly imprisoned and brought into servitude. No chains can detain those whom God will make free. (2.) In reckoning with the oppressors: *The rebellious dwell in a dry land* and have no comfort in that which they have got by fraud and injury. The best land will be a dry land to those that by their rebellion have forfeited the blessing of God, which is the juice and fatness of all our enjoyments. The Israelites were brought out of Egypt into the wilderness, but were there better provided for than the Egyptians themselves, whose land, if Nilus failed them as it sometimes did, was a dry land.

7 O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march through the wilderness; Selah. 8 The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: *even Sinai itself was moved* at the presence of God, the God of Israel. 9 Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary. 10 Thy congregation hath dwelt therein: thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor. 11 The Lord gave the word: great *was* the company of those that published it. 12 Kings of armies did flee apace: and she that tarried at home divided the spoil. 13 Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall

ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold. 14 When the Almighty scattered kings in it, it was *white as snow* in Salmon.

The psalmist here, having occasion to give God thanks for the great things he had done for him and his people of late, takes occasion thence to praise him for what he had done for their fathers in the days of old. Fresh mercies should put us in mind of former mercies and revive our grateful sense of them. Let it never be forgotten,

I. That God himself was the guide of Israel through the wilderness; when he had brought them out of their chains he did not leave them in the dry land, but he himself went before them in a *march through the wilderness*, v. 7. It was not a journey, but a march, for they went as soldiers, as an army with banners. The Egyptians promised themselves that the wilderness had shut them in, but they were deceived; God's Israel, having him for their leader, marched through the wilderness and were not lost in it. Note, If God bring his people into a wilderness, he will be sure to go before them in it and bring them out of it. Cant. viii. 5.

II. That he manifested his glorious presence with them at Mount Sinai, v. 8. Never did any people see the glory of God, nor hear his voice, as Israel did, Deut. iv. 32, 33. Never had any people such an excellent law given them, so expounded, so enforced. Then the *earth shook*, and the neighbouring countries, it is likely, felt the shock; terrible thunders there were, accompanied no doubt with thunder-showers, in which the heavens seemed to drop; while the divine doctrine *dropped as the rain*, Deut. xxxii. 2. *Sinai itself*, that vast mountain, that long ridge of mountains, *was moved at the presence of God*; see Judg. v. 4, 5; Deut. xxxiii. 2; Hab. iii. 3. This terrible appearance of the Divine Majesty, as it would possess them with a fear and dread of him, so it would encourage their faith in him and dependence upon him. Whatever mountains of difficulty lay in the way of their happy settlement, he that could move Sinai itself could remove them, could get over them.

III. That he provided very comfortably for them both in the wilderness and in Canaan (v. 9, 10): *Thou didst send a plentiful rain and hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor*. This may refer, 1. To the victualing of their camp with manna in the wilderness, which was rained upon them, as were also the quails (Lxxviii. 24, 27), and it might be fitly called a rain of liberality or munificence, for it was a memorable instance of the divine bounty. This confirmed the camp of Israel (here called *God's inheritance*, because he had chosen them to be a peculiar treasure to himself) *when it was weary and ready to perish*: this confirmed their faith, and was a standing proof of God's

power and goodness. Even in the wilderness God found a comfortable dwelling for Israel, which was his congregation. Or, 2. To the seasonable supplies granted them in Canaan, that land *flowing with milk and honey*, which is said to *drink water of the rain of heaven*, Deut. xi. 11. When sometimes that fruitful land was ready to be turned into barrenness, for the iniquity of those that dwelt therein, God, in judgment, remembered mercy, and sent them a plentiful rain, which refreshed it again, so that the congregation of Israel dwelt therein, and there was provision enough, even to satisfy their poor with bread. This looks further to the spiritual provision made for God's Israel; the Spirit of grace and the gospel of grace are the plentiful rain with which God confirms his inheritance, and from which their fruit is found, Isa. xlv. 8. Christ himself is this rain, lxxii. 6. *He shall come as showers that water the earth*.

IV. That he often gave them victory over their enemies; armies, and kings of armies, appeared against them, from their first coming into Canaan, and all along in the times of the judges, till David's days, but, first or last, they gained their point against them, v. 11, 12, 14. Observe here, 1. That God was their commander-in-chief: *The Lord gave the word*, as general of their armies. He raised up judges for them, gave them their commissions and instructions, and assured them of success. *God spoke in his holiness, and then Gilead is mine*. 2. That they had prophets, as God's messengers, to make known his mind to them. God gave them his word (*the word of the Lord came unto them*) and then *great was the company of the preachers*—prophets and prophetesses, for the word is feminine. When God has messages to send he will not want messengers. Or perhaps it may allude to the women's joining in the triumph when the victory was obtained, as was usual (Exod. xv. 20, 1 Sam. xviii. 7), in which they took notice of the word of God, triumphing in that as much as in his works. 3. That their enemies were defeated, and put to confusion: *Kings of armies did flee*, did flee with the greatest terror and precipitation imaginable, did not fight and flee, but flee and flee, retired without striking a stroke; they fled apace, fled and never rallied again. 4. That they were enriched with the plunder of the field: *She that tarried at home divided the spoil*. Not only the men, the soldiers that abode by the stuff, who were, by a statute of distributions, to share the prey (1 Sam. xxx. 24), but even the women that tarried at home had a share, which intimates the abundance of spoil that should be taken. 5. That these great things which God did for them were sanctified to them and contributed to their reformation (v. 14): *When the Almighty scattered kings for her (for the church) she was white as snow in Salmon*, purified and refined by the mercies of God; *when the host went forth against the enemy they kept them*

selves from every wicked thing, and so the host returned victorious, and Israel by the victory were confirmed in their purity and piety. This account of Israel's victories is applicable to the victories obtained by the exalted Redeemer for those that are his, over death and hell. By the resurrection of Christ our spiritual enemies were made to flee, their power was broken, and they were for ever disabled to hurt any of God's people. This victory was first notified by the women (the she-publishers) to the disciples (Matt. xxviii. 7) and by them it was preached to all the world, while believers that tarry at home, that did not themselves contribute any thing towards it, enjoy the benefit of it, and divide the spoil.

V. That from a low and despised condition they had been advanced to splendour and prosperity. When they were bond-slaves in Egypt, and afterwards when they were oppressed sometimes by one potent neighbour and sometimes by another, they did, as it were, *lie among the pots* or rubbish, as despised broken vessels, or as vessels in which there was no pleasure—they were black, and dirty, and discoloured. But God, at length, *delivered them from the pots* (lxxxi. 6), and in David's time they were in a fair way to be one of the most prosperous kingdoms in the world, amiable in the eyes of all about them, *like the wings of a dove covered with silver*, v. 13. "And so," says Dr. Hammond, "under Christ's kingdom, the heathen idolaters that were brought to the basest and most despicable condition of any creatures, worshipping wood and stone, and given up to the vilest lusts, should from that detestable condition be advanced to the service of Christ, and the practice of all Christian virtues, the greatest inward beauties in the world." It may be applied also to the deliverance of the church out of a suffering state and the comforts of particular believers after their despondencies.

15 The hill of God *is as* the hill of Bashan; a high hill *as* the hill of Bashan. 16 Why leap ye, ye high hills? *this is* the hill *which* God desireth to dwell in; yea, the LORD will dwell *in it* for ever. 17 The chariots of God *are* twenty thousand, *even* thousands of angels: the Lord *is* among them, *as in* Sinai, in the holy place. 18 Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, *for* the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell *among them*. 19 Blessed *be* the Lord, *who* daily loadeth us *with benefits*, *even* the God of our salvation. Selah. 20 *He that is* our God *is* the God of salvation: and unto God the Lord

belong the issues from death. 21 But God shall wound the head of his enemies, *and* the hairy scalp of such a one as goeth on still in his trespasses.

David, having given God praise for what he had done for Israel in general, as the God of Israel (v. 8), here comes to give him praise as Zion's God in a special manner; compare ix. 11. *Sing praises to the Lord who dwelleth in Zion*, for which reason Zion is called *the hill of God*.

I. He compares it with the hill of Bashan and other high and fruitful hills, and prefers it before them, v. 15, 16. It is true, Zion was but little and low in comparison with them, and was not covered over with flocks and herds as they were, yet, upon this account, it has the pre-eminence above them all, that it is *the hill of God*, the hill *which he desires to dwell in*, and where he chooses to manifest the tokens of his peculiar presence, cxxxii. 13; 14. Note, It is much more honourable to be holy to God than to be high and great in the world. "Why leap you, ye high hills? Why do you insult over poor Zion, and boast of your own height? This is the hill which God has chosen, and therefore though you exceed it in bulk, and be first-rates, yet, because on this the royal flag is hoisted, you must all strike sail to it." Zion was especially honourable because it was a type of the gospel church, which is therefore called Mount Zion (Heb. xii. 22), and this is intimated here, when he said, *The Lord will dwell in it for ever*, which must have its accomplishment in the gospel Zion. There is no kingdom in the world comparable to the kingdom of the Redeemer, no city comparable to that which is incorporated by the gospel charter, for there God dwells and will dwell for ever.

II. He compares it with Mount Sinai, of which he had spoken (v. 8), and shows that it has the Shechinah or divine presence in it as really, though not as sensibly, as Sinai itself had, v. 17. Angels are *the chariots of God*, his chariots of war, which he makes use of against his enemies, his chariots of conveyance, which he sends for his friends, as he did for Elijah (and Lazarus is said to be carried by the angels), his chariots of state, in the midst of which he shows his glory and power. They are vastly numerous: *Twenty thousands*, even thousands multiplied. There is an *innumerable company of angels* in the heavenly Jerusalem, Heb. xii. 22. The enemies David fought with had chariots (2 Sam. viii. 4), but what were they, for number or strength, to the chariots of God? While David had these on his side he needed not to fear those that trusted in *chariots and horses*, xx. 7. God appeared on Mount Sinai, attended with myriads of angels, by whose dispensation the law was given, Acts vii. 53. *He comes with ten thousands of saints*, Deut. xxxiii. 2. And still in Zion God manifest

his glory, and is really present, with a numerous retinue of his heavenly hosts, signified by the cherubim between which God is said to dwell. So that, as some read the last words of the verse, *Sinai is in the sanctuary*; that is, the sanctuary was to Israel instead of Mount Sinai, whence they received divine oracles. Our Lord Jesus has these chariots at command. When the first-begotten was brought into the world it was with this charge, *Let all the angels of God worship him* (Heb. i. 6); they attended him upon all occasions, and he is now among them, *angels, principalities, and powers, being made subject to him*, 1 Pet. iii. 22. And it is intimated in the New Testament that the angels are present in the solemn religious assemblies of Christians, 1 Cor. xi. 10. Let the woman have a veil on her head *because of the angels*; and see Eph. iii. 10.

III. The glory of Mount Zion was lie King whom God set on that holy hill (ii. 6), who came to the daughter of Zion, Matt. xxi. 5. Of his ascension the psalmist here speaks, and to it his language is expressly applied (Eph. iv. 8): *Thou hast ascended on high* (v. 18); compare xlvii. 5, 6. Christ's ascending on high is here spoken of as a thing past, so sure was it; and spoken of to his honour, so great was it. It may include his whole exalted state, but points especially at his ascension into heaven to the right hand of the Father, which was as much our advantage as his advancement. For, 1. He then triumphed over the gates of hell. He led *captivity captive*; that is, he led his captives in triumph, as great conquerors used to do, *making a show of them openly*, Col. ii. 15. He led those captive who had led us captive, and who, if he had not interposed, would have held us captive for ever. Nay, he led *captivity itself captive*, having quite broken the power of sin and Satan. As he was the death of death, so he was the captivity of captivity, Hos. xiii. 14. This intimates the complete victory which Jesus Christ obtained over our spiritual enemies; it was such that through him *we also are more than conquerors*, that is, triumphers, Rom. viii. 37. 2. He then opened the gates of heaven to all believers: *Thou hast received gifts for men*. He gave gifts to men, so the apostle reads it, Eph. iv. 8. For he received that he might give; on his head the anointing of the Spirit was poured, that from him it might descend to the skirts of his garments. And he gave what he had received; having received power to give eternal life, he bestows it upon as many as were given him, John xvii. 2. *Thou hast received gifts for men*, not for angels; fallen angels were not to be made saints, nor standing angels made gospel ministers, Heb. ii. 5. Not for Jews only, but for all men; whoever will may reap the benefit of these gifts. The apostle tells us what these gifts were (Eph. iv. 11), *prophets, apostles, evangelists, pastors and teachers*, the institution of a gospel ministry and the quali-

fication of men for it, both which are to be valued as the gifts of heaven and the fruits of Christ's ascension. *Thou hast received gifts in men* (so the margin), that is, in the human nature which Christ was pleased to clothe himself with, that he might be a *merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God*. In him, as Mediator, a *fulness dwells*, that from his fulness we might receive. To magnify the kindness and love of Christ to us in receiving these gifts for us, the psalmist observes, (1.) The forfeiture we had made of them. He received them for the *rebellious also*, for those that had been rebellious; so all the children of men had been in their fallen state. Perhaps it is especially meant of the Gentiles, that had been *enemies in their minds by wicked works*, Col. i. 21: For them these gifts are received, to them they are given, that they might lay down their arms, that their enmity might be slain, and that they might return to their allegiance. This magnifies the grace of Christ exceedingly that through him rebels are, upon their submission, not only pardoned, but preferred. They have commissions given them under Christ, which some say, in our law, amounts to the reversing of an attainer. Christ came to a rebellious world, not to condemn it, but that through him it might be saved. (2.) The favour designed us in them: *He received gifts for the rebellious*, that the Lord God might dwell among them, that he might set up a church in a rebellious world, in which he would dwell by his word and ordinances, as of old in the sanctuary, that he might set up his throne, and Christ might dwell in the hearts of particular persons that had been rebellious. The gracious intention of Christ's undertaking was to rear up the *tabernacle of God among men*, that he might dwell with them and they might themselves be living temples to his praise, Ezek. xxxvii. 27.

IV. The glory of Zion's King is that he is a Saviour and benefactor to all his willing people and a consuming fire to all those that persist in rebellion against him, v. 19—21. We have here good and evil, life and death, the blessing and the curse, set before us, like that (Mark xvi. 16), *He that believes shall be saved; he that believes not shall be damned*.

1. Those that take God for their God, and so give up themselves to him to be his people, shall be loaded with his benefits, and to them he will be a God of salvation. If in sincerity we avouch God to be our God, and seek to him as such, (1.) He will continually do us good and furnish us with occasion for praise. Having mentioned the gifts Christ received for us (v. 18), fitly does he subjoin, in the next words, *Blessed be the Lord*; for it is owing to the mediation of Christ that we live, and live comfortably, and are daily loaded with benefits. So many, so weighty, are the gifts of God's bounty to us that he may be truly said to load us with them; he pours out

blessings till there is no room to receive them, Mal. iii. 10. So constant are they, and so unvaried is he in doing us good, that he daily loads us with them, according as the necessity of every day requires. (2.) He will at length be unto us the God of salvation, of everlasting salvation, the salvation of God, which he will show to those that order their conversation aright (1. 23), the salvation of the soul. He that daily loads us with benefits will not put us off with present things for a portion, but will be the God of our salvation; and what he gives us now he gives as the God of salvation, pursuant to the great design of our salvation. *He is our God*, and therefore he will be the God of eternal salvation to us; for that only will answer the vast extent of his covenant-relation to us as our God. But has he power to complete this salvation? Yes, certainly; *for unto God the Lord belong the issues from death*. The keys of hell and death are put into the hand of the Lord Jesus, Rev. i. 18. He, having made an escape from death himself in his resurrection, has both authority and power to rescue those that are his from the dominion of death, by altering the property of it to 'hem when they die and giving them a complete victory over it when they shall rise again; for the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. And to those that shall thus for ever escape death, and shall find such an outlet from it as not to be hurt of the second death, to them surely deliverances from temporal death are mercies indeed and come from God as the God of their salvation. 2 Cor. i. 10.

2. Those that persist in their enmity to him will certainly be ruined (v. 21): *God shall wound the head of his enemies*,—of Satan the old serpent (of whom it was by the first promise foretold that the seed of the woman should break his head, Gen. iii. 15),—of all the powers of the nations, whether Jews or Gentiles, that oppose him and his kingdom among men (cx. 6, *He shall wound the heads over many countries*),—of all those, whoever they are, that will not have him to reign over them, for those he accounts his enemies, and they shall be brought forth and slain before him, Luke xix. 27. He will wound the hairy sculp of such a one as goeth on still in his trespasses. Note, Those who go on still in their trespasses, and hate to be reformed, God looks upon as his enemies and will treat them accordingly. In calling the head the hairy sculp perhaps there is an allusion to Absalom, whose bushy hair was his halter. Or it denotes either the most fierce and barbarous of his enemies, who let their hair grow, to make themselves look the more frightful, or the most fine and delicate of his enemies, who are nice about their hair: neither the one nor the other can secure themselves from the fatal wounds which divine justice will give to the heads of those that go on in their sins

22 The Lord said, I will bring again

from Bashan, I will bring my people again from the depths of the sea: 23 That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies, and the tongue of thy dogs in the same. 24 They have seen thy goings, O God; even the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary. 25 The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after; among them were the damsels playing with timbrels. 26 Bless ye God in the congregations, even the Lord, from the fountain of Israel. 27 There is little Benjamin with their ruler, the princes of Judah and their council, the princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali. 28 Thy God hath commanded thee strength: strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us. 29 Because of thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee. 30 Rebuke the company of spearmen, the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the people, till every one submit himself with pieces of silver: scatter thou the people that delight in war. 31 Princes shall come out of Egypt, Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.

In these verses we have three things:—

I. The gracious promise which God makes of the redemption of his people, and their victory over his and their enemies (v. 22, 23). The Lord said, in his own gracious purpose and promise, "I will do great things for my people, as the God of their salvation," v. 20. God will not fail the expectations of those who by faith take him for their God. It is promised, 1. That he will set them in safety from their danger, as he had done formerly. "I will again bring them from the depths of the sea," as he did Israel when he brought them out of the slavery of Egypt into the ease and liberty of the wilderness; "and I will again bring them from Bashan," as he did Israel when he brought them from their wants and wanderings in the wilderness into the fulness and settlement of the land of Canaan; for the land of Bashan was on the other side Jordan, where they had wars with Sihon and Og, and whence their next removal was into Canaan. Note, The former appearances of God's power and goodness for his people should encourage their faith and hope in him for the future, that what he has done he will do again. He will set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people (Isa. xi. 11); and we may perhaps see repeated all the wonders which our

fathers told us of. But this is not all: 2. That he will make them victorious over their enemies (v. 23): *That thy feet may be dipped, as thou passest along, in the blood of thy enemies*, shed like water in great abundance, and the tongue of thy dogs may lap in the same. Dogs licked the blood of Ahab; and, in the destruction of the anti-christian generation, we read of blood up to the horses' bridles, Rev. xiv. 20. The victories with which God blessed David's forces over the enemies of Israel are here prophesied of, but as types of Christ's victory over death and the grave for himself and for all believers, in his resurrection (and theirs by virtue of his) out of the earth, and of the destruction of the enemies of Christ and his church, who shall have blood given them to drink, for they are worthy.

II. The welcome entertainment which God's own people shall give to these glorious discoveries of his grace, both in his word and in his works. Has he spoken in his holiness? Has he said he will *bring again from Bashan*? What then is required of us in return to this?

1. That we observe his motions (v. 24): *"They have seen, thy people have seen, thy goings, O God!* While others regard not the work of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, they have seen the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary." See here, (1.) How an active faith appropriates God; he is God and King; but that is not all, he is my God and my King. Those who thus take him for theirs may see him, in all his outgoings, acting as their God, as their King, for their good, and in answer to their prayers. (2.) Where God's most remarkable outgoings are, even in the sanctuary, in and by his word and ordinances, and among his people in the gospel church especially, in and by which is made known the manifold wisdom of God. These outgoings of his in the sanctuary far outshine the outgoings of the morning and the evening, and more loudly proclaim his eternal power and godhead. (3.) What is our duty in reference to these outgoings, which is to observe them. *This is the finger of God. Surely God is with us of a truth.*

2. That we give him glory in the most devout and solemn manner. When we see his goings in his sanctuary, (1.) Let those that are immediately employed in the service of the temple praise him, v. 25. It was expected that the Levites, some of whom were singers and others players on instruments, who had the nearest views of his outgoings in his sanctuary, should lead in his praises. And, it being a day of extraordinary triumph, among them were damsels playing with timbrels, to complete the concert. "Thus (says Dr. Hammond) when Christ has gone up to heaven the apostles shall celebrate and publish it to all the world, and even the women that were witnesses of it shall affectionately join

with them in divulging it." (2.) Let all the people of Israel in their solemn religious assembly give glory to God: *Bless God*, not only in temples, but in the synagogues, or schools of the prophets, or wherever there is a congregation of those that come forth from the fountain of Israel, that are of the seed of Jacob, let them concur in blessing God. Public mercies, which we jointly share in, call for public thanksgivings, which all should join in. "Thus (says Dr. Hammond) all Christians shall be obliged solemnly to magnify the name of the Messiah, and, to that end, frequently to assemble together in congregations." And, (3.) Let those among them who, upon any account, are the most eminent, and make a figure, go before the rest in praising God, v. 27. There was little Benjamin (that was the royal tribe in Saul's time) with their rulers, the princes of Judah (that was the royal tribe in David's time), and their council, their captains or leaders. In the beginning of David's reign there had been long war between Judah and Benjamin, but now they both join in praises for success against the common enemy. But why are the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali particularly mentioned? Perhaps because those tribes, lying towards the north, lay most exposed to the incursions of the Syrians, and other neighbours that molested them, and therefore should be in a particular manner thankful for these victories over them. Dr. Hammond gives another reason, That these were the two learned tribes. *Naphtali giveth goodly words* (Gen. xlix. 21) and Zebulun had those that handle the pen of the writer, Judg. v. 14. These shall join in praising God, their princes especially. It is much for the honour of God when those that are above others in dignity, power, and reputation, go before them in the worship of God and are forward in using their influence and interest for the advancing of any service that is to be done to him. Dr. Hammond notes hence that the kingdom of the Messiah should, at length, be submitted to by all the potentates and learned men in the world.

3. That we seek unto him, and depend upon him, for the perfecting of what he has begun, v. 28. In the former part of the verse the psalmist speaks to Israel: *"Thy God has commanded thy strength"*; that is, whatever is done for thee, or whatever strength thou hast to help thyself, it comes from God, his power and grace, and the word which he has commanded; thou hast no reason to fear while thou hast strength of God's commanding, and no reason to boast while thou hast no strength but what is of his commanding." In the latter part he speaks to God, encouraged by his experiences: *"Strengthen, O God! that which thou hast wrought for us.* Lord, confirm what thou hast commanded, perform what thou hast promised, and bring to a happy end that good work which thou hast so gloriously begun." What God ha

wrought he will strengthen; where he has given true grace he will give more grace. Some make this whole verse to be a believer's address to the Messiah, whom David calls God, as he had done, xlv. 6, 8. "*Thy God*" (God the Father) "*has commanded thy strength*, has made thee strong for himself, as the man of his right hand (lxxx. 17), has treasured up strength in thee for us; therefore we pray that thou, O God the Son! wilt strengthen what thou hast wrought for us, wilt accomplish thy undertaking for us by finishing thy good work in us."

III. The powerful invitation and inducement which would hereby be given to those that are without to come in and join themselves to the church, v. 29—31. This was in part fulfilled by the accession of many proselytes to the Jewish religion in the days of David and Solomon; but it was to have its full accomplishment in the conversion of the Gentile nations to the faith of Christ, and the making of them fellow-heirs, and of the same body, with the seed of Israel, Eph. iii. 6. 1. Some shall submit for fear (v. 30): "*The company of spearmen*, that stand it out against Christ and his gospel, that are not willing to be ruled by him, that persecute the preachers and professors of his name, that are furious and outrageous as a multitude of bulls, fat and wanton as the calves of the people" (which is a description of those Jews and Gentiles that opposed the gospel of Christ and did what they could to prevent the setting up of his kingdom in the world), "*Lord*, rebuke them; abate their pride, assuage their malice, and confound their devices, till, conquered by the convictions of their consciences and the many checks of providence, they be every one of them brought, at length, to *submit themselves with pieces of silver*, as being glad to make their peace with the church upon any terms." Even Judas submitted himself with pieces of silver when he returned them with this confession, *I have betrayed innocent blood*. And see Rev. iii. 9. Many, by being rebuked, have been happily saved from being ruined. But as for those that will not submit, notwithstanding these rebukes, he prays for their dispersion, which amounts to a prophecy of it: *Scatter thou the people that delight in war*, who take such a pleasure in opposing Christ that they will never be reconciled to him. This may refer to the unbelieving Jews, who delighted in making war upon the holy seed, and would not submit themselves, and were therefore scattered over the face of the earth. David had himself been a man of war, but could appeal to God that he never delighted in war and bloodshed for its own sake; as for those that did, and therefore would not submit to the fairest terms of peace, he does not doubt but God would scatter them. Those are lost to all the sacred principles of humanity, as well as Christianity, that can delight in war and take a pleasure in contention; let them

expect that, sooner or later, they shall have enough of it, Isa. xxxiii. 1; Rev. xiii. 10. 2. Others shall submit willingly (v. 29, 31): *Because of thy temple at Jerusalem* (this David speaks of in faith, for the temple of Jerusalem was not built in his time, only the materials and model were prepared) *kings shall bring presents unto thee*; rich presents shall be brought, such as are fit for kings to bring; even kings themselves, that stand much upon the punctilios of honour and prerogative, shall court the favour of Christ at a great expense. There is that in God's temple, that beauty and benefit in the service of God and in communion with him, and in the gospel of Christ which went forth from Jerusalem, that is enough to invite kings themselves to bring presents to God, to present themselves to him as living sacrifices, and with themselves the best performances. He mentions *Egypt and Ethiopia*, two countries out of which subjects and suppliants were least to be expected (v. 31): *Princes shall come out of Egypt* as ambassadors to seek God's favour and submit to him; and they shall be accepted, for *the Lord of hosts shall thereupon bless them, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people*, Isa. xix. 25. Even Ethiopia, that had stretched out her hands against God's Israel (2 Chron. xiv. 9), should now *stretch out her hands unto God*, in prayer, in presents, and to take hold on him, and that soon. *Agree with thy adversary quickly*. Out of all nations some shall be gathered in to Christ and be owned by him.

32 Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth; O sing praises unto the Lord; Selah: 33 To him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens, *which were* of old; lo, he doth send out his voice, *and that a mighty voice*. 34 Ascribe ye strength unto God: his excellency *is* over Israel, and his strength *is* in the clouds. 35 O God, *thou art* terrible out of thy holy places: the God of Israel *is* he that giveth strength and power unto *his* people. Blessed be God.

The psalmist, having prayed for and prophesied of the conversion of the Gentiles, here invites them to come in and join with the devout Israelites in praising God, intimating that their accession to the church would be the matter of their joy and praise (v. 32): *Let the kingdoms of the earth sing praises to the Lord*; they all ought to do it, and, when they become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ, they will do it. God is here proposed to them as the proper object of praise upon several accounts:—

I. Because of his supreme and sovereign dominion: *He rides upon the heavens of heavens which were of old* (v. 33); compare v. 4. He has from the beginning, nay from before

all time, prepared his throne; he sits on the circuit of heaven, guides all the motions of the heavenly bodies; and from the highest heavens, which are the residence of his glory, he dispenses the influences of his power and goodness to this lower world.

II. Because of his awful and terrible majesty: *He sends out his voice, and that a mighty voice.* This may refer either generally to the thunder, which is called *the voice of the Lord* and is said to be *powerful and full of majesty* (xxix. 3, 4), or in particular to that thunder in which God spoke to Israel at Mount Sinai.

III. Because of his mighty power: *Ascribe you strength unto God* (v. 34); acknowledge him to be a God of such irresistible power that it is folly to contend with him and wisdom to submit to him; acknowledge that he has power sufficient both to protect his faithful subjects and to destroy his stubborn adversaries; and give him the glory of all the instances of his omnipotence. *Thine is the kingdom and power, and therefore thine is the glory.* We must acknowledge his power, 1. In the kingdom of grace: *His excellency is over Israel*; he shows his sovereign care in protecting and governing his church; that is the excellency of his power, which is employed for the good of his people. 2. In the kingdom of providence: *His strength is in the clouds*, whence comes the thunder of his power, the *small rain, and the great rain of his strength.* Though God has his strength in the clouds, yet he condescends to gather his Israel under the shadow of his wings, Deut. xxxiii. 26.

IV. Because of the glory of his sanctuary and the wonders wrought there (v. 35): *O God! thou art terrible out of thy holy places.* God is to be admired and adored with reverence and godly fear by all those that attend him in his holy places, that receive his oracles, that observe his operations according to them, and that pay their homage to him. He displays that out of his holy places which declares aloud that he will be sanctified in those that come nigh unto him. Out of heaven, his holy place above, he does, and will, show himself a terrible God. Nor is any attribute of God more dreadful to sinners than his holiness.

V. Because of the grace bestowed upon his people: *The God of Israel is he that gives strength and power unto his people*, which the gods of the nations, that were vanity and a lie, could not give to their worshippers; how should they help them, when they could not help themselves? All Israel's strength against their enemies came from God; they owned they had *no might of their own*, 2 Chron. xx. 12. And all our sufficiency for our spiritual work and warfare is from the grace of God. It is through Christ strengthening us that we can do all things, and not otherwise; and therefore he must have the glory of all we do (cxv. 1) and our humble thanks for en-

abling us to do it and accepting the work of his own hands in us. If it be the God of Israel that gives strength and power unto his people, they ought to say, *Blessed be God.* If all be from him, let all be to him.

PSALM LXIX.

David penned this psalm when he was in affliction; and in it, 1. He complains of the great distress and trouble he was in and earnestly begs of God to relieve and succor him, ver. 1—21. 2. He imprecates the judgments of God upon his persecutors, ver. 22—29. 3. He concludes with the voice of joy and praise, in an assurance that God would help and succor him, and would do well for the church, ver. 30—36. Now, in this, David was a type of Christ, and divers passages in this psalm are applied to Christ in the New Testament and are said to have their accomplishment in him (ver. 4, 9, 21), and ver. 22 refers to the enemies of Christ. So that (like the twenty-second psalm) it begins with the humiliation and ends with the exaltation of Christ, one branch of which was the destruction of the Jewish nation for persecuting him, which the imprecations here are predictions of. In singing this psalm we must have an eye to the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that followed, not forgetting the sufferings of Christians too, and the glory that shall follow them; for it may lead us to think of the ruin reserved for the persecutors and the rest reserved for the persecuted.

To the chief musician upon Shoshannim. *A psalm of David.*

SAVE me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. 2 I sink in deep mire, where *there is* no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me. 3 I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God. 4 They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would destroy me, *being* mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: then I restored *that* which I took not away. 5 O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee. 6 Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for my sake: let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel. 7 Because for thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face. 8 I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children. 9 For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me. 10 When I wept, *and chastened* my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach. 11 I made sackcloth also my garment; and I became a proverb to them. 12 They that sit in the gate speak against me; and I *was* the song of the drunkards.

In these verses David complains of his troubles, intermixing with those complaints some requests for relief.

I. His complaints are very sad, and he pours them out before the Lord, as one that

hoped thus to ease himself of a burden that lay very heavy upon him.

1. He complains of the deep impressions that his troubles made upon his spirit (v. 1, 2): "*The waters of affliction*, those bitter waters, *have come unto my soul*, not only threaten my life, but disquiet my mind; they fill my head with perplexing cares and my heart with oppressive grief, so that I cannot enjoy God and myself as I used to do." We shall bear up under our troubles if we can but keep them from our hearts; but, when they put us out of the possession of our own souls, our case is bad. *The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity*; but what shall we do when the spirit is wounded? That was David's case here. His thoughts sought for something to confide in, and with which to support his hope, but he found nothing: He sunk in deep mire, where there was no standing, no firm footing; the considerations that used to support and encourage him now failed him, or were out of the way, and he was ready to give himself up for gone. He sought for something to comfort himself with, but found himself in deep waters that overflowed him, overwhelmed him; he was like a sinking drowning man, in such confusion and consternation. This points at Christ's sufferings in his soul, and the inward agony he was in when he said, *Now is my soul troubled*; and, *My soul is exceedingly sorrowful*; for it was his soul that he made an offering for sin. And it instructs us, when we are in affliction, to commit the keeping of our souls to God, that we may be neither soured with discontent nor sink into despair.

2. He complains of the long continuance of his troubles (v. 3): *I am weary of my crying*. Though he could not keep his head above water, yet he cried to his God, and the more death was in his view the more life was in his prayers; yet he had not immediately an answer of peace given in, no, nor so much of that support and comfort in praying which God's people used to have; so that he was almost weary of crying, grew hoarse, and his throat so dried that he could cry no more. Nor had he his wonted satisfaction in believing, hoping, and expecting relief: *My eyes fail while I wait for my God*; he had almost looked his eyes out, in expectation of deliverance. Yet his pleading this with God is an indication that he is resolved not to give up believing and praying. His throat is dried, but his heart is not; his eyes fail, but his faith does not. Thus our Lord Jesus, on the cross, cried out, *Why hast thou forsaken me?* yet, at the same time, he kept hold of his relation to him: *My God, my God*.

3. He complains of the malice and multitude of his enemies, their injustice and cruelty, and the hardships they put upon him, v. 4. They hated him, they would destroy him, for hatred aims at the destruction of the person hated; but what was his iniquity, what was his sin, what provocation had he

given them, that they were so spiteful towards him? None at all: "*They hate me without a cause*; I never did them the least injury, that they should bear me such ill-will." Our Saviour applies this to himself (John xv. 25): *They hated me without a cause*. We are apt to use this in justification of our passion against those that hate us, that we never gave them cause to hate us. But it is rather an argument why we should bear it patiently, because then we suffer as Christ did, and may then expect that God will give us redress. "*They are my enemies wrongfully*, for I have been no enemy to them." In a world where unrighteousness reigns so much we must not wonder if we meet with those that are our enemies wrongfully. Let us take care that we never do wrong and then we may the better bear it if we receive wrong. These enemies were not to be despised, but were very formidable both for their number—*They are more than the hairs of my head* (Christ's enemies were numerous; those that came to seize him were a great multitude; how were those increased that troubled him!) and for their strength—*They are mighty in authority and power*. We are weak, but our enemies are strong; for *we wrestle against principalities and powers*. Then I restored that which I took not away. Applying this to David, it was what his enemies compelled him to (they made him suffer for that offence which he had never been guilty of); and it was what he consented to, that, if possible, he might pacify them and make them to be at peace with him. He might have insisted upon the laws of justice and honour, the former not requiring and the latter commonly thought to forbid the restoring of that which we took not away, for that is to wrong ourselves both in our wealth and in our reputation. Yet the case may be such sometimes that it may become our duty. Blessed Paul, though free from all men, yet, for the honour of Christ and the edification of the church, made himself a servant to all. But, applying it to Christ, it is an observable description of the satisfaction which he made to God for our sin by his blood: *Then he restored that which he took not away*; he underwent the punishment that was due to us, paid our debt, suffered for our offence. God's glory, in some instances of it, was taken away by the sin of man; man's honour, and peace, and happiness, were taken away; it was not he that took them away, and yet by the merit of his death he restored them.

4. He complains of the unkindness of his friends and relations, and this is a grievance which with an ingenuous mind cuts as deeply as any (v. 8): "*I have become a stranger to my brethren*; they make themselves strange to me and use me as a stranger, are shy of conversing with me and ashamed to own me." This was fulfilled in Christ, whose brethren did not believe on him (John vii. 5), who came to his own and his own received him not (John

i. 11), and who was forsaken by his disciples, whom he had been free with as his brethren.

5. He complains of the contempt that was put upon him and the reproach with which he was continually loaded. And in this especially his complaint points at Christ, who for our sakes submitted to the greatest disgrace and made himself of no reputation. We having by sin injured God in his honour, Christ made him satisfaction, not only by divesting himself of the honours due to an incarnate deity, but by submitting to the greatest dishonours that could be done to any man. Two things David here takes notice of as aggravations of the indignities done him:—(1.) The ground and matter of the reproach, v. 10, 11. They ridiculed him for that by which he both humbled himself and honoured God. When men lift up themselves in pride and vain glory they are justly laughed at for their folly; but David chastened his soul, and clothed himself with sackcloth, and from his abasing himself they took occasion to trample upon him. When men dishonour God it is just that their so doing should turn to their dishonour; but when David, purely in devotion to God and to testify his respect to him, *wept, and chastened his soul with fasting, and made sackcloth his garment*, as humble penitents used to do, instead of commending his devotion and recommending it as a great example of piety, they did all they could both to discourage him in it and to prevent others from following his good example; for *that was to his reproach*. They laughed at him as a fool for mortifying himself thus; and even for this he *became a proverb to them*; they made him the common subject of their banter. We must not think it strange if we be ill spoken of for that which is well done, and in which we have reason to hope that we are accepted of God. Our Lord Jesus was stoned for his good works (John x. 32), and when he cried, *Eli, Eli—My God, my God*, was bantered, as if he called for Elias. (2.) The persons that reproached him, v. 12. [1.] Even the gravest and the most honourable, from whom better was expected: *Those that sit in the gate speak against me*, and their reproaches pass for the dictates of senators and the decrees of judges, and are credited accordingly. [2.] The meanest, and the most despicable, the abjects (xxxv. 15), the scum of the country, the *children of fools*, yea, the *children of base men*, Job xxx. 8. Such drunkards as these make themselves vile, and he was the song of the drunkards; they made themselves and their companions merry with him. See the bad consequences of the sin of drunkenness; it makes men *despisers of those that are good*, 2 Tim. iii. 3. When the king was *made sick with bottles of wine he stretched out his hand with scorn*, Hos. vii. 5. The bench of the drunkards is the seat of the scornful. See what is commonly the lot of the best of men: those that are the praise of the wise are the song of fools. But it is easy to those that

rightly judge of things to despise being thus despised.

II. His confessions of sin are very serious (v. 5): “*O God! thou knowest my foolishness*, both what is and what is not; my sins that I am guilty of are not hidden from thee, and therefore thou knowest how innocent I am of those crimes which they charge upon me.” Note, Even when, as to men’s unjust accusations, we plead *Not guilty*, yet, before God, we must acknowledge ourselves to have deserved all that is brought upon us, and much worse. This is the genuine confession of a penitent, who knows that he cannot prosper in covering his sin, and that *therefore* it is his wisdom to acknowledge it, because it is naked and open before God. 1. He knows the corruption of our nature: *Thou knowest the foolishness* that is bound up in my heart. All our sins take rise from our foolishness. 2. He knows the transgressions of our lives; they are not hidden from him, no, not our heart-sins, no, not those that are committed most secretly. They are all done in his sight, and are never cast behind his back till they are repented of and pardoned. This may aptly be applied to Christ, for he knew no sin, yet he was made sin for us; and God knew it, nor was it hidden from him, when it pleased the Lord to bruise him and put him to grief.

III. His supplications are very earnest. 1. For himself (v. 1): “*Save me, O God! save me from sinking, from despairing*.” Thus Christ was heard in that he feared, for he was saved from letting fall his undertaking, Heb. v. 7. 2. For his friends (v. 6): *Let not those that wait on thee, O Lord God of hosts! and that seek thee, O God of Israel!* (under these two characters we ought to seek God, and in seeking him to wait on him, as the *God of hosts*, who has all power to help, and as the *God of Israel* in covenant with his people, whom therefore he is engaged in honour and truth to help) *be ashamed and confounded for my sake*. This intimates his fear that if God did not appear for him it would be a discouragement to all other good people and would give their enemies occasion to triumph over them, and his earnest desire that whatever became of him all that seek God, and wait upon him, might be kept in heart and kept in countenance, and might neither be discouraged in themselves nor exposed to contempt from others. If Jesus Christ had not been owned and accepted of his Father in his sufferings, all that seek God, and wait for him, would have been ashamed and confounded; but they have confidence towards God, and in his name come boldly to the throne of grace.

IV. His plea is very powerful, v. 7, 9. Reproach was one of the greatest of his burdens: “*Lord, roll away the reproach, and plead my cause, for, 1. It is for thee that I am reproached, for serving thee and trusting in thee: For thy sake I have borne reproach*.”

Those that are evil spoken of for well-doing

may with a humble confidence leave it to God to *bring forth their righteousness as the light*. 2. "It is with thee that I am reproached: *The zeal of thy house has eaten me up*, that is, has made me forget myself, and do that which they wickedly turn to my reproach. Those that hate thee and thy house for that reason hate me, because they know how zealously affected I am to it. It is this that has made them ready to eat me up and has eaten up all the love and respect I had among them." Those that blasphemed God, and spoke ill of his word and ways, did therefore reproach David for believing in his word and walking in his ways. Or it may be construed as an instance of David's zeal for God's house, that he resented all the indignities done to God's name as if they had been done to his own name. He laid to heart all the dishonour done to God and the contempt cast upon religion; these he laid nearer to his heart than any outward troubles of his own. And therefore he had reason to hope God would interest himself in the reproaches cast upon him, because he had always interested himself in the reproaches cast upon God. Both the parts of this verse are applied to Christ. (1.) It was an instance of his love to his Father that *the zeal of his house did even eat him up* when he whipped the buyers and sellers out of the temple, which reminded his disciples of this text, John ii. 17. (2.) It was an instance of his self-denial, and that he pleased not himself, that *the reproaches of those that reproached God fell upon him* (Rom. xv. 3), and therein he set us an example.

13 But as for me, my prayer is unto thee, O LORD, in an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the truth of thy salvation. 14 Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink: let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters. 15 Let not the waterflood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me. 16 Hear me, O LORD; for thy lovingkindness is good: turn unto me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies. 17 And hide not thy face from thy servant; for I am in trouble: hear me speedily. 18 Draw nigh unto my soul, and redeem it: deliver me because of mine enemies. 19 Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour: mine adversaries are all before thee. 20 Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but *there was none*; and for comfort-

ers, but I found none. 21 They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

David had been speaking before of the spiteful reproaches which his enemies cast upon him; here he adds, *But, as for me, my prayer is unto thee*. They spoke ill of him for his fasting and praying, and for that he was made the song of the drunkards; but notwithstanding that, he resolves to continue praying. Note, Though we may be jeered out for well-doing, we must never be jeered out of it. Those can bear but little for God, and their confessing his name before men, that cannot bear a scoff and a hard word rather than quit their duty. David's enemies were very abusive to him, but this was his comfort, that he had a God to go to, with whom he would lodge his cause. "They think to carry their cause by insolence and calumny; but I use other methods. Whatever they do, *As for me, my prayer is unto thee, O Lord!*" And it was in an acceptable time, not the less acceptable for being a time of affliction. God will not drive us from him, though it is need that drives us to him; nay, it is the more acceptable, because the misery and distress of God's people make them so much the more the objects of his pity: it is seasonable for him to help them when all other helps fail, and they are undone, and feel that they are undone, if he do not help them. We find this expression used concerning Christ, Isa. xlix. 8, *In an acceptable time have I heard thee*. Now observe,

I. What his requests are. 1. That he might have a gracious audience given to his complaints, the cry of his affliction, and the desire of his heart. *Hear me* (v. 13), and again, *Hear me, O Lord!* (v. 16), *Hear me speedily* (v. 17), not only hear what I say, but grant what I ask. Christ knew that *the Father heard him always*, John xi. 42. 2. That he might be rescued out of his troubles, might be saved from sinking under the load of grief (*Deliver me out of the mire*; let me not stick in it, so some, but help me out, and *set my feet on a rock*, xl. 2), might be saved from his enemies, that they might not swallow him up, nor have their will against him: "*Let me be delivered from those that hate me*, as a lamb from the paw of a lion, v. 14. Though I have come into deep waters (v. 2), where I am ready to conclude that the floods will overflow me, yet let my fears be prevented and silenced; let not the waterflood, though it flow upon me, overflow me, v. 15. Let me not fall into the gulf of despair; let not that deep swallow me up; let not that pit shut her mouth upon me, for then I am undone." He gave himself up for lost in the beginning of the psalm; yet now he has his head above water, and is not so weary of crying as he thought himself. 3. That God would turn to him (v. 16), that he would smile upon him, and not hide his face from him, v. 17. The

tokens of God's favour to us, and the light of his countenance shining upon us, are enough to keep our spirits from sinking in the deepest mire of outward troubles, nor need we desire any more to make us safe and easy, v. 18. "Draw nigh to my soul, to manifest thyself to it, and that shall redeem it."

II. What his pleas are to enforce these petitions. 1. He pleads God's mercy and truth (v. 13): *In the multitude of thy mercy hear me.* There is mercy in God, a multitude of mercies, all kinds of mercy, inexhaustible mercy, mercy enough for all, enough for each; and hence we must take our encouragement in praying. The truth also of his salvation (the truth of all those promises of salvation which he has made to those that trust in him) is a further encouragement. He repeats his argument taken from the mercy of God: "*Hear me, for thy lovingkindness is good.* It is so in itself; it's rich and plentiful and abundant. It is so in the account of all the saints; it is very precious to them, it is their life, their joy, their all. O let me have the benefit of it! Turn to me, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies."

v. 16. See how highly he speaks of the goodness of God: in him there are mercies, tender mercies, and a multitude of them. If we think well of God, and continue to do so under the greatest hardships, we need not fear but God will do well for us; for *he takes pleasure in those that hope in his mercy*, cxlvii.

2. He pleads his own distress and affliction: "*Hide not thy face from me, for I am in trouble* (v. 17), and therefore need thy favour; therefore it will come seasonably, and therefore I shall know how to value it." He pleads particularly the reproach he was under and the indignities that were done him (v. 19): *Thou hast known my reproach, my shame, and my dishonour.* See what a stress is laid upon this; for, in the sufferings of Christ for us, perhaps nothing contributed more to the satisfaction he made for sin, which had been so injurious to God in his honour, than the reproach, and shame, and dishonour he underwent, which God took notice of, and accepted as more than an equivalent for the everlasting shame and contempt which our sins had deserved, and therefore we must by repentance take shame to ourselves and bear the reproach of our youth. And if at any time we be called out to suffer reproach, and shame, and dishonour, for his sake, this may be our comfort, that he knows it, and, as he is before-hand with us, so he will not be behind-hand with us. The psalmist speaks the language of an ingenuous nature when he says (v. 20): *Reproach has broken my heart; I am full of heaviness; for I bear hard upon one that knows the worth of a good name to be put under a bad character; but when we consider what an honour it is to be dishonoured for God, and what favour to be counted worthy to suffer shame for his name (as they deemed it, Acts v. 41),*

we shall see there is no reason at all why it should sit so heavily or be any heart-breaking to us. 3. He pleads the insolence and cruelty of his enemies (v. 18): *Deliver me because of my enemies*, because they were such as he had before described them, v. 4. "*My adversaries are all before thee* (v. 19); thou knowest what sort of men they are, what danger I am in from them, what enemies they are to thee, and how much thou art reflected upon in what they do and design against me." One instance of their barbarity is given (v. 21): *They gave me gall for my meat* (the word signifies a bitter herb, and is often joined with wormwood) *and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.* This was literally fulfilled in Christ, and did so directly point to him that he would not say *It is finished* till this was fulfilled; and, in order that his enemies might have occasion to fulfil it, he said, *I thirst*, John xix. 28, 29. Some think that the hyssop which they put to his mouth with the vinegar was the bitter herb which they gave him with the vinegar for his meat. See how particularly the sufferings of Christ were foretold, which proves the scripture to be the word of God, and how exactly the predictions were fulfilled in Jesus Christ, which proves him to be the true Messiah. This is he that should come, and we are to look for no other. 4. He pleads the unkindness of his friends and his disappointment in them (v. 20): *I looked for some to take pity, but there was none*; they all failed him like the brooks in summer. This was fulfilled in Christ, for in his sufferings all his disciples forsook him and fled. We cannot expect too little from men (miserable comforters are they all); nor can we expect too much from God, for he is the Father of mercy and the God of all comfort and consolation.

22 Let their table become a snare before them: and *that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap.* 23 Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake. 24 Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them. 25 Let their habitation be desolate; and let them not dwell in their tents. 26 For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten; and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded. 27 Add iniquity unto their iniquity: and let them not come into thy righteousness. 28 Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous. 29 But *I am poor and sorrowful*: let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high.

These imprecations are not David's prayers against his enemies, but prophecies of the destruction of Christ's persecutors, especially the Jewish nation, which our Lord himself foretold with tears, and which was accomplished about forty years after the death of Christ. The first two verses of this paragraph are expressly applied to the judgments of God upon the unbelieving Jews by the apostle (Rom. xi. 9, 10), and therefore the whole must look that way. The rejection of the Jews for rejecting Christ, as it was a signal instance of God's justice and an earnest of the vengeance which God will at last take on all that are obstinate in their infidelity, so it was, and continues to be, a convincing proof of the truth of the Christian religion. One great objection against it, at first, was, that it set aside the ceremonial law; but its doing so was effectually justified, and that objection removed, when God so remarkably set it aside by the utter destruction of the temple, and the sinking of those, with the Mosaic economy, that obstinately adhered to it in opposition to the gospel of Christ. Let us observe here,

I. What the judgments are which should come upon the crucifiers of Christ; not upon all of them, for there were those who had a hand in his death and yet repented and found mercy (Acts ii. 23; iii. 14, 15), but upon those of them and their successors who justified it by an obstinate infidelity and rejection of his gospel, and by an inveterate enmity to his disciples and followers. See 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16. It is here foretold,

1. That their sacrifices and offerings should be a mischief and prejudice to them (v. 22): *Let their table become a snare.* This may be understood of the altar of the Lord, which is called *his table and theirs* because in feasting upon the sacrifices they were partakers of the altar. This should have been for their welfare or peace (for they were peace-offerings), but it became a snare and a trap to them; for by their affection and adherence to the altar they were held fast in their infidelity and hardened in their prejudices against Christ, that altar which those had no right to eat of who continued to serve the tabernacle, Heb. xiii. 10. Or it may be understood of their common creature-comforts, even their necessary food; they had given Christ gall and vinegar, and therefore justly shall their meat and drink be made gall and vinegar to them. When the supports of life and delights of sense, through the corruption of our nature, become an occasion of sin to us, and are made the food and fuel of our sensuality, then our table is a snare, which is a good reason why we should never feed ourselves without fear, Jude 12.

2. That they should never have the comfort either of that knowledge or of that peace which believers are blessed with in the gospel of Christ (v. 23), that they should be given up, (1.) To a judicial blindness: *Let their*

eyes be darkened, that they see not the glory of God in the face of Christ. Their sin was that they would not see, but shut their eyes against the light, loving darkness rather than their punishment was that they should not see, but be given up to their own hearts' lusts, which were hardening, and the god of this world should be permitted to blind their minds, 2 Cor. iv. 4. This was foretold concerning them (Isa. vi. 10), and Christ ratified it, Matt. xiii. 14, 15; John xii. 40. (2.) To a judicial terror. There is a gracious terror which opens the way to comfort, such as that of Paul (Acts ix. 6); he trembled and was astonished. But this is a terror that shall never end in peace, but shall make their loins continually to shake, through horror of conscience, as Belshazzar, when the joints of his loins were loosed. "Let them be driven to despair, and filled with constant confusion." This was fulfilled in the desperate counsels of the Jews when the Romans came upon them.

3. That they should fall and lie under God's anger and fiery indignation (v. 24): *Pour out thy indignation upon them.* Note, Those who reject God's great salvation proffered to them may justly fear that his indignation will be poured out upon them; for those that submit not to the Son of his love will certainly be made the generation of his wrath. It is the doom passed on those who believe not in Christ that the *wrath of God abideth on them* (John iii. 36); it takes hold of them and will never let them go. Salvation itself will not save those that are not willing to be ruled by it. Behold the goodness and severity of God!

4. That their place and nation should be utterly taken away, the very thing they were afraid of, and to prevent which, as they pretended, they persecuted Christ (John xi. 48): *Let their habitation be desolate* (v. 25), which was fulfilled when their country was laid waste by the Romans, and *Zion, for their sakes, was ploughed as a field*, Mic. iii. 12. The temple was the house which they were in a particular manner proud of, but this was *left unto them desolate*, Matt. xxiii. 38. Yet that is not all; it ought to be some satisfaction to us, if we be cut off from the enjoyment of our possessions, that others will have the benefit of them when we are dislodged; but it is here added, *Let none dwell in their tents*, which was remarkably fulfilled in Judah and Jerusalem, for after the destruction of the Jews it was long ere the country was inhabited to any purpose. But this is applied particularly to Judas, by St. Peter, Acts i. 20. For, he being *felo de se*—a suicide, we may suppose his estate was confiscated, so that *his habitation was desolate and no man of his own kindred dwelt therein*.

5. That their way to ruin should be downhill, and nothing should stop them, nor interpose to prevent it (v. 27): "Lord, leave them to themselves, to add iniquity to iniquity."

quity." Those that are bad, if they be given up to their own hearts' lusts, will certainly be worse; they will add sin to sin, nay, they will add rebellion to their sin, Job xxxiv. 37. It is said of the Jews that they filled up their sin always, 1 Thess. ii. 16. Add the punishment of iniquity to their iniquity (so some read it), for the same word signifies both sin and punishment, so close is their connexion. If men will sin, God will reckon for it. But those that have multiplied to sin may yet find mercy, for God multiplies to pardon, through the righteousness of the Mediator; and therefore, that they might be precluded from all hopes of mercy, he adds, *Let them not come into thy righteousness*, to receive the benefit of the righteousness of God, which is by faith in a Mediator, Phil. iii. 9. Not that God shuts out any from that righteousness, for the gospel excludes none that do not by their unbelief exclude themselves; but let them be left to take their own course and they will never come into this government; for being ignorant of the demands of God's righteousness, and going about to establish the merit of their own, they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God, Rom. x. 3. And those that are so proud and self-willed that they will not come into God's righteousness shall have their doom accordingly; they themselves have decided it: they shall not come into his righteousness. Let not those expect any benefit by it that are not willing and glad to be beholden to it.

6. That they should be cut off from all hopes of happiness (v. 28): *Let them be blotted out of the book of the living*; let them not be suffered to live any longer, since, the longer they live, the more mischief they do. Multitudes of the unbelieving Jews fell by sword and famine, and none of those who had embraced the Christian faith perished among them; the nation, as a nation, was blotted out, and became not a people. Many understand it of their rejection from God's covenant and all the privileges of it; that is *the book of the living*: "Let the commonwealth of Israel itself, Israel according to the flesh, now become alienated from that covenant of promise which hitherto it has had the monopoly of. Let it appear that they were never written in the Lamb's book of life, but reprobate silver let men call them, because the Lord has rejected them. Let them not be written with the righteous; that is, let them not have a place in the congregation of the saints when they shall all be gathered in the general assembly of those whose names are written in heaven," i. 5.

II. What the sin is for which these dreadful judgments should be brought upon them (v. 26): *They persecute him whom thou hast smitten, and talk to the grief of thy wounded*. 1. Christ was he whom God had smitten, for it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and he was esteemed stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted, and therefore men hid their faces from

him, Isa. liii. 3, 4, 10. They persecuted him with a rage reaching up to heaven; they cried, *Crucify him, crucify him*. Compare that of St. Peter with this, Acts ii. 23. Though he was delivered by the counsel and foreknowledge of God, it was with wicked hands that they crucified and slew him. They talked to the grief of the Lord Jesus when he was upon the cross, saying, *He trusted in God, let him deliver him*, than which nothing could be said more grieving. 2. The suffering saints were God's wounded, wounded in his cause and for his sake, and them they persecuted, and talked to their grief. For these things wrath came upon them to the uttermost, 1 Thess. ii. 16; and see Matt. xxiii. 34, &c. This may be understood more generally, and it teaches us that nothing is more provoking to God than to insult over those whom he has smitten, and to add affliction to the afflicted, upon which it justly follows here, *Add iniquity to iniquity*; see Zech. i. 15. Those that are of a wounded spirit, under trouble and fear about their spiritual state, ought to be very tenderly dealt with, and care must be taken not to talk to their grief and not to make the heart of the righteous sad.

III. What the psalmist thinks of himself in the midst of all (v. 29): "*But I am poor and sorrowful*; that is the worst of my case, under outward afflictions, yet written among the righteous, and not under God's indignation as they are." It is better to be poor and sorrowful, with the blessing of God, than rich and jovial and under his curse. For those who come into God's righteousness shall soon see an end of their poverty and sorrow, and his salvation shall set them up on high, which is the thing that David here prays for, Isa. lxi. 10. This may be applied to Christ. He was, in his humiliation, poor and sorrowful, a man of sorrows, and that had not where to lay his head. But God highly exalted him; the salvation wrought for him, the salvation wrought by him, set him up on high, far above all principalities and powers.

30 I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving. 31 *This* also shall please the LORD better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs. 32 The humble shall see *this*, and be glad: and your heart shall live that seek God. 33 For the LORD heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners. 34 Let the heaven and earth praise him, the seas, and every thing that moveth therein. 35 For God will save Zion, and will build the cities of Judah: that they may dwell there, and have it in possession. 36 The seed also of his servants shall inherit it: and

they that love his name shall dwell therein.

The psalmist here, both as a type of Christ and as an example to Christians, concludes a psalm with holy joy and praise which he began with complaints and remonstrances of his griefs.

I. He resolves to praise God himself, not doubting but that therein he should be accepted of him (v. 30, 31): "*I will praise the name of God, not only with my heart, but with my song, and magnify him with thanksgiving;*" for he is pleased to reckon himself magnified by the thankful praises of his people. It is intimated that all Christians ought to glorify God with their praises, *in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs*. And *this shall please the Lord*, through Christ the Mediator of our praises as well as of our prayers, better than the most valuable of the legal sacrifices (v. 31), *an ox or bullock*. This is a plain intimation that in the days of the Messiah an end should be put, not only to the sacrifices of atonement, but to those of praise and acknowledgment which were instituted by the ceremonial law; and, instead of them, spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving are accepted—the calves of our lips, not the calves of the stall, Heb. xiii. 15. It is a great comfort to us that humble and thankful praises are more pleasing to God than the most costly pompous sacrifices are or ever were.

II. He encourages other good people to rejoice in God and continue seeking him (v. 32, 33): *The humble shall see this and be glad*. They shall observe, to their comfort, 1. The experiences of the saints. They shall see how ready God is to hear the poor when they cry to him, and to give them that which they call upon him for, how far he is from despising his prisoners; though men despise them, he favours them with his gracious visits and will find a time to enlarge them. *The humble shall see this and be glad*, not only because when one member is honoured all the members rejoice with it, but because it is an encouragement to them in their straits and difficulties to trust in God. It shall revive the hearts of those who seek God to see more seals and subscriptions to this truth, that Jacob's God never said to Jacob's seed, *Seek you me in vain*. 2. The exaltation of the Saviour, for of him the psalmist had been speaking, and of himself as a type of him. When his sorrows are over, and he enters into the joy that was set before him, when he is heard and discharged from his imprisonment in the grave, the humble shall look upon it and be glad, and those that seek God through Christ shall live and be comforted, concluding that, if they suffer with him, they shall also reign with him.

III. He calls upon all the creatures to praise God, the heaven, and earth, and sea, and the inhabitants of each, v. 34. Heaven

and earth, and the hosts of both, were made by him, and therefore *let heaven and earth praise him*. Angels in heaven, and saints on earth, may each of them in their respective habitations furnish themselves with matter enough for constant praise. Let the fishes of the sea, though mute to a proverb, praise the Lord, for the sea is his, and he made it. The praises of the world must be offered for God's favours to his church, v. 35, 36. For God will save Zion, the holy mountain, where his service was kept up. He will save all that are sanctified and set apart to him, all that employ themselves in his worship, and all those over whom Christ reigns; for he was King upon the holy hill of Zion. He has mercy in store for the cities of Judah, of which tribe Christ was. God will do great things for the gospel church, in which let all that wish well to it rejoice. For, 1. It shall be peopled and inhabited. There shall be added to it such as shall be saved. *The cities of Judah shall be built*, particular churches shall be formed and incorporated according to the gospel model, that there may be a remnant to dwell there and to have it in possession, to enjoy the privileges conferred upon it and to pay the tributes and services required from it. Those that love his name, that have a kindness for religion in general, shall embrace the Christian religion, and take their place in the Christian church; they shall dwell therein, as citizens, and of the household of God. 2. It shall be perpetuated and inherited. Christianity was not to be *res unius ætatis*—a transitory thing. No: *The seed of his servants shall inherit it*. God will secure and raise up for himself a seed to serve him, and they shall inherit the privileges of their fathers; for the promise is to you and your children, as it was of old. *I will be a God to thee, and thy seed after thee*. The land of promise shall never be lost for want of heirs, for God can out of stones raise up children unto Abraham and will do so rather than the entail shall be cut off. David shall never want a man to stand before him. The Redeemer shall see his seed, and prolong his days in them, till the mystery of God shall be finished and the mystical body completed. And since the holy seed is the substance of the world, and if that were all gathered in the world would be at an end quickly, it is just that for this assurance of the preservation of it heaven and earth should praise him.

PSALM LXX.

This psalm is adapted to a state of affliction; it is copied almost word for word from the fortieth, and, some think for that reason, is entitled, "a psalm to bring to remembrance;" for it may be of use sometimes to pray over the prayers we have formerly made to God upon similar occasions, which may be done with new affections. David here prays that God would send, 1. Help to himself, ver. 1, 5. 2. Shame to his enemies, ver. 2, 3. 3. Joy to his friends, ver. 4. These five verses were the last five verses of Ps. xl. He seems to have intended this short prayer to be both for himself and as a salve for every sore, and therefore to be always in mind; and in singing we may apply it to our particular troubles, whatever they are.

To the chief musician. *A psalm of David, to bring to remembrance.*

MAKE haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O LORD. 2 Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul: let them be turned backward, and put to confusion, that desire my hurt. 3 Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame that say, Aha, aha. 4 Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: and let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified. 5 But I am poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God: thou art my help and my deliverer; O LORD, make no tarrying.

hasten the desired succour. "*Make haste unto me, for the longing desire of my soul is towards thee; I shall perish if I be not speedily helped. I have no other to expect relief from: Thou art my help and my deliverer. Thou hast engaged to be so to all that seek thee; I depend upon thee to be so to me; I have often found thee so; and thou art sufficient, all-sufficient, to be so; therefore make haste to me.*"

II. He prays that God would fill the faces of his enemies with shame, v. 2, 3. Observe, 1. How he describes them; they sought after his soul—his life, to destroy that—his mind, to disturb that, to draw him from God to sin and to despair. They desired his hurt, his ruin; when any calamity befel him or threatened him they said, "*Aha, aha! so would we have it; we shall gain our point now, and see him ruined.*" Thus spiteful, thus insolent, were they. 2. What his prayer is against them: "*Let them be ashamed; let them be brought to repentance, so filled with shame as that they may seek thy name (lxxxiii. 16); let them see their fault and folly in fighting against those whom thou dost protect, and be ashamed of their envy, Isa. xxvi. 11. However, let their designs against me be frustrated and their measures broken; let them be turned back from their malicious pursuits, and then they will be ashamed and confounded, and, like the enemies of the Jews, much cast down in their own eyes.*" Neh. vi. 16.

III. He prays that God would fill the hearts of his friends with joy (v. 4), that all those who seek God and love his salvation, who desire it, delight in it, and depend upon it, may have continual matter for joy and praise and hearts for both; and then he doubts not but that he should put in for a share of the blessing he prays for; and so may we if we answer the character. 1. Let us make the service of God our great business and the favour of God our great delight and pleasure, for that is seeking him and loving his salvation. Let the pursuit of a happiness in God be our great care and the enjoyment of it our great satisfaction. "A heart to love the salvation of the Lord, and to prefer it before any secular advantages whatsoever, so as cheerfully to quit all rather than hazard our salvation, is a good evidence of our interest in it and title to it. 2. Let us then be assured that, if it be not our own fault, the joy of the Lord shall fill our minds and the high praises of the Lord shall fill our mouths. Those that seek God, if they seek him early and seek him diligently, shall rejoice and be glad in him, for their seeking him is an evidence of his good-will to them and an earnest of their finding him, cv. 3. There is pleasure and joy even in seeking God, for it is one of the fundamental principles of religion that God is the rewarder of all those that diligently seek him. Those that love God's salvation shall say with pleasure, with constant pleasure (for praising God,

The title tells us that this psalm was designed to bring to remembrance; that is, to put God in remembrance of his mercy and promises (for so we are said to do when we pray to him and plead with him. Isa. xliii. 26, *Put me in remembrance*)—not that the Eternal Mind needs a remembrancer, but this honour he is pleased to put upon the prayer of faith. Or, rather, to put himself and others in remembrance of former afflictions, that we may never be secure, but always in expectation of troubles, and of former devotions, that when the clouds return after the rain we may have recourse to the same means which we have formerly found effectual for fetching in comfort and relief. We may in prayer use the words we have often used before: our Saviour in his agony prayed thrice, saying the same words; so David here uses the words he had used before, yet not without some alterations, to show that he did not design to tie himself or others to them as a form. God looks at the heart, not at the words.

I. David here prays that God would make haste to relieve and succour him (v. 1, 5): *I am poor and needy*, in want and distress, and much at a loss within myself. Poverty and necessity are very good pleas in prayer to a God of infinite mercy, who despises not the sighing of a contrite heart, who has pronounced a blessing upon the poor in spirit, and who fills the hungry with good things. He prays, 1. That God would appear for him to deliver him from his troubles in due time. 2. That in the mean time he would come in to his aid, to help him under his troubles, that he might not sink and faint. 3. That he would do this quickly: *Make haste* (v. 1), and again (v. 5), *Make haste, make no tarrying*. Sometimes God seems to delay helping his own people, that he may excite such earnest desires as these. *He that believes does not make haste*, so as to anticipate or outrun the divine counsels, so as to force a way of escape or to take any unlawful methods of relief; but he may make haste by going forth to meet God in humble prayer that he would

if we make it our continual work, will be our continual feast), *Let God be magnified*, as he will be, to eternity, in the salvation of his people. All who wish well to the comfort of the saints, and to the glory of God, cannot but say a hearty *amen* to this prayer, that those who love God's salvation may say continually, *Let God be magnified*.

PSALM LXXI.

David penned this psalm in his old age, as appears by several passages in it, which makes many think that it was penned at the time of Absalom's rebellion; for that was the great trouble of his latter days. It might be occasioned by Sheba's insurrection, or some trouble that happened to him in that part of his life of which it was foretold that the sword should not depart from his house. But he is not over-particular in representing his case, because he intended it for the general use of God's people in their afflictions, especially those they meet with in their declining years; for this psalm, above any other, is fitted for the use of the old disciples of Jesus Christ. I. He begins the psalm with believing prayers, with prayers that God would deliver him and save him (ver. 2, 4) and not cast him off (ver. 9) or be far from him (ver. 12); and that his enemies might be put to shame, ver. 13. He pleads his confidence in God (ver. 1, 3, 5, 7), the experience he had had of help from God (ver. 6), and the malice of his enemies against him, ver. 10, 11. II. He concludes the psalm with believing praises, ver. 14, &c. Never was his hope more established, ver. 16, 18, 20, 21. Never were his joys and thanksgivings more enlarged, ver. 15, 19, 22—24. He is in an ecstasy of joyful praise; and, in the singing of it, we too should have our faith in God encouraged and our hearts raised in blessing his holy name.

IN thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion. 2 Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape: incline thine ear unto me, and save me. 3 Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress. 4 Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man. 5 For thou art my hope, O Lord God: thou art my trust from my youth. 6 By thee have I been holden up from the womb: thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels: my praise shall be continually of thee. 7 I am as a wonder unto many; but thou art my strong refuge. 8 Let my mouth be filled with thy praise and with thy honour all the day. 9 Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth. 10 For mine enemies speak against me; and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together, 11 Saying, God hath forsaken him: persecute and take him; for there is none to deliver him. 12 O God, be not far from me: O my God, make haste for my help. 13 Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul; let them be covered with reproach and dishonour that seek my hurt.

Two things in general David here prays for—that he might not be confounded and that his enemies and persecutors might be confounded.

I. He prays that he might never be made ashamed of his dependence upon God nor disappointed in his believing expectations from him. With this petition every true believer may come boldly to the throne of grace; for God will never disappoint the hope that is of his own raising. Now observe here,

1. How David professes his confidence in God, and with what pleasure and grateful variety of expression he repeats his profession of that confidence, still presenting the profession of it to God and pleading it with him. We praise God, and so please him, by telling him (if it be indeed true) what an entire confidence we have in him (v. 1): "*In thee, O Lord!* and in thee only, *do I put my trust*." Whatever others do, I choose the God of Jacob for my help." Those that are entirely satisfied with God's all-sufficiency and the truth of his promise, and in dependence upon that, as sufficient to make them amends, are freely willing to do and suffer, to lose and venture, for him, may truly say, *In thee, O Lord! do I put my trust*. Those that will deal with God must deal upon trust; if we are shy of dealing with him, it is a sign we do not trust him. *Thou art my rock and my fortress* (v. 3); and again, "*Thou art my refuge, my strong refuge*" (v. 7); that is, "I fly to thee, and am sure to be safe in thee, and under thy protection. If thou secure me, none can hurt me. *Thou art my hope and my trust*" (v. 5); that is, "thou hast proposed thyself to me in thy word as the proper object of my hope and trust; I have hoped in thee, and never found it in vain to do so."

2. How his confidence in God is supported and encouraged by his experiences (v. 5, 6): "*Thou hast been my trust from my youth*; ever since I was capable of discerning between my right hand and my left, I stayed myself upon thee, and saw a great deal of reason to do so; for *by thee have I been holden up from the womb*." Ever since he had the use of his reason he had been a dependent upon God's goodness, because ever since he had had a being he had been a monument of it. Note, The consideration of the gracious care which the divine Providence took of us in our birth and infancy should engage us to an early piety and constant devotedness to his honour. He that was our help from our birth ought to be our hope from our youth. If we received so much mercy from God before we were capable of doing him any service, we should lose no time when we are capable. This comes in here as a support to the psalmist in his present distress; not only that God had given him his life and being, bringing him out of his mother's bowels into the world, and providing that he should not die from the womb, nor give up the ghost when he came out of the belly, but that he

had betimes made him one of his family: "Thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels into the arms of thy grace, under the shadow of thy wings, into the bond of thy covenant; thou tookest me into thy church, as a son of thy handmaid, and born in thy house, cxvi. 16. And therefore," (1.) "I have reason to hope that thou wilt protect me; thou that hast held me up hitherto wilt not let me fall now; thou that madest me wilt not forsake the work of thy own hands; thou that helpedst me when I could not help myself wilt not abandon me now that I am as helpless as I was then." (2.) "Therefore I have reason to resolve that I will devote myself unto thee: *My praise shall therefore be continually of thee*;" that is, "I will make it my business every day to praise thee and will take all occasions to do it."

3. What his requests to God are, in this confidence.

(1.) That he might *never be put to confusion* (v. 1), that he might not be disappointed of the mercy he expected and so made ashamed of his expectation. Thus we may all pray in faith that our confidence in God may not be our confusion. Hope of the glory of God is hope that makes not ashamed.

(2.) That he might be delivered out of the hand of his enemies (v. 2): "*Deliver me in thy righteousness*." As thou art the righteous Judge of the world, pleading the cause of the injured and punishing the injurious, cause me in some way or other to escape" (God will, with the temptation, make a way to escape, 1 Cor. x. 13): "*Incline thy ear unto my prayers*, and, in answer to them, save me out of my troubles, v. 4. Deliver me, O my God! out of the hands of those that are ready to pull me in pieces." Three things he pleads for deliverance:—[1.] The encouragement God had given him to expect it: "*Thou hast given commandment to save me* (v. 3); that is, thou hast promised to do it, and such efficacy is there in God's promises that they are often spoken of as commands, like that, *Let there be light, and there was light*. He speaks, and it is done. [2.] The character of his enemies; they are *wicked, unrighteous, cruel men*, and it will be for the honour of God to appear against them (v. 4), for he is a holy, just, and good God. [3.] The many eyes that were upon him (v. 7): "*I am as a wonder unto many*; every one waits to see what will be the issue of such extraordinary troubles as I have fallen into and such extraordinary confidence as I profess to have in God." Or, "I am looked upon as a monster, am one whom every body shuns, and therefore am undone if the Lord be not my refuge. Men abandon me, but God will not."

(3.) That he might always find rest and safety in God (v. 3): "*Be thou my strong habitation*; be thou to me a *rock of repose, whereto I may continually resort*. Those that are at home in God, that live a life of communion with him and confidence in him, that conti-

nually resort unto him by faith and prayer, having their eyes ever towards him, may promise themselves a strong habitation in him, such as will never fall of itself nor can ever be broken through by any invading power; and they shall be welcome to resort to him continually upon all occasions, and not be upbraided as coming too often.

(4.) That he might have continual matter for thanksgiving to God, and might be continually employed in that pleasant work (v. 8): "*Let my mouth be filled with thy praise*, as now it is with my complaints, and then I shall not be ashamed of my hope, but my enemies will be ashamed of their insolence." Those that love God love to be praising him, and desire to be doing it all the day, not only in their morning and evening devotions, not only *seven times a day* (cxix. 164), but *all the day*, to intermix with all they say something or other that may redound to the honour and praise of God. They resolve to do it while they live; they hope to be doing it eternally in a better world.

(5.) That he might not be neglected now in his declining years (v. 9): "*Cast me not off now in the time of my old age; forsake me not when my strength fails*. Observe here, [1.] The natural sense he had of the infirmities of age: *My strength fails*. Where there was strength of body and vigour of mind, strong sight, a strong voice, strong limbs, alas! in old age they fail; the life is continued, but the strength is gone, or that which is *labour and sorrow*, xc. 10. [2.] The gracious desire he had of the continuance of God's presence with him under these infirmities: *Lord, cast me not off; do not then forsake me*. This intimates that he should look upon himself as undone if God should abandon him. To be cast off and forsaken of God is a thing to be dreaded at any time, especially in the time of old age and when our strength fails us; for it is God that is the strength of our heart. But it intimates that he had reason to hope God would not desert him; the faithful servants of God may be comfortably assured that he will not cast them off in old age, nor forsake them when their strength fails them. He is a Master that is not wont to cast off old servants. In this confidence David here prays again (v. 12): "*O God! be not far from me*; let me not be under the apprehension of thy withdrawals, for then I am miserable. *O my God! a God in covenant with me, make haste for my help, lest I perish before help come*."

II. He prays that his enemies might be made ashamed of their designs against him. Observe, 1. What it was which they unjustly said against him, v. 10, 11. Their plot was deep and desperate; it was against his life: "*They lay wait for my soul* (v. 10), and are adversaries to that, v. 13. Their powers and policies were combined. *They take counsel together*. And very insolent they were in their deportment: *They say, God has forsaken*

him; persecute and take him. Here their premises are utterly false, that because a good man was in great trouble and had continued long in it, and was not so soon delivered as perhaps he expected, therefore God had forsaken him and would have no more to do with him. All are not forsaken of God who think themselves so or whom others think to be so. And, as their premises were false, so their inference was barbarous. If God has forsaken him, then persecute and take him, and doubt not but to make a prey of him. This is talking to the grief of one whom God has smitten, lxix. 26. But thus they endeavour to discourage David, as Sennacherib endeavoured to intimidate Hezekiah by suggesting that God was his enemy and fought against him. *Have I now come up without the Lord against this city, to destroy it?* Isa. xxxvi. 10. It is true, if God has forsaken a man, there is none to deliver him; but therefore to insult over him ill becomes those who are conscious to themselves that they deserve to be for ever forsaken of God. But rejoice not against me, O my enemy! though I fall, I shall rise. He that seems to forsake for a small moment will gather with everlasting kindness. 2. What it was which he justly prayed for, from a spirit of prophecy, not a spirit of passion (v. 13): "*Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul.* If they will not be confounded by repentance, and so saved, let them be confounded with everlasting dishonour, and so ruined." God will turn into shame the glory of those who turn into shame the glory of God and his people.

14 But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more. 15 My mouth shall show forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof. 16 I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only. 17 O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. 18 Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have showed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come. 19 Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things: O God, who is like unto thee! 20 Thou, which hast showed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth. 21 Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side. 22 I

will also praise thee with the psaltery, even thy truth, O my God: unto thee will I sing with the harp, O thou Holy One of Israel. 23 My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee; and my soul, which thou hast redeemed. 24 My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long: for they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt.

David is here in a holy transport of joy and praise, arising from his faith and hope in God; we have both together v. 14, where there is a sudden and remarkable change of his voice; his fears are all silenced, his hopes raised, and his prayers turned into thanksgivings. "Let my enemies say what they will, to drive me to despair, I will hope continually, hope in all conditions, in the most cloudy and dark day; I will live upon hope and will hope to the end." Since we hope in one that will never fail us, let not our hope in him fail us, and then we shall praise him yet more and more. "The more they reproach me the more closely will I cleave to thee; I will praise thee more and better than ever I have done yet." The longer we live the more expert we should grow in praising God and the more we should abound in it. I will add over and above all thy praise, all the praise I have hitherto offered, for it is all too little. When we have said all we can, to the glory of God's grace, there is still more to be said; it is a subject that can never be exhausted, and therefore we should never grow weary of it. Now observe, in these verses,

I. How his heart is established in faith and hope; and it is a good thing that the heart be so established. Observe,

1. What he hopes in, v. 16. (1.) In the power of God: "*I will go in the strength of the Lord God,* not sit down in despair, but stir up myself to and exert myself in my work and warfare, will go forth and go on, not in any strength of my own, but in God's strength—disclaiming my own sufficiency and depending on him only as all-sufficient—in the strength of his providence and in the strength of his grace." We must always go about God's work in his strength, having our eyes up unto him to work in us both to will and to do. (2.) In the promise of God: "*I will make mention of thy righteousness,* that is, thy faithfulness to every word which thou hast spoken, the equity of thy disposals, and thy kindness to thy people that trust in thee. This I will make mention of as my plea in prayer for thy mercy." We may very fitly apply it to the righteousness of Christ, which is called the righteousness of God by faith, and which is witnessed by the law and the prophets; we must depend upon God's strength

for assistance and upon Christ's righteousness for acceptance. *In the Lord have I righteousness and strength*, Isa. xlv. 24.

2. What he hopes for.

(1.) He hopes that God will not leave him in his old age, but will be the same to him to the end that he had been all along, v. 17, 18. Observe here, [1.] What God had done for him when he was young: *Thou hast taught me from my youth*. The good education and good instructions which his parents gave him when he was young he owns himself obliged to give God thanks for as a great favour. It is a blessed thing to be taught of God from our youth, from our childhood to know the holy scriptures, and it is what we have reason to bless God for. [2.] What he had done for God when he was middle-aged: He had *declared all God's wondrous works*. Those that have got good when they are young must be doing good when they are grown up, and must continue to communicate what they have received. We must own that all the works of God's goodness to us are wondrous works, admiring he should do so much for us who are so undeserving, and we must make it our business to declare them, to the glory of God and the good of others. [3.] What he desired of God now that he was old: *Now that I am old and gray-headed, dying to this world and hastening to another, O God! forsake me not*. This is what he earnestly desires and confidently hopes for. Those that have been taught of God from their youth, and have made it the business of their lives to honour him, may be sure that he will not leave them when they are old and gray-headed, will not leave them helpless and comfortless, but will make the evil days of old age their best days, and such as they shall have occasion to say they have pleasure in. [4.] What he designed to do for God in his old age: "I will not only *show thy strength*, by my own experience of it, *to this generation*, but I will leave my observations upon record for the benefit of posterity, and so show it to *every one that is to come*." As long as we live we should be endeavouring to glorify God and edify one another; and those that have had the largest and longest experience of the goodness of God to them should improve their experiences for the good of their friends. It is a debt which the old disciples of Christ owe to the succeeding generations to leave behind them a solemn testimony to the power, pleasure, and advantage of religion, and the truth of God's promises.

(2.) He hopes that God would revive him and raise him up out of his present low and disconsolate condition (v. 20): *Thou who hast made me to see and feel great and sore troubles*, above most men, *shalt quicken me again*. Note, [1.] The best of God's saints and servants are sometimes exercised with great and sore troubles in this world. [2.] God's hand is to be eyed in all the troubles of the saints, and that will help to extenuate them and

make them seem light. He does not say, "Thou hast burdened me with those troubles," but "shown them to me," as the tender father shows the child the rod to keep him in awe. [3.] Though God's people be brought ever so low he can revive them and raise them up. Are they dead? he can quicken them again. See 2 Cor. i. 9. Are they buried, as dead men out of mind? he can bring them up again from the depths of the earth, can cheer the most drooping spirit and raise the most sinking interest. [4.] If we have a due regard to the hand of God in our troubles, we may promise ourselves, in due time, a deliverance out of them. Our present troubles, though great and sore, shall be no hindrance to our joyful resurrection from the depths of the earth, witness our great Master, to whom this may have some reference; his Father showed him great and sore troubles, but quickened him and brought him up from the grave.

(3.) He hopes that God would not only deliver him out of his troubles, but would advance his honour and joy more than ever (v. 21): "Thou shalt not only restore me to *my greatness* again, but shalt *increase it*, and give me a better interest, after this shock, than before; thou shalt not only comfort me, but *comfort me on every side*, so that I shall see nothing black or threatening on any side." Note, Sometimes God makes his people's troubles contribute to the increase of their greatness, and their sun shines the brighter for having been under a cloud. If he make them contribute to the increase of their goodness, that will prove in the end the increase of their greatness, their glory; and if he comfort them on every side, according to the time and degree wherein he has afflicted them on every side, they will have no reason to complain. When our Lord Jesus was quickened again, and brought back from the depths of the earth, his greatness was increased, and he entered on the joy set before him.

(4.) He hopes that all his enemies would be put to confusion, v. 24. He speaks of it with the greatest assurance as a thing done, and triumphs in it accordingly: *They are confounded, they are brought to shame, that seek my hurt*. His honour would be their disgrace and his comfort their vexation.

II. Let us now see how his heart is enlarged in joy and praises, how he rejoices in hope, and sings in hope; for we are saved by hope.

1. He will speak of God's righteousness and his salvation, as great things, things which he was well acquainted with, and much affected with, which he desired God might have the glory of and others might have the comfortable knowledge of (v. 15): *My mouth shall show forth thy righteousness and thy salvation*; and again (v. 24), *My tongue shall talk of thy righteousness*, and this *all the day*. God's righteousness, which David seems here to be in a particular manner affected with, includes a great deal: the rectitude of his

nature, the equity of his providential disposals, the righteous laws he has given us to be ruled by, the righteous promises he has given us to depend upon, and the everlasting righteousness which his Son has brought in for our justification. God's righteousness and his salvation are here joined together; let no man think to put them asunder, nor expect salvation without righteousness, l. 23. If these two are made the objects of our desire, let them be made the subjects of our discourse all the day, for they are subjects that can never be exhausted.

2. He will speak of them with wonder and admiration, as one astonished at the dimensions of divine love and grace, the height and depth, the length and breadth, of it: "*I know not the numbers thereof*, v. 15. Though I cannot give a particular account of thy favours to me, they are so many, so great (if *I would count them, they are more in number than the sand*, xl. 5), yet, knowing them to be numberless, I will be still speaking of them, for in them I shall find new matter," v. 19. The righteousness that is in God is very high; that which is done by him for his people is very great: put both together, and we shall say, *O God! who is like unto thee?* 'This is praising God, acknowledging his perfections and performances to be, (1.) Above our conception; they are very high and great, so high that we cannot apprehend them, so great that we cannot comprehend them. (2.) Without any parallel; no being like him, no works like his: *O God! who is like unto thee?* None in heaven, none on earth, no angel, no king. God is a none-such; we do not rightly praise him if we do not own him to be so.

3. He will speak of them with all the expressions of joy and exultation, v. 22, 23. Observe,

(1.) How he would eye God in praising him. [1.] As a faithful God: *I will praise thee, even thy truth*. God is made known by his word; if we praise that, and the truth of that, we praise him. By faith we set to our seal that God is true; and so we praise his truth. [2.] As a God in covenant with him: "*O my God! whom I have consented to and avouched for mine*." As in our prayers, so in our praises, we must look up to God as our God, and give him the glory of our interest in him and relation to him. [3.] As the *Holy One of Israel*, Israel's God in a peculiar manner, glorious in his holiness among that people and faithful to his covenant with them. It is God's honour that he is a Holy One; it is his people's honour that he is the Holy One of Israel.

(2.) How he will express his joy and exultation. [1.] With his hand, in sacred music—*with the psaltery, with the harp*; at these David excelled, and the best of his skill shall be employed in setting forth God's praises to such advantage as might affect others. [2.] With his lips, in sacred songs: "*Unto thee will I sing*, to thy honour, and with a desire

to be accepted of thee. *My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee*, knowing they cannot be better employed." [3.] In both with his heart: "*My soul shall rejoice which thou hast redeemed*." Note, *First*, Holy joy is the very heart and life of thankful praise. *Secondly*, We do not make melody to the Lord, in singing his praises, if we do not do it with our hearts. My lips shall rejoice, but that is nothing; lip-labour, though ever so well laboured, if that be all, is but lost labour in serving God; the soul must be at work, and with all that is within us we must bless his holy name, else all about us is worth little. *Thirdly*, Redeemed souls ought to be joyful thankful souls. The work of redemption ought, above all God's works, to be celebrated by us in our praises. The Lamb that was slain, and has redeemed us to God, must therefore be counted worthy of all blessing and praise.

PSALM LXXII.

The foregoing psalm was penned by David when he was old, and, it should seem, so was this too; for Solomon was now standing fair for the crown; that was his prayer for himself, this for his son and successor, and with these two the prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended, as we find in the close of this psalm. If we have but God's presence with us while we live, and good hopes concerning those that shall come after us that they shall be praising God on earth when we are praising him in heaven, it is enough. This is entitled "a psalm for Solomon;" it is probable that David dictated it, or, rather, that it was by the blessed Spirit dictated to him, when, a little before he died, by divine direction he settled the succession, and gave orders to proclaim Solomon king, 1 Kings i. 30, &c. But, though Solomon's name is here made use of, Christ's kingdom is here prophesied of under the type and figure of Solomon's. David knew what the divine oracle was, That "of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne," Acts ii. 30. To him he here bears witness, and with the prospect of the glories of his kingdom he comforted himself in his dying moments when he foresaw that his house would not be so with God, not so great, not so good, as he wished. David, in spirit, l. begins with a short prayer for his successor, ver. l. It is he that passes immediately into a long prediction of the close of his reign, ver. 2-17. And, III. He concludes with praise to the God of Israel, ver. 18-20. In singing this psalm we must have an eye to Christ, praising him as a King, and pleasing our selves with our happiness as his subjects.

A psalm for Solomon.

GIVE the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son.

This verse is a prayer for the king, even the king's son.

I. We may apply it to Solomon: *Give him thy judgments, O God! and thy righteousness; make him a man, a king; make him a good man, a good king*. 1. It is the prayer of a father for his child, a dying blessing, such as the patriarchs bequeathed to their children. The best thing we can ask of God for our children is that God will give them wisdom and grace to know and do their duty; that is better than gold. Solomon learned to pray for himself as his father had prayed for him, not that God would give him riches and honour, but a wise and understanding heart. It was a comfort to David that his own son was to be his successor, but more so that he was likely to be both judicious and righteous. David had given him a good education (Prov. iv. 3), had taught him *good judgment and righteousness*, yet that would not do unless God gave him his judgments. Parents cannot give grace to their children,

but may by prayer bring them to the God of grace, and shall not seek him in vain, for their prayer shall either be answered or it shall return with comfort into their own bosom. 2. It is the prayer of a king for his successor. David had executed judgment and justice during his reign, and now he prays that his son might do so too. Such a concern as this we should have for posterity, desiring and endeavouring that those who come after us may do God more and better service in their day than we have done in ours. Those have little love either to God or man, and are of a very narrow selfish spirit, who care not what becomes of the world and the church when they are gone. 3. It is the prayer of subjects for their king. It should seem, David penned this psalm for the use of the people, that they, in singing, might pray for Solomon. Those who would live quiet and peaceable lives must pray for kings and all in authority, that God would give them his judgments and righteousness.

II. We may apply it to Christ; not that he who intercedes for us needs us to intercede for him; but, 1. It is a prayer of the Old-Testament church for sending the Messiah, as the church's King, King on the holy hill of Zion, of whom the King of kings had said, *Thou art my Son*, ii. 6, 7. "Hasten his coming to whom all judgment is committed;" and we must thus hasten the second coming of Christ, when he shall judge the world in righteousness. 2. It is an expression of the satisfaction which all true believers take in the authority which the Lord Jesus has received from the Father: "Let him have all power both in heaven and earth, and be the Lord our righteousness; let him be the great trustee of divine grace for all that are his; give it to him, that he may give it to us."

2 He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment. 3 The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness. 4 He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. 5 They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations. 6 He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth. 7 In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. 8 He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. 9 They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his ene-

mies shall lick the dust. 10 The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. 11 Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him. 12 For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. 13 He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. 14 He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight. 15 And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for him continually; and daily shall he be praised. 16 There shall be a handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and *they* of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. 17 His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and *men* shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed.

This is a prophecy of the prosperity and perpetuity of the kingdom of Christ under the shadow of the reign of Solomon. It comes in, 1. As a plea to enforce the prayer: "Lord, give him thy judgments and thy righteousness, and then he shall judge thy people with righteousness, and so shall answer the end of his elevation, v. 2. Give him thy grace, and then thy people, committed to his charge, will have the benefit of it." *Because God loved Israel, he made him king over them to do judgment and justice*, 2 Chron. ix. 8. We may in faith wrestle with God for that grace which we have reason to think will be of common advantage to his church. 2. As an answer of peace to the prayer. As by the prayer of faith we return answers to God's promises of mercy, so by the promises of mercy God returns answers to our prayers of faith. That this prophecy must refer to the kingdom of the Messiah is plain, because there are many passages in it which cannot be applied to the reign of Solomon. There was indeed a great deal of righteousness and peace, at first, in the administration of his government; but, before the end of his reign, there were both trouble and unrighteousness. The kingdom here spoken of is to last as long as the sun, but Solomon's was soon extinct. Therefore even the Jewish expositors understand it of the kingdom of the Messiah.

Let us observe the many great and precious promises here made, which were to have their full accomplishment only in the

kingdom of Christ; and yet some of them were in part fulfilled in Solomon's reign.

I. That it should be a *righteous government* (v. 2): *He shall judge thy people with righteousness.* Compare Isa. xi. 4. All the laws of Christ's kingdom are consonant to the eternal rules of equity; the chancery it erects to relieve against the rigours of the broken law is indeed a court of equity; and against the sentence of his last judgment there will lie no exception. The peace of his kingdom shall be supported by righteousness (v. 3); for then only is the peace like a river, when the *righteousness is as the waves of the sea.* The world will be judged in righteousness, Acts xvii. 31.

II. That it should be a peaceable government: *The mountains shall bring peace, and the little hills* (v. 3); that is (says Dr. Hammond), both the superior and the inferior courts of judicature in Solomon's kingdom. There shall be *abundance of peace*, v. 7. Solomon's name signifies *peaceable*, and such was his reign; for in it Israel enjoyed the victories of the foregoing reign and preserved the tranquillity and repose of that reign. But peace is, in a special manner, the glory of Christ's kingdom; for, as far as it prevails, it reconciles men to God, to themselves, and to one another, and slays all enmities; for he is our peace.

III. That the poor and needy should be, in a particular manner, taken under the protection of this government: *He shall judge thy poor*, v. 2. Those are God's poor that are impoverished by keeping a good conscience, and those shall be provided for with a distinguishing care, shall be judged for with judgment, with a particular cognizance taken of their case and a particular vengeance taken for their wrongs. *The poor of the people, and the children of the needy*, he will be sure so to judge as to save, v. 4. This is insisted upon again (v. 12, 13), intimating that Christ will be sure to carry his cause on behalf of his injured poor. *He will deliver the needy that lie at the mercy of their oppressors, the poor also*, both because they have no helper and it is for his honour to help them and because they cry unto him and he has promised, in answer to their prayers, to help them; they by prayer *commit themselves unto him*, x. 14. *He will spare the needy that throw themselves on his mercy*, and will not be rigorous and severe with them; *he will save their souls*, and that is all they desire. *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* Christ is the poor man's King.

IV. That proud oppressors shall be reckoned with: *He shall break them in pieces* (v. 4), shall take away their power to hurt, and punish them for all the mischief they have done. This is the office of a good king, *Parcere subjectis, et debellare superbos*—*To spare the vanquished and debase the proud.* The devil is the great oppressor, whom Christ

will break in pieces and of whose kingdom he will be the destruction. *With the breath of his mouth shall he slay that wicked one* (Isa. xi. 4), and shall deliver the souls of his people *from deceit and violence*, v. 14. He shall save from the power of Satan, both as an old serpent working by deceit to ensnare them and as a roaring lion working by violence to terrify and devour them. So *precious shall their blood be unto him* that not a drop of it shall be shed, by the deceit or violence of Satan or his instruments, without being reckoned for. Christ is a King, who, though he calls his subjects sometimes to resist unto blood for him, yet is not prodigal of their blood, nor will ever have it parted with but upon a valuable consideration to his glory and theirs, and the filling up of the measure of their enemies' iniquity.

V. That religion shall flourish under Christ's government (v. 5): *They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure.* Solomon indeed built the temple, and the fear and worship of God were well kept up, for some time, under his government, but it did not last long; this therefore must point at Christ's kingdom, all the subjects of which are brought to and kept in the fear of God; for the Christian religion has a direct tendency to, and a powerful influence upon, the support and advancement of natural religion. Faith in Christ will set up, and keep up, the fear of God; and therefore this is the everlasting gospel that is preached, *Fear God, and give honour to him*, Rev. xiv. 7. And, as Christ's government promotes devotion towards God, so it promotes both justice and charity among men (v. 7): *In his days shall the righteous flourish*; righteousness shall be practised, and those that practise righteousness shall be preferred. Righteousness shall abound and be in reputation, shall command and be in power. The law of Christ, written in the heart, disposes men to be honest and just, and to render to all their due; it likewise disposes men to live in love, and so it produces abundance of peace and beats swords into ploughshares. Both holiness and love shall be perpetual in Christ's kingdom, and shall never go to decay, for the subjects of it shall *fear God as long as the sun and moon endure*; Christianity, in the profession of it, having got footing in the world, shall keep its ground till the end of time, and having, in the power of it, got footing in the heart, it will continue there till, by death, the sun, and the moon, and the stars (that is, the bodily senses) are darkened. Through all the changes of the world, and all the changes of life, Christ's kingdom will support itself; and, if the fear of God continue as long as the sun and moon, abundance of peace will. The peace of the church, the peace of the soul, shall run parallel with its purity and piety, and last as long as these last.

VI. That Christ's government shall be very comfortable to all his faithful loving

subjects (v. 6): *He shall, by the graces and comforts of his Spirit, come down like rain upon the mown grass; not on that which is cut down, but that which is left growing, that it may spring again, though it was beheaded. The gospel of Christ distils as the rain, which softens the ground that was hard, moistens that which was dry, and so makes it green and fruitful, Isa. lv. 10. Let our hearts drink in the rain, Heb. vi. 7.*

VII. That Christ's kingdom shall be extended very far, and greatly enlarged; considering,

1. The extent of his territories (v. 8): *He shall have dominion from sea to sea* (from the South Sea to the North, or from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean) *and from the river Euphrates, or Nile, to the ends of the earth.* Solomon's dominion was very large (1 Kings iv. 21), according to the promise, Gen. xv. 18. But no sea, no river, is named, that it might, by these proverbial expressions, intimate the universal monarchy of the Lord Jesus. His gospel has been, or shall be, preached to all nations (Matt. xxiv. 14), and the kingdoms of the world shall become his kingdoms (Rev. xi. 15) when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be brought in. His territories shall be extended to those countries, (1.) That were strangers to him: *Those that dwell in the wilderness, out of all high roads, that seldom hear news, shall hear the glad tidings of the Redeemer and redemption by him, shall bow before him, shall believe in him, accept of him, worship him, and take his yoke upon them. Before the Lord Jesus we must all either bow or break; if we break, we are ruined—if we bow, we are certainly made for ever.* (2.) That were enemies to him, and had fought against him: *They shall lick the dust; they shall be brought down and laid in the dust, shall bite the ground for vexation, and be so hunger-bitten that they shall be glad of dust, the serpent's meat* (Gen. iii. 15), for of his seed they are; and over whom shall not he rule, when his enemies themselves are thus humbled and brought low?

2. The dignity of his tributaries. He shall not only reign over those that dwell in the wilderness, the peasants and cottagers, but over those that dwell in the palaces (v. 10): *The kings of Tarshish, and of the isles, that lie most remote from Israel and are the isles of the Gentiles* (Gen. x. 5), *shall bring presents to him as their sovereign Lord, by and under whom they hold their crowns and all their crown-lands. They shall court his favour, and make an interest in him, that they may hear his wisdom. This was literally fulfilled in Solomon (for all the kings of the earth sought the wisdom of Solomon, and brought every man his present, 2 Chron. ix. 23, 24), and in Christ too, when the wise men of the east, who probably were men of the first rank in their own country, came to worship him and brought him presents, Matt. ii. 11. They shall present themselves to him; that is the*

best present we can bring to Christ, and without that no other present is acceptable, Rom. xii. 1. *They shall offer gifts, spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, offer them to Christ as their God, on Christ as their altar, which sanctifies every gift. Their conversion to God is called the offering up, or sacrificing, of the Gentiles, Rom. xv. 16. And so is their devotion to God, Heb. xiii. 15, 16. Yea, all kings shall, sooner or later, fall down before him, either to do their duty to him or to receive their doom from him, v. 11. They shall fall before him, either as his willing subjects or as his conquered captives, as suppliants for his mercy or expectants of his judgment. And, when the kings submit, the people come in of course: All nations shall serve him; all shall be invited into his service; some of all nations shall come into it, and in every nation incense shall be offered to him and a pure offering, Mal. i. 11; Rev. vii. 9.*

VIII. That he shall be honoured and beloved by all his subjects (v. 15): *He shall live; his subjects shall desire his life (O king! live for ever) and with good reason; for he has said, Because I live, you shall live also; and of him it is witnessed that he liveth, ever liveth, making intercession, Heb. vii. 8, 25. He shall live, and live prosperously; and, 1. Presents shall be made to him. Though he shall be able to live without them, for he needs neither the gifts nor the services of any, yet to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba—gold, the best of metals, gold of Sheba, which probably was the finest gold; for he that is best must be served with the best. Those that have abundance of the wealth of this world, that have gold at command, must give it to Christ, must serve him with it, do good with it. Honour the Lord with thy substance.* 2. Prayers shall be made for him, and that continually. The people prayed for Solomon, and that helped to make him and his reign so great a blessing to them. It is the duty of subjects to make prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, for kings and all in authority, not in compliment to them, as is too often done, but in concern for the public welfare. But how is this applied to Christ? He needs not our prayers, nor can have any benefit by them. But the Old-Testament saints prayed for his coming, prayed continually for it; for they called him, *He that should come.* And now that he has come we must pray for the success of his gospel and the advancement of his kingdom, which he calls praying for him (Hosanna to the Son of David, prosperity to his reign), and we must pray for his second coming. It may be read, *Prayer shall be made through him, or for his sake; whatsoever we ask of the Father shall be in his name and in dependence upon his intercession.* 3. Praises shall be made of him, and high encomiums given of his wisdom, justice, and goodness: *Daily shall he be praised.* By praying daily in his name we give him honour. Subjects ought

to speak well of the government that is a blessing to them; and much more ought all Christians to praise Jesus Christ, daily to praise him; for they owe their all to him, and to him they lie under the highest obligations.

IX. That under his government there shall be a wonderful increase both of meat and mouths, both of the fruits of the earth in the country and of the people inhabiting the cities, v. 16. 1. The country shall grow rich. Sow but a *handful of corn on the top of the mountains*, whence one would expect but little, and yet *the fruit of it shall shake like Lebanon*; it shall come up like a wood, so thick, and tall, and strong, like the cedars of Lebanon. Even upon the tops of the mountains the earth shall bring forth by handfuls; that is an expression of great plenty (Gen. xli. 47), as the grass upon the house-top is said to be that wherewith the mower fills not his hand. This is applicable to the wonderful productions of the seed of the gospel in the days of the Messiah. A handful of that seed, sown in the mountainous and barren soil of the Gentile world, produced a wonderful harvest gathered in to Christ, fruit that shook like Lebanon. The fields were *white to the harvest*, John iv. 35; Matt. ix. 37. The grain of mustard-seed grew up to a great tree. 2. The towns shall grow populous: *Those of the city shall flourish like grass*, for number, for verdure. The gospel church, the city of God among men, shall have all the marks of prosperity, many shall be added to it, and those that are shall be happy in it.

X. That his government shall be perpetual, both to his honour and to the happiness of his subjects. The Lord Jesus shall reign for ever, and of him only this must be understood, and not at all of Solomon. It is Christ only that shall be *feared throughout all generations* (v. 5) and *as long as the sun and moon endure*, v. 7. 1. The honour of the prince is immortal and shall never be sullied (v. 17): *His name shall endure for ever*, in spite of all the malicious attempts and endeavours of the powers of darkness to eclipse the lustre of it and to cut off the line of it; it shall be preserved; it shall be perpetuated; it shall be propagated. As the names of earthly princes are continued in their posterity, so Christ's in himself. *Filiabitur nomen ejus—His name shall descend to posterity*. All nations, while the world stands, shall call him blessed, shall bless God for him, continually speak well of him, and think themselves happy in him. To the end of time, and to eternity, his name shall be celebrated, shall be made use of; every tongue shall confess it and every knee shall bow before it. 2. The happiness of the people is universal too; it is complete and everlasting: *Men shall be blessed, truly and for ever blessed, in him*. This plainly refers to the promise made unto the fathers that in the Messiah all the nations of the earth should be blessed. Gen. xii. 3.

18 Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. 19 And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen. 20 The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.

Such an illustrious prophecy as is in the foregoing verses of the Messiah and his kingdom may fitly be concluded, as it is here, with hearty prayers and praises.

I. The psalmist is here enlarged in thanksgivings for the prophecy and promise, v. 18, 19. So sure is every word of God, and with so much satisfaction may we rely upon it, that we have reason enough to give thanks for what he has said, though it be not yet done. We must own that for all the great things he has done for the world, for the church, for the children of men, for his own children, in the kingdom of providence, in the kingdom of grace, for all the power and trust lodged in the hands of the Redeemer, God is worthy to be praised; we must stir up ourselves and all that is within us to praise him after the best manner, and desire that all others may do it. *Blessed be the Lord*, that is, *blessed be his glorious name*; for it is only in his name that we can contribute any thing to his glory and blessedness, and yet that is also *exalted above all blessing and praise*. Let it be blessed for ever, it shall be blessed for ever, it deserves to be blessed for ever, and we hope to be for ever blessing it. We are here taught to bless the name of Christ, and to bless God in Christ, for all that which he has done for us by him. We must bless him, 1. As the Lord God, as a self-existent self-sufficient Being, and our sovereign Lord. 2. As the God of Israel, in covenant with that people and worshipped by them, and who does this in performance of the truth unto Jacob and the mercy to Abraham. 3. As the God who only does wondrous things, in creation and providence, and especially this work of redemption, which excels them all. Men's works are little, common, trifling things, and even these they could not do without him. But God does all by his own power, and they are wondrous things which he does, and such as will be the eternal admiration of saints and angels.

II. He is earnest in prayer for the accomplishment of this prophecy and promise: *Let the whole earth be filled with his glory*, as it will be when the *kings of Tarshish*, and the *isles*, shall bring presents to him. It is sad to think how empty the earth is of the glory of God, how little service and honour he has from a world to which he is such a bountiful benefactor. All those, therefore, that wish well to the honour of God and the welfare of mankind, cannot but desire that the earth may be filled with the discoveries of his glory, suitably returned in thankful acknowledg-

ments of his glory. Let every heart, and every mouth, and every assembly, be filled with the high praises of God. We shall see how earnest David is in this prayer, and how much his heart is in it, if we observe, 1. How he shuts up the prayer with a double seal: "*Amen and amen* ; again and again I say, I say it and let all others say the same, so be it. Amen to my prayer; Amen to the prayers of all the saints to this purport—*Hallowed be thy name ; thy kingdom come.*" 2. How he even shuts up his life with this prayer, *v.* 20. This was the last psalm that ever he penned, though not placed last in this collection ; he penned it when he lay on his death-bed, and with this he breathes his last : " Let God be glorified, let the kingdom of the Messiah be set up, and kept up, in the world, and I have enough, I desire no more. With this let the prayers of David the son of Jesse be ended. Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

PSALM LXXIII.

This psalm, and the ten that next follow it, carry the name of Asaph in the titles of them. If he was the penman of them (as many think), we rightly call them psalms of Asaph. If he was only the chief musician, to whom they were delivered, our marginal reading is right, which calls them psalms for Asaph. It is probable that he penned them ; for we read of the words of David and of Asaph the seer, which were used in praising God in Hezekiah's time, 2 Chron. xxiii. 30. Though the Spirit of prophecy by sacred songs descended chiefly on David, who is therefore styled " the sweet psalmist of Israel," yet God put some of that Spirit upon those about him. This is a psalm of great use ; it gives us an account of the conflict which the psalmist had with a strong temptation to envy the prosperity of wicked people. He begins his account with a sacred principle, which he held fast, and by the help of which he kept his ground and carried his point, *ver.* 1. He then tells us, I. How he got into the temptation, *ver.* 2—14. II. How he got out of the temptation and gained a victory over it, *ver.* 15—20. III. How he got by the temptation and was the better for it, *ver.* 21—23. If, in singing this psalm, we fortify ourselves against the like temptation, we do not use it in vain. The experiences of others should be our instructions.

A psalm of Asaph.

TRULY God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. 2 But as for me, my feet were almost gone ; my steps had well nigh slipped. 3 For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. 4 For there are no bands in their death : but their strength is firm. 5 They are not in trouble as other men ; neither are they plagued like other men. 6 Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain ; violence covereth them as a garment. 7 Their eyes stand out with fatness : they have more than heart could wish. 8 They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression : they speak loftily. 9 They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth. 10 Therefore his people return hither : and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. 11 And they say, How doth God know ? and is there knowledge

in the most high ? 12 Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world ; they increase in riches. 13 Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. 14 For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.

This psalm begins somewhat abruptly : *Yet God is good to Israel* (so the margin reads it) ; he had been thinking of the prosperity of the wicked ; while he was thus musing the fire burned, and at last he spoke by way of check to himself for what he had been thinking of. " However it be, yet God is good." Though wicked people receive many of the gifts of his providential bounty, yet we must own that he is, in a peculiar manner, good to Israel ; they have favours from him which others have not.

The psalmist designs an account of a temptation he was strongly assaulted with—to envy the prosperity of the wicked, a common temptation, which has tried the graces of many of the saints. Now in this account,

I. He lays down, in the first place, that great principle which he is resolved to abide by and not to quit while he was parleying with this temptation, *v.* 1. Job, when he was entering into such a temptation, fixed for his principle the omniscience of God : *Times are not hidden from the Almighty*, Job xxiv. 1. Jeremiah's principle is the justice of God. *Righteous art thou, O God ! when I plead with thee*, Jer. xii. 1. Habakkuk's principle is the holiness of God : *Thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*, Hab. i. 13. The psalmist's, here, is the goodness of God. These are truths which cannot be shaken and which we must resolve to live and die by. Though we may not be able to reconcile all the disposals of Providence with them, we must believe they are reconcilable. Note, Good thoughts of God will fortify us against many of Satan's temptations. *Truly God is good* ; he had had many thoughts in his mind concerning the providences of God, but this word, at last, settled him : " For all this, God is good, good to Israel, even to those that are of a clean heart." Note, 1. Those are the Israel of God that are of a clean heart, purified by the blood of Christ, cleansed from the pollutions of sin, and entirely devoted to the glory of God. An upright heart is a clean heart ; cleanness is truth in the inward part. 2. God, who is good to all, is in a special manner good to his church and people, as he was to Israel of old. God was good to Israel in redeeming them out of Egypt, taking them into covenant with himself, giving them his laws and ordinances, and in the various providences that related to them ; he is, in like manner, good to all those that are of a clean heart, and, whatever happens, we must not think otherwise.

II. He comes now to relate the shock that

was given to his faith in God's distinguishing goodness to Israel, by a strong temptation to envy the prosperity of the wicked, and therefore to think that the Israel of God are no happier than other people and that God is no kinder to them than to others.

1. He speaks of it as a very narrow escape that he had not been quite foiled and overthrown by this temptation (v. 2): "*But as for me, though I was so well satisfied in the goodness of God to Israel, yet my feet were almost gone (the tempter had almost tripped up my heels), my steps had well-nigh slipped (I had like to have quitted my religion, and given up all my expectations of benefit by it); for I was envious at the foolish.*" Note,

1. The faith even of strong believers may sometimes be sorely shaken and ready to fail them. There are storms that will try the firmest anchors. 2. Those that shall never be quite undone are sometimes very near it, and, in their own apprehension, as good as gone. Many a precious soul, that shall live for ever, had once a very narrow turn for its life; almost and well-nigh ruined, but a step between it and fatal apostasy, and yet snatched as a brand out of the burning, which will for ever magnify the riches of divine grace in the nations of those that are saved. Now,

2. Let us take notice of the process of the psalmist's temptation, what he was tempted with and tempted to.

(1.) He observed that foolish wicked people have sometimes a very great share of outward prosperity. He saw, with grief, *the prosperity of the wicked*, v. 3. Wicked people are really foolish people, and act against reason and their true interest, and yet every stander-by sees their prosperity. [1.] They seem to have the least share of the troubles and calamities of this life (v. 5): *They are not in the troubles of other men*, even of wise and good men, *neither are they plagued like other men*, but seem as if by some special privilege they were exempted from the common lot of sorrows. If they meet with some little trouble, it is nothing to what others endure that are less sinners and yet greater sufferers. [2.] They seem to have the greatest share of the comforts of this life. They live at ease, and bathe themselves in pleasures, so that *their eyes stand out with fatness*, v. 7. See what the excess of pleasure is; the moderate use of it enlightens the eyes, but those that indulge themselves inordinately in the delights of sense have their eyes ready to start out of their heads. Epicures are really their own tormentors, by putting a force upon nature, while they pretend to gratify it. And well may those feed themselves to the full who have *more than heart could wish, more than they themselves ever thought of or expected to be masters of*. They have, at least, more than a humble, quiet, contented heart could wish, yet not so much as they themselves wish for. There are many who have a great deal of this life in their hands,

but nothing of the other life in their hearts. They are ungodly, live without the fear and worship of God, and yet they prosper and get on in the world, and not only are rich, but *increase in riches*, v. 12. They are looked upon as thriving men; while others have much ado to keep what they have, they are still adding more, more honour, power, pleasure, by increasing in riches. *They are the prosperous of the age*, so some read it. [3.] Their end seems to be peace. This is mentioned first, as the most strange of all, for peace in death was ever thought to be the peculiar privilege of the godly (xxxvii. 37), yet, to outward appearance, it is often the lot of the ungodly (v. 4). *There are no bands in their death*. They are not taken off by a violent death; they are foolish, and yet die not as fools die; *for their hands are not bound nor their feet put into fetters*, 2 Sam. iii. 33, 34. They are not taken off by an untimely death, like the fruit forced from the tree before it is ripe, but are left to hang on, till, through old age, they gently drop of themselves. They do not die of sore and painful diseases: *There are no pangs*, no agonies, *in their death, but their strength is firm to the last*, so that they scarcely feel themselves die. They are of those who *die in their full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet*, not of those that *die in the bitterness of their souls and never eat with pleasure*, Job xxi. 23, 25. Nay, they are not bound by the terrors of conscience in their dying moments; they are not frightened either with the remembrance of their sins or the prospect of their misery, but die securely. We cannot judge of men's state on the other side death either by the manner of their death or the frame of their spirits in dying. Men may die like lambs, and yet have their place with the goats.

(2.) He observed that they made a very bad use of their outward prosperity and were hardened by it in their wickedness, which very much strengthened the temptation he was in to fret at it. If it had done them any good, if it had made them less provoking to God or less oppressive to man, it would never have vexed him; but it had quite a contrary effect upon them. [1.] It made them very proud and haughty. Because they live at ease, *pride compasses them as a chain*, v. 6. They show themselves (to all that see them) to be puffed up with their prosperity, as men show their ornaments. *The pride of Israel testifies to his face*, Hos. v. 5; Isa. iii. 9. *Pride ties on their chain*, or necklace; so Dr. Hammond reads it. It is no harm to wear a chain or necklace; but when pride ties it on, when it is worn to gratify a vain mind, it ceases to be an ornament. It is not so much what the dress or apparel is (though we have rules for that, 1 Tim. ii. 9) as what principle ties it on and with what spirit it is worn. And, as the pride of sinners appears in their dress, so it does in their talk: *They speak loftily* (v. 8); they affect great swelling words

of vanity (2 Pet. ii. 18), bragging of themselves and disdainful all about them. Out of the abundance of the pride that is in their heart they speak big. [2.] It made them oppressive to their poor neighbours (v. 6): *Violence covers them as a garment*. What they have got by fraud and oppression they keep and increase by the same wicked methods, and care not what injury they do to others, nor what violence they use, so they may but enrich and aggrandize themselves. *They are corrupt*, like the giants, the sinners of the old world, when the earth was filled with violence, Gen. vi. 11, 13. They care not what mischief they do, either for mischief-sake or for their own advantage-sake. *They speak wickedly concerning oppression*; they oppress, and justify themselves in it. Those that speak well of sin speak wickedly of it. *They are corrupt*, that is, dissolved in pleasures and every thing that is luxurious (so some), and then they deride and speak maliciously; they care not whom they wound with the poisoned darts of calumny; from on high they speak oppression. [3.] It made them very insolent in their demeanour towards both God and man (v. 9): *They set their mouth against the heavens*, putting contempt upon God himself and his honour, bidding defiance to him and his power and justice. They cannot reach the heavens with their hands, to shake God's throne, else they would; but they show their ill-will by setting their mouth against the heavens. *Their tongue also walks through the earth*, and they take liberty to abuse all that come in their way. No man's greatness or goodness can secure him from the scourge of the virulent tongue. They take a pride and pleasure in bantering all mankind; they are pests of the country, for they neither fear God nor regard man. [4.] In all this they were very atheistical and profane. They could not have been thus wicked if they had not learned to say (v. 11), *How doth God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?* So far were they from desiring the knowledge of God, who gave them all the good things they had and would have taught them to use them well, that they were not willing to believe God had any knowledge of them, that he took any notice of their wickedness or would ever call them to an account. As if, because he is *Most High*, he could not or would not see them, Job xxii. 12, 13. Whereas because he is *Most High* therefore he can, and will, take cognizance of all the children of men and of all they do, or say, or think. What an affront is it to the God of infinite knowledge, from whom all knowledge is, to ask, *Is there knowledge in him?* Well may he say (v. 12), *Behold, these are the ungodly*.

(3.) He observed that while wicked men thus prospered in their impiety, and were made more impious by their prosperity, good people were in great affliction, and he himself in particular, which very much strength-

ened the temptation he was in to quarrel with Providence. [1.] He looked abroad and saw many of God's people greatly at a loss (v. 10): "Because the wicked are so very daring *therefore his people return hither*; they are at the same pause, the same plunge, that I am at; they know not what to say to it any more than I do, and the rather because *waters of a full cup are wrung out to them*; they are not only made to drink, and to drink deeply, of the bitter cup of affliction, but to drink all. Care is taken that they lose not a drop of that unpleasant potion; the waters are wrung out unto them, that they may have the dregs of the cup. They pour out abundance of tears when they hear wicked people blaspheme God and speak profanely," as David did, cxix. 136. These are the waters wrung out to them. [2.] He looked at home, and felt himself under the continual frowns of Providence, while the wicked were sunning themselves in its smiles (v. 14): "For my part," says he, "*all the day long have I been plagued with one affliction or another, and chastened every morning, as duly as the morning comes*." His afflictions were great—he was chastened and plagued; the returns of them were constant, *every morning with the morning*, and they continued, without intermission, *all the day long*. This he thought was very hard, that, when those who blasphemed God were in prosperity, he that worshipped God was under such great affliction. He spoke feelingly when he spoke of his own troubles; there is no disputing against sense, except by faith.

(4.) From all this arose a very strong temptation to cast off his religion. [1.] Some that observed the prosperity of the wicked, especially comparing it with the afflictions of the righteous, were tempted to deny a providence and to think that God had forsaken the earth. In this sense some take v. 11. There are those, even among God's professing people, that say, "*How does God know?*" Surely all things are left to blind fortune, and not disposed of by an all-seeing God." Some of the heathen, upon such a remark as this, have asked, *Quis putet esse deos?—Who will believe that there are gods?* [2.] Though the psalmist's feet were not so far gone as to question God's omniscience, yet he was tempted to question the benefit of religion, and to say (v. 13), *Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and have, to no purpose, washed my hands in innocency*. See here what it is to be religious; it is to cleanse our hearts, in the first place, by repentance and regeneration, and then to wash our hands in innocency by a universal reformation of our lives. It is not in vain to do this, not in vain to serve God and keep his ordinances; but good men have been sometimes tempted to say, "It is in vain," and "Religion is a thing that there is nothing to be got by," because they see wicked people in prosperity. But, however the thing may appear now, when the

pure in heart, those blessed ones, shall see God (Matt. v. 8), they will not say that they cleansed their hearts in vain.

15 If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend *against* the generation of thy children. 16 When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; 17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God; *then* understood I their end. 18 Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. 19 How are they *brought* into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. 20 As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image.

We have seen what a strong temptation the psalmist was in to envy prospering profaneness; now here we are told how he kept his footing and got the victory.

I. He kept up a respect for God's people, and with that he restrained himself from speaking what he had thought amiss, v. 15. He got the victory by degrees, and this was the first point he gained; he was ready to say, *Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain*, and thought he had reason to say it, but he kept his mouth with this consideration, "*If I say, I will speak thus, behold, I should myself revolt and apostatize from, and so give the greatest offence imaginable to, the generation of thy children.*" Observe here, 1. Though he thought amiss, he took care not to utter that evil thought which he had conceived. Note, It is bad to think ill, but it is worse to speak it, for that is giving the evil thought an *imprimatur*—a sanction; it is allowing it, giving consent to it, and publishing it for the infection of others. But it is a good sign that we repent of the evil imagination of the heart if we suppress it, and the error remains with ourselves. If therefore thou hast been so foolish as to think evil, be so wise as to *lay thy hand upon thy mouth*, and let it go no further, Prov. xxx. 32. *If I say, I will speak thus.* Observe, Though his corrupt heart made this inference from the prosperity of the wicked, yet he did not mention it to those about him till he had debated within himself whether it were fit to be mentioned or no. Note, We must think twice before we speak once, both because some things may be thought which yet may not be spoken and because the second thoughts may correct the mistakes of the first. 2. The reason why he would not speak it was for fear of giving offence to those whom God owned for his children. Note, (1.) There are a people in the world that are the generation of God's children, a set of men that hear and love God as their Father. (2.) We must be

very careful not to say or do any thing which may justly offend *any of these little ones* (Matt. xviii. 6), especially which may offend *the generation of them*, may sadden their hearts, or weaken their hands, or shake their interest. (3.) There is nothing that can give more general offence to the generation of God's children than to say that *we have cleansed our heart in vain* or that it is vain to serve God; for there is nothing more contrary to their universal sentiment and experience nor any thing that grieves them more than to hear God thus reflected on. (4.) Those that wish themselves in the condition of the wicked do in effect quit the tents of God's children.

II. He foresaw the ruin of wicked people. By this he baffled the temptation, as by the former he gave some check to it. Because he durst not speak what he had thought, for fear of giving offence, he began to consider whether he had any good reason for that thought (v. 16): "*I endeavoured to understand the meaning of this unaccountable dispensation of Providence; but it was too painful for me. I could not conquer it by the strength of my own reasoning.*" It is a problem, not to be solved by the mere light of nature, for, if there were not another life after this, we could not fully reconcile the prosperity of the wicked with the justice of God. But (v. 17) *he went into the sanctuary of God*; he applied to his devotions, meditated upon the attributes of God, and the things revealed, which belong to us and to our children; he consulted the scriptures, and the lips of the priests who attended the sanctuary; he prayed to God to make this matter plain to him and to help him over this difficulty; and, at length, he understood the wretched end of wicked people, which he plainly foresaw to be such that even in the height of their prosperity they were rather to be pitied than envied, for they were but ripening for ruin. Note, There are many great things, and things needful to be known, which will not be known otherwise than by going into the sanctuary of God, by the word and prayer. The sanctuary must therefore be the resort of a tempted soul. Note, further, We must judge of persons and things as they appear by the light of divine revelation, and then we shall judge righteous judgment; particularly we must judge by the end. All is well that ends well, everlastingly well; but nothing well that ends ill, everlastingly ill. The righteous man's afflictions end in peace, and therefore he is happy; the wicked man's enjoyments end in destruction, and therefore he is miserable.

1. The prosperity of the wicked is short and uncertain. The high places in which Providence sets them are *slippery places* (v. 18), where they cannot long keep footing; but, when they offer to climb higher, that very attempt will be the occasion of their sliding and falling. Their prosperity has no firm

ground; it is not built upon God's favour or his promise; and they have not the satisfaction of feeling that it rests on firm ground.

2. Their destruction is sure, and sudden, and very great. This cannot be meant of any temporal destruction; for they were supposed to *spend all their days in wealth* and their death itself had no bands in it: *In a moment they go down to the grave*, so that even that could scarcely be called *their destruction*; it must therefore be meant of eternal destruction on the other side death—hell and destruction. They flourish for a time, but are undone for ever. (1.) Their ruin is sure and inevitable. He speaks of it as a thing done—*They are cast down*; for their destruction is as certain as if it were already accomplished. He speaks of it as God's doing, and therefore it cannot be resisted: *Thou castest them down*. It is *destruction from the Almighty* (Joel i. 15), *from the glory of his power*, 2 Thess. i. 9. Who can support those whom God will cast down, on whom God will lay burdens? (2.) It is swift and sudden; their damnation slumbers not; *for how are they brought into desolation as in a moment!* v. 19. It is easily effected, and will be a great surprise to themselves and all about them. (3.) It is severe and very dreadful. It is a total and final ruin: *They are utterly consumed with terrors*. It is the misery of the damned that the terrors of the Almighty, whom they have made their enemy, fasten upon their guilty consciences, which can neither shelter themselves from them nor strengthen themselves under them; and therefore not their being, but their bliss, must needs be utterly consumed by them; not the least degree of comfort or hope remains to them; the higher they were lifted up in their prosperity the sorer will their fall be when they are cast down into *destructions* (for the word is plural) and suddenly *brought into desolation*.

3. Their prosperity is therefore not to be envied at all, but despised rather, *quod erat demonstrandum*—which was the point to be established, v. 20. *As a dream when one awaketh*, so, O Lord! when thou awakest, or when they awake (as some read it), *thou shalt despise their image, their shadow, and make it to vanish*. In the day of the great judgment (so the Chaldee paraphrase reads it), when they are awaked out of their graves, thou shalt, in wrath, despise their image; for *they shall rise to shame and everlasting contempt*. See here, (1.) What their prosperity now is; it is but an image, a vain show, a fashion of the world that passes away; it is not real, but imaginary, and it is only a corrupt imagination that makes it a happiness; it is not substance, but a mere shadow; it is not what it seems to be, nor will it prove what we promise ourselves from it; it is as a dream, which may please us a little, while we are asleep, yet even then it disturbs our repose; but, how pleasing soever it is, it is all but a

cheat, all false; when we awake we find it so. A hungry man *dreams that he eats, but he awakes and his soul is empty*, Isa. xxix. 8. A man is never the more rich or honourable for dreaming he is so. Who therefore will envy a man the pleasure of a dream? (2.) What will be the issue of it; God will awake to judgment, to plead his own and his people's injured cause; they shall be made to awake out of the sleep of their carnal security, and then God shall despise their image; he shall make it appear to all the world how despicable it is; so that the righteous shall laugh at it, lii. 6, 7. How did God despise that rich man's image when he said, *Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee!* Luke xii. 19, 20. We ought to be of God's mind, for his judgment is according to truth, and not to admire and envy that which he despises and will despise; for, sooner or later, he will bring all the world to be of his mind.

21 Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. 22 So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was *as a beast* before thee. 23 Nevertheless I *am* continually with thee: thou hast holden *me* by my right hand. 24 Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me *to glory*. 25 Whom have I in heaven *but thee?* and *there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee*. 26 My flesh and my heart faileth: *but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever*. 27 For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. 28 But *it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all thy works*.

Behold Samson's riddle again unriddled, *Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness*; for we have here an account of the good improvement which the psalmist made of that sore temptation with which he had been assaulted and by which he was almost overcome. He that stumbles and does not fall, by recovering himself takes so much the longer steps forward. It was so with the psalmist here; many good lessons he learned from his temptation, his struggles with it, and his victories over it. Nor would God suffer his people to be tempted if his grace were not sufficient for them, not only to save them from harm, but to make them gainers by it; even this shall work for good.

I. He learned to think very humbly of himself and to abase and accuse himself before God (v. 21, 22); he reflects with shame upon the disorder and danger he was in, and the vexation he gave himself by entertaining

the temptation and parleying with it: *My heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins*, as one afflicted with the acute pain of the stone in the region of the kidneys. If evil thoughts at any time enter into the mind of a good man, he does not roll them under his tongue as a sweet morsel, but they are grievous and painful to him; temptation was to Paul as a thorn in the flesh, 2 Cor. xii. 7. This particular temptation, the working of envy and discontent, is as painful as any; where it constantly rests it is the *rotteness of the bones* (Prov. xiv. 30); where it does but occasionally come it is the pricking of the reins. Fretfulness is a corruption that is its own correction. Now in the reflection upon it, 1. He owns it was his folly thus to vex himself "*So foolish was I to be my own tormentor.*" Let peevish people thus reproach themselves for, and shame themselves out of, their discontents. "What a fool am I thus to make myself uneasy without a cause?" 2. He owns it was his ignorance to vex himself at this: "*So ignorant was I of that which I might have known, and which, if I had known it aright, would have been sufficient to silence my murmurs. I was as a beast (Behemoth—a great beast) before thee.*" Beasts mind present things only, and never look before at what is to come; and so did I. If I had not been a great fool, I should never have suffered such a senseless temptation to prevail over me so far. What! to envy wicked men upon account of their prosperity! To be ready to wish myself one of them, and to think of changing conditions with them! *So foolish was I.*" Note, If good men do at any time, through the surprise and strength of temptation, think, or speak, or act amiss, when they see their error they will reflect upon it with sorrow, and shame, and self-abhorrence, will call themselves *fools* for it. *Surely I am more brutish than any man*, Prov. xxx. 2; Job xlii. 5, 6. Thus David, 2 Sam. xxiv. 10.

II. He took occasion hence to own his dependence on and obligations to the grace of God (v. 23): "*Nevertheless, foolish as I am, I am continually with thee and in thy favour; thou hast holden me by my right hand.*" This may refer either, 1. To the care God had taken of him, and the kindness he had shown him, all along from his beginning hitherto. He had said, in the hour of temptation (v. 14), *All the day long have I been plagued*; but here he corrects himself for that passionate complaint: "Though God has chastened me, he has not cast me off; notwithstanding all the crosses of my life, *I have been continually with thee*; I have had thy presence with me, and thou hast been nigh unto me in all that which I have called upon thee for; and therefore, though perplexed, yet not in despair. Though God has sometimes written bitter things against me, yet he has still *holden me by my right hand*, both to keep me, that I should not desert him or fly off from him,

and to prevent my sinking and fainting under my burdens, or losing my way in the wildernesses through which I have walked." If we have been kept in the way with God, kept closely in our duty and upheld in our integrity, we must own ourselves indebted to the free grace of God for our preservation: *Having obtained help of God, I continue hitherto.* And, if he has thus maintained the spiritual life, the earnest of eternal life, we ought not to complain, whatever calamities of this present time we have met with. Or, 2. To the late experience he had had of the power of divine grace in carrying him through this strong temptation and bringing him off a conqueror: "I was foolish and ignorant, and yet thou hast had compassion on me and taught me (Heb. v. 2), and kept me under thy protection;" for the unworthiness of man is no bar to the free grace of God. We must ascribe our safety in temptation, and our victory over it, not to our own wisdom, for we are foolish and ignorant, but to the gracious presence of God with us and the prevalency of Christ's intercession for us, that our faith may not fail: "*My feet were almost gone, and they would have quite gone, past recovery, but that thou hast holden me by my right hand and so kept me from falling.*"

III. He encouraged himself to hope that the same God who had delivered him from this evil work would *preserve him to his heavenly kingdom*, as St. Paul does (2 Tim. iv. 18): "I am now upheld by thee, therefore *thou shalt guide me with thy counsel*, leading me, as thou hast done hitherto, many a difficult step; and, since I am now continually with thee, *thou shalt afterwards receive me to glory*" v. 24. This completes the happiness of the saints, so that they have no reason to envy the worldly prosperity of sinners. Note, 1. All those who commit themselves to God shall be guided with his counsel, with the counsel both of his word and of his Spirit, the best counsellors. The psalmist had like to have paid dearly for following his own counsels in this temptation and therefore resolves for the future to take God's advice, which shall never be wanting to those that duly seek it with a resolution to follow it. 2. All those who are guided and led by the counsel of God in this world shall be received to his glory in another world. If we make God's glory in us the end we aim at, he will make our glory with him the end we shall for ever be happy in. Upon this consideration, let us never envy sinners, but rather bless ourselves in our own blessedness. If God direct us in the way of our duty, and prevent our turning aside out of it, he will afterwards, when our state of trial and preparation is over, receive us to his kingdom and glory, the believing hopes and prospects of which will reconcile us to all the dark providences that now puzzle and perplex us, and ease us of the pain we have been put into by some threatening temptations.

IV. He was hereby quickened to cleave the

more closely to God, and very much confirmed and comforted in the choice he had made of him, v. 25, 26. His thoughts here dwell with delight upon his own happiness in God, as much greater than the happiness of the ungodly that prospered in the world. He saw little reason to envy them what they had in the creature when he found how much more and better, surer and sweeter, comforts he had in the Creator, and what cause he had to congratulate himself on this account. He had complained of his afflictions (v. 14); but this makes them very light and easy, *All is well if God be mine*. We have here the breathings of a sanctified soul towards God, and its repose in him, as that to a godly man really which the prosperity of a worldly man is to him in conceit and imagination: *Whom have I in heaven but thee?* There is scarcely a verse in all the psalms more expressive than this of the pious and devout affections of a soul to God; here it soars up towards him, follows hard after him, and yet, at the same time, has an entire satisfaction and complacency in him.

1. It is here supposed that God alone is the felicity and chief good of man. He, and he only, that made the soul, can make it happy; there is none in heaven, none in earth, that can pretend to do it besides.

2. Here are expressed the workings and breathings of a soul towards God accordingly. If God be our felicity,

(1.) Then we must have him (*Whom have I but thee?*), we must choose him, and make sure to ourselves an interest in him. What will it avail us that he is the felicity of souls if he be not the felicity of our souls, and if we do not by a lively faith make him ours, by joining ourselves to him in an everlasting covenant?

(2.) Then our desire must be towards him and our delight in him (the word signifies both); we must delight in what we have of God and desire what we yet further hope for. Our desires must not only be offered up to God, but they must all terminate in him, desiring nothing more than God, but still more and more of him. This includes all our prayers, *Lord, give us thyself*; as that includes all the promises, *I will be to them a God*. The desire of our souls is to thy name.

3. We must prefer him in our choice and desire before any other. [1.] *"There is none in heaven but thee, none to seek to or trust in, none to court or covet acquaintance with, but thee."* God is in himself more glorious than any celestial being (lxxxix. 6), and must be, in our eyes, infinitely more desirable. Excellent beings there are in heaven, but God alone can make us happy. His favour is infinitely more to us than the refreshment of the dews of heaven or the benign influence of the stars of heaven, more than the friendship of the saints in heaven or the good offices of the angels there. [2.] *I desire none on earth besides thee; not only none in heaven,*

a place at a distance, which we have but little acquaintance with, but none on earth neither, where we have many friends and where much of our present interest and concern lie. "Earth carries away the desires of most men, and yet I have none on earth, no persons, no things, no possessions, no delights, that I desire besides thee or with thee, in comparison or competition with thee." We must desire nothing besides God but what we desire for him (*nihil prater te nisi propter te—nothing besides thee except for thy sake*), nothing but what we desire from him, and can be content without so that it be made up in him. We must desire nothing besides God as needful to be a partner with him in making us happy.

(4.) Then we must repose ourselves in God with an entire satisfaction, v. 26. Observe here, [1.] Great distress and trouble supposed: *My flesh and my heart fail*. Note, Others have experienced and we must expect, the failing both of flesh and heart. The body will fail by sickness, age, and death; and that which touches the bone and the flesh touches us in a tender part, that part of ourselves which we have been but too fond of; when the flesh fails the heart is ready to fail too; the conduct, courage, and comfort fail. [2.] Sovereign relief provided in this distress: *But God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever*. Note, Gracious souls, in their greatest distresses, rest upon God as their spiritual strength and their eternal portion. First, *"He is the strength of my heart"*, the rock of my heart, a firm foundation, which will bear my weight and not sink under it. *God is the strength of my heart*; I have found him so; I do so still, and hope ever to find him so." In the distress supposed, he had put the case of a double failure, both *flesh and heart fail*; but, in the relief, he fastens on a single support: he leaves out the flesh and the consideration of that, it is enough that God is the strength of his heart. He speaks as one careless of the body (let that fail, there is no remedy), but as one concerned about the soul, to be strengthened in the inner man. Secondly, *"He is my portion for ever"*; he will not only support me while I am here, but make me happy when I go hence." The saints choose God for their portion, they have him for their portion, and it is their happiness that he will be their portion, a portion that will last as long as the immortal soul lasts.

V. He was fully convinced of the miserable condition of all wicked people. This he learned in the sanctuary upon this occasion, and he would never forget it (v. 27): *"Lo, those that are far from thee, in a state of distance and estrangement, that desire the Almighty to depart from them, shall certainly perish"*; so shall their doom be; they choose to be far from God, and they shall be far from him for ever. *Thou wilt justly destroy all those that go a whoring from thee*, that is, all apostates, that in profession have been betrothed to God, but forsake him, their duty to him and their

communion with him, to embrace the bosom of a stranger." The doom is severe, no less than perishing and being destroyed. It is universal: "They shall all be destroyed without exception." It is certain: "*Thou hast destroyed* ; it is as sure to be done as if done already; and the destruction of some ungodly men is an earnest of the perdition of all." God himself undertakes to do it, into whose hands it is a fearful thing to fall: "Thou, though infinite in goodness, wilt reckon for thy injured honour and abused patience, and wilt destroy those that go a whoring from thee."

VI. He was greatly encouraged to cleave to God and to confide in him, *v. 28. If those that are far from God shall perish*, then, 1. Let this constrain us to live in communion with God; "if it fare so ill with those that live at a distance from him, then it is good, very good, the chief good, that good for a man, in this life, which he should most carefully pursue and secure, it is best for me to draw near to God, and to have God draw near to me;" the original may take in both. *But for my part* (so I would read it) *the approach of God is good for me*. Our drawing near to God takes rise from his drawing near to us, and it is the happy meeting that makes the bliss. Here is a great truth laid down, That it is good to draw near to God; but the life of it lies in the application, "It is good for me." Those are the wise who know what is good for themselves: "*It is good*, says he (and every good man agrees with him in it), *it is good for me to draw near to God* : it is my duty; it is my interest." 2. Let us therefore live in a continual dependence upon him: "*I have put my trust in the Lord God*, and will never go a whoring from him after any creature confidences." If wicked men, notwithstanding all their prosperity, shall perish and be destroyed, then let us trust in the Lord God, in him, not in them (see cxlvi. 3—5), in him, and not in our worldly prosperity; let us trust in God, and neither fret at them nor be afraid of them; let us trust in him for a better portion than theirs is. 3. While we do so, let us not doubt but that we shall have occasion to praise his name. Let us trust in the Lord, that we may declare all his works. Note, Those that with an upright heart put their trust in God shall never want matter for thanksgiving to him.

PSALM LXXIV.

This psalm does so particularly describe the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, by Nebuchadnezzar and the army of the Chaldeans, and can so ill be applied to any other event we meet with in the Jewish history, that interpreters incline to think that either it was penned by David, or Asaph in David's time, with a prophetic reference to that sad event (which yet is not so probable), or that it was penned by another Asaph, who lived at the time of the captivity, or by Jeremiah (for it is of a piece with his Lamentations), or some other prophet, and, after the return out of captivity, was delivered to the sons of Asaph, who were called by his name, for the public service of the church. That was the most eminent family of the singers in Ezra's time. See Ezra ii. 41; iii. 10; Neh. xi. 17, 22; xii. 35, 46. The deplorable case of the people of God at that time is here spread before the Lord, and left with him. The prophet, in the name of the church, l. Puts in complaining pleas of the miseries they suffered, for the quickening of their desires in prayer, ver. 1—11. II. He puts in comfortable pleas for the encouraging of their faith in prayer, ver. 12—17. III. He concludes with divers petitions to

God for deliverances, ver. 18—23. In singing it we must be affected with the former desolations of the church, for we are members of the same body, and may apply it to any present distresses or desolations of any part of the Christian church.

Maschil of Asaph.

O GOD, why hast thou cast us off for ever? *why* doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture? 2 Remember thy congregation, *which* thou hast purchased of old; the rod of thine inheritance, *which* thou hast redeemed; this mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt. 3 Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations; *even* all *that* the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary. 4 Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregations; they set up their ensigns *for* signs. 5 *A man* was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees. 6 But now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers. 7 They have cast fire into thy sanctuary, they have defiled *by casting* down the dwelling place of thy name to the ground. 8 They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together: they have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land. 9 We see not our signs: *there is* no more any prophet: *neither is there* among us any that knoweth how long. 10 O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever? 11 Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? pluck *it* out of thy bosom.

This psalm is entitled *Maschil*—a psalm to give instruction, for it was penned in a day of affliction, which is intended for instruction; and this instruction in general it gives us, That when we are, upon any account, in distress, it is our wisdom and duty to apply to God by faithful and fervent prayer, and we shall not find it in vain to do so. Three things the people of God here complain of:—

I. The displeasure of God against them, as that which was the cause and bitterness of all their calamities. They look above the instruments of their trouble, who, they knew, could have no power against them unless it were given them from above, and keep their eye upon God, by whose determined counsel they were delivered up into the hands of wicked and unreasonable men. Observe the liberty they take to expostulate with God (*v. 1*), we hope not too great a liberty, for Christ himself, upon the cross, cried out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* So the church here, *O God! why hast thou forsaken us for ever?* Here they speak ac-

cording to their present dark and melancholy apprehensions; for otherwise, *Has God cast away his people? God forbid*, Rom. xi. 1. The people of God must not think that because they are cast down they are therefore cast off, that because men cast them off therefore God does, and that because he seems to cast them off for a time therefore they are really cast off for ever: yet this expostulation intimates that they dreaded God's casting them off more than any thing, that they desired to be owned of him, whatever they suffered from men, and were desirous to know wherefore he thus contended with them:

Why does thy anger smoke? that is, why does it rise up to such a degree that all about us take notice of it, and ask, *What means the heat of this great anger?* Deut. xxix. 24. Compare v. 20, where the anger of the Lord and his jealousy are said to smoke against sinners. Observe what they plead with God, now that they lay under the tokens and apprehensions of his wrath. 1. They plead their relation to him:

"We are the *sheep of thy pasture*, the sheep wherewith thou hast been pleased to stock the pasture, thy peculiar people whom thou art pleased to set apart for thyself and design for thy own glory. That the wolves worry the sheep is not strange; but was ever any shepherd thus displeased at his own sheep? *Remember*, we are *thy congregation* (v. 2), incorporated by thee and for thee, and devoted to thy praise; we are the *rod*, or tribe, of *thy inheritance*, whom thou hast been pleased to claim a special property in above other people (Deut. xxxii. 9), and from whom thou hast received the rents and issues of praise and worship more than from the neighbouring nations. Nay, a man's inheritance may lie at a great distance, but we are pleading for *Mount Zion*, wherein thou hast dwelt, which has been the place of thy peculiar delight and residence, thy demesne and mansion."

2. They plead the great things God had done for them and the vast expense he had been at upon them: "It is *thy congregation*, which thou hast not only made with a word's speaking, but *purchased of old* by many miracles of mercy when they were first formed into a people; it is *thy inheritance*, which thou hast redeemed when they were sold into servitude."

God gave Egypt to ruin for their ransom, gave men for them and people for their life, Isa. xliii. 3, 4. "Now, Lord, wilt thou now abandon a people that cost thee so dear, and has been so dear to thee?" And, if the redemption of Israel out of Egypt was an encouragement to hope that he would not cast them off, much more reason have we to hope,

that God will not cast off any whom Christ has redeemed with his own blood; but the people of his purchase shall be for ever the people of his praise. 3. They plead the calamitous state that they were in (v. 3): "*Lift up thy feet*; that is, come with speed to repair the desolations that are made in thy sanctuary, which otherwise will be perpetual

and irreparable." It has been sometimes said that the divine vengeance strikes with iron hands, yet it comes with leaden feet; and then those who wait for the day of the Lord, cry, *Lord, lift up thy feet; exalt thy steps*; magnify thyself in the outgoing of thy providence. When the desolations of the sanctuary have continued long we are tempted to think they will be perpetual; but it is a temptation; for God will avenge his own elect, will avenge them speedily, though he bear long with their oppressors and persecutors.

II. They complain of the outrage and cruelty of their enemies, not so much, no, not at all, of what they had done to the prejudice of their secular interests; here are no complaints of the burning of their cities and ravaging of their country, but only what they had done against the sanctuary and the synagogue. The concerns of religion should lie nearer our hearts and affect us more than any worldly concern whatsoever. The desolation of God's house should grieve us more than the desolation of our own houses; for the matter is not great what becomes of us and our families in this world provided God's name may be sanctified, his kingdom may come, and his will be done.

1. The psalmist complains of the desolations of the sanctuary, as Daniel, *ch. ix. 17*. The temple at Jerusalem was the *dwelling-place of God's name*, and therefore the *sanctuary, or holy place*, v. 7. In this the enemies did wickedly (v. 3), for they destroyed it in downright contempt of God and affront to him. (1.) They roared in the midst of *God's congregations*, v. 4. There where God's faithful people attended on him with a humble reverent silence, or softly speaking, they roared in a riotous revelling manner, being elated with having made themselves masters of that sanctuary of which they had sometimes heard formidable things. (2.) They set up their ensigns for signs. The banners of their army they set up in the temple (Israel's strongest castle, as long as they kept closely to God) as trophies of their victory. There, where the signs of God's presence used to be, now the enemy had set up their ensigns. This daring defiance of God and his power touched his people in a tender part. (3.) They took a pride in destroying the carved work of the temple. As much as formerly men thought it an honour to lend a hand to the building of the temple, and he was thought famous that helped to fell timber for that work, so much now they valued themselves upon their agency in destroying it, v. 5, 6. Thus, as formerly those were celebrated for wise men that did service to religion, so now those are applauded as wits that help to run it down. Some read it thus: *They show themselves, as one that lifts up axes on high in a thicket of trees*, for so do they break down the carved work of the temple; they make no more scruple of breaking down the rich wainscot of the temple

than woodcutters do of hewing trees in the forest; such indignation have they at the sanctuary that the most curious carving that ever was seen is beaten down by the common soldiers without any regard had to it, either as a dedicated thing or as a piece of exquisite art. (4.) They set fire to it, and so violated or destroyed it to the ground, v. 7. The Chaldeans burnt the house of God, that stately costly fabric, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 19. And the Romans left not there one stone upon another (Matt. xxiv. 2), rasing it, rasing it, even to the foundations, till Zion, the holy mountain, was, by Titus Vespasian, ploughed as a field.

2. He complains of the desolations of the synagogues, or schools of the prophets, which, before the captivity, were in use, though much more afterwards. There God's word was read and expounded, and his name praised and called upon, without altars or sacrifices. These also they had a spite to (v. 8): *Let us destroy them together*; not only the temple, but all the places of religious worship and the worshippers with them. *Let us destroy them together*; let them be consumed in the same flame. Pursuant to this impious resolve they burnt up all the synagogues of God in the land and laid them all waste. So great was their rage against religion that the religious houses, because religious, were all levelled with the ground, that God's worshippers might not glorify God, and edify one another, by meeting in solemn assemblies.

III. The great aggravation of all these calamities was that they had no prospect at all of relief, nor could they foresee an end of them (v. 9): "We see our enemy's sign set up in the sanctuary, but we see not our signs, none of the tokens of God's presence, no hopeful indications of approaching deliverance. *There is no more any prophet to tell us how long the trouble will last and when things concerning us shall have an end, that the hope of an issue at last may support us under our troubles.*" In the captivity in Babylon they had prophets, and had been told how long the captivity should continue, but the day was cloudy and dark (Ezek. xxxiv. 12), and they had not as yet the comfort of these gracious discoveries. God spoke once, yea, twice, good words and comfortable words, but they perceived them not. Observe, They do not complain, "We see not our armies; there are no men of war to command our forces, nor any to go forth with our hosts;" but, "no prophets, none to tell us how long." This puts them upon expostulating with God, as delaying, 1. To assert his honour (v. 10): *How long shall the adversary reproach and blaspheme thy name?* In the desolations of the sanctuary our chief concern should be for the glory of God, that that may not be injured by the blasphemies of those who persecute his people for his sake, because they are his; and therefore our

enquiry should be, not "How long shall we be troubled?" but "How long shall God be blasphemed?" 2. To exert his power (v. 11): "*Why withdrawest thou thy hand, and dost not stretch it out, to deliver thy people and destroy thy enemies? Pluck it out of thy bosom, and be not as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save, or will not,*" Jer. xiv. 9. When the power of enemies is most threatening it is comfortable to fly the power of God.

12 For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth. 13 Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength: thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters. 14 Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness. 15 Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood: thou driedst up mighty rivers. 16 The day is thine, the night also is thine: thou hast prepared the light and the sun. 17 Thou hast set all the borders of the earth: thou hast made summer and winter.

The lamenting church fastens upon something here which she calls to mind, and therefore hath she hope (as Lam. iii. 21), with which she encourages herself and silences her own complaints. Two things quiet the minds of those that are here sorrowing for the solemn assembly:—

1. That God is the God of Israel, a God in covenant with his people (v. 12): *God is my King of old.* This comes in both as a plea in prayer to God (xlii. 4, *thou art my King, O God!*) and as a prop to their own faith and hope, to encourage themselves to expect deliverance, considering the *days of old*, lxxvii. 5. The church speaks as a complex body, the same in every age, and therefore calls God, "My King, my King of old, or, "from antiquity;" he of old put himself into that relation to them and appeared and acted for them in that relation. As Israel's King, he wrought salvation in the midst of the nations of the earth; for what he did, in the government of the world, tended towards the salvation of his church. Several things are here mentioned which God had done for his people as their King of old, which encouraged them to commit themselves to him and depend upon him.

1. He had divided the sea before them when they came out of Egypt, not by the strength of Moses or his rod, but by his own strength; and he that could do that could do any thing.

2. He had destroyed Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Pharaoh was the *leviathan*; the Egyptians were the *dragons*, fierce and cruel. Observe, (1.) The victory obtained over these

enemies. God broke their heads, baffled their politics, as when Israel, the more they were afflicted by them, multiplied the more. God crushed their powers, though complicated, ruined their country by ten plagues, and at last drowned them ^{as} in the Red Sea. *This is Pharaoh and all his multitude*, Ezek. xxxi. 18. It was the Lord's doing; none besides could do it, and he did it with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. This was typical of Christ's victory over Satan and his kingdom, pursuant to the first promise, that the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head. (2.) The improvement of this victory for the encouragement of the church: *Thou gavest him to be meat to the people of Israel, now going to inhabit the wilderness*. The spoil of the Egyptians enriched them; they stripped their slain, and so got the Egyptians' arms and weapons, as before they had got their jewels. Or, rather, this providence was meat to their faith and hope, to support and encourage them in reference to the other difficulties they were likely to meet with in the wilderness. It was part of the spiritual meat which they were all made to eat of. Note, The breaking of the heads of the church's enemies is the joy and strength of the hearts of the church's friends. Thus the companions make a banquet even of Leviathan, Job xli. 6.

3. God had both ways altered the course of nature, both in fetching streams out of the rock and turning streams into rock, v. 15. (1.) He had dissolved the rock into waters: *Thou didst bring out the fountain and the flood* (so some read it); and every one knows whence it was brought, out of the rock, out of the flinty rock. Let this never be forgotten, but let it especially be remembered that the rock was Christ, and the waters out of it were spiritual drink. (2.) He had concealed the waters into rock: *Thou driedst up mighty rapid rivers*, Jordan particularly at the time when it overflowed all its banks. He that did these things could now deliver his oppressed people; and break the yoke of the oppressors, as he had done formerly; yea, he would do it, for his justice and goodness, his wisdom and truth, are still the same, as well as his power.

II. That the God of Israel is the God of nature, v. 16, 17. It is he that orders the regular successions and revolutions, 1. Of day and night. He is the Lord of all time. The evening and the morning are of his ordaining. It is he that opens the eyelids of the morning light, and draws the curtains of the evening shadow. *He has prepared the moon and the sun* (so some read it), the two great lights, to rule by day and by night alternately. The preparing of them denotes their constant readiness and exact observance of their time, which they never miss a moment. 2. Of summer and winter: "Thou hast appointed all the bounds of the earth, and the different climates of its several regions,

for thou hast made summer and winter, the frigid and the torrid zones; or, rather, the constant revolutions of the year and its several seasons." Herein we are to acknowledge God, from whom all the laws and powers of nature are derived; but how does this come in here? (1.) He that had power at first to settle, and still to preserve, this course of nature by the diurnal and annual motions of the heavenly bodies, has certainly all power both to save and to destroy, and with him nothing is impossible, nor are any difficulties or oppositions insuperable. (2.) He that is faithful to his covenant with the day and with the night, and preserves the ordinances of heaven inviolable, will certainly make good his promise to his people and never cast off those whom he has chosen, Jer. xxxi. 35, 36; xxxiii. 20, 21. His covenant with Abraham and his seed is as firm as that with Noah and his sons, Gen. viii. 21. (3.) Day and night, summer and winter, being counterchanged in the course of nature, throughout all the borders of the earth, we can expect no other than that trouble and peace, prosperity and adversity, should be, in like manner, counterchanged in all the borders of the church. We have as much reason to expect affliction as to expect night and winter. But we have then no more reason to despair of the return of comfort than we have to despair of day and summer.

18 Remember this, *that* the enemy hath reproached, O LORD, and *that* the foolish people have blasphemed thy name. 19 O deliver not the soul of thy turtledove unto the multitude *of the wicked*: forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever. 20 Have respect unto the covenant: for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty. 21 O let not the oppressed return ashamed: let the poor and needy praise thy name. 22 Arise, O God, plead thine own cause: remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily. 23 Forget not the voice of thine enemies: the tumult of those that rise up against thee increaseth continually.

The psalmist here, in the name of the church, most earnestly begs that God would appear for them against their enemies, and put an end to their present troubles. To encourage his own faith, he interests God in this matter (v. 22): *Arise, O God! plead thy own cause*. This we may be sure he will do, for he is jealous for his own honour; whatever is his own cause he will plead it with a strong hand, will appear against those that oppose it and with and for those that cordially espouse it. He will arise and plead it, though for a time he seems to neglect it; no

will stir up himself, will manifest himself, will do his own work in his own time: Note, The cause of religion is God's own cause and he will certainly plead it. Now, to make it out that the cause is God's, he pleads,

I. That the persecutors are God's sworn enemies: "Lord, they have not only abused us, but they have been, and are, abusive to thee; what is done against us, for thy sake, does, by consequence, reflect upon thee. But that is not all; they have directly and immediately reproached thee, and *blasphemed thy name*," v. 18. This was that which they roared in the sanctuary; they triumphed as if they had now got the mastery of the God of Israel, of whom they had heard such great things. As nothing grieves the saints more than to hear God's name blasphemed, so nothing encourages them more to hope that God will appear against their enemies than when they have arrived at such a pitch of wickedness as to reproach God himself; this fills the measure of their sins apace and hastens their ruin. The psalmist insists much upon this: "We dare not answer their reproaches; Lord, do thou answer them. Remember that the *foolish people have blasphemed thy name* (v. 18) and that still the *foolish man reproaches thee daily*." Observe the character of those that reproach God; they are foolish. As atheism is folly (xiv. 1), profaneness and blasphemy are no less so. Perhaps those are cried up as the wits of the age that ridicule religion and sacred things; but really they are the greatest fools, and will shortly be made to appear so before all the world. And yet see their malice—They reproach God daily, as constantly as his faithful worshippers pray to him and praise him; see their impudence—They do not hide their blasphemous thoughts in their own bosoms, but proclaim them with a loud voice (*forget not the voice of thy enemies*, v. 23), and this with a daring defiance of divine justice; they *rise up against thee*, and by their blasphemies even wage war with heaven and take up arms against the Almighty. Their noise and *tumult ascend continually* (so some), as the cry of Sodom came up before God, calling for vengeance, Gen. xviii. 21. *It increases continually* (so we read it); they grow worse and worse, and are hardened in their impieties by their successes. Now, Lord, *remember this; do not forget it*. God needs not to be put in remembrance by us of what he has to do, but thus we must show our concern for his honour and believe that he will vindicate us.

II. That the persecuted are his covenant-people. 1. See what distress they are in. They have fallen into the hands of the *multitude of the wicked*, v. 19. *How are those increased that trouble them!* There is no standing before an enraged multitude, especially like these, armed with power; and, as they are numerous, so they are barbarous: *The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty*. The land of the Chaldeans,

where there was none of the light of the knowledge of the true God (though otherwise it was famed for learning and arts), was indeed a dark place; the inhabitants of it were *alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that was in them*, and therefore they were cruel: where there was no true divinity there was scarcely to be found common humanity. They were especially cruel to the people of God; certainly those have no knowledge who *eat them up*, xiv. 4. They are oppressed (v. 21) because they are poor and unable to help themselves; they are oppressed, and so impoverished and made poor. 2. See what reason they had to hope that God would appear for their relief and not suffer them to be always thus trampled upon. Observe how the psalmist pleads with God for them. (1.) "It is *thy turtle-dove* that is ready to be swallowed up by the multitude of the wicked," v. 19. The church is a dove for harmlessness and mildness, innocency and inoffensiveness, purity and fruitfulness, a dove for mournfulness in a day of distress, a turtle-dove for fidelity and the constancy of love: turtle-doves and pigeons were the only fowls that were offered in sacrifice to God. "Shall thy turtle-dove, that is true to thee and devoted to thy honour, be delivered, its life and soul and all, into the *hand of the multitude of the wicked*, to whom it will soon become an easy and acceptable prey? Lord, it will be thy honour to help the weak, especially to help thy own." (2.) "It is the *congregation of thy poor*, and they are not the less thine for their being poor (for God has *chosen the poor of this world*, Jam. ii. 5), but they have the more reason to expect thou wilt appear for them because they are many: it is the *congregation of thy poor*; let them not be abandoned and forgotten for ever." (3.) "They are in covenant with thee; and wilt thou not have respect *unto the covenant*?" v. 20. Wilt thou not perform the promises thou hast, in thy covenant, made to them? Wilt thou not own those whom thou hast brought into the bond of the covenant? When God delivers his people it is *in remembrance of his covenant*, Lev. xxvi. 42. "Lord, though we are unworthy to be respected, yet have respect to the covenant." (4.) "They trust in thee, and boast of their relation to thee and expectations from thee. O let not them return ashamed of their hope (v. 21), as they will be if they be disappointed." (5.) "If thou deliver them, they will praise thy name and give thee the glory of their deliverance. Appear, Lord, for those that will praise thy name, against those that blaspheme it."

PSALM LXXV.

Though this psalm is attributed to Asaph in the title, yet it does so exactly agree with David's circumstances, at his coming to the crown after the death of Saul, that most interpreters ascribe it to that juncture, and suppose that either Asaph penned it, in the person of David, as his poet-laureat (probably the substance of the psalm was some speech which David made to a convention of the states, at his accession to the government, and Asaph turned it into verse, and published it in a poem, for the better spreading of it among the people), or that David penned it, and

delivered it to Asaph as precentor of the temple. In this psalm, I. David returns God thanks for bringing him to the throne, ver. 1, 9. II. He promises to lay out himself for the public good, in the use of the power God had given him, ver. 2, 3, 10. III. He checks the insolence of those that opposed his coming to the throne, ver. 4, 5. IV. He fetches a reason for all this from God's sovereign dominion in the affairs of the children of men, ver. 6—8. In singing this psalm we must give to God the glory of all the revolutions of states and kingdoms, believing that they are all according to his counsel and that he will make them all to work for the good of his church.

To the chief musician, Al-taschith. A psalm or song of Asaph.

UNTO thee, O God, do we give thanks, *unto thee* do we give thanks: for that thy name is near thy wondrous works declare. 2 When I shall receive the congregation I will judge uprightly. 3 The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved: I bear up the pillars of it. Selah. 4 I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly: and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn: 5 Lift not up your horn on high: speak *not with a stiff neck*.

In these verses,

I. The psalmist gives to God the praise of his advancement to honour and power, and the other great things he had done for him and for his people Israel (v. 1): *Unto thee, O God! do we give thanks* for all the favours thou hast bestowed upon us; and again, *unto thee do we give thanks*; for our thanksgivings must be often repeated. Did not we often pray for mercy when we were in pursuit of it; and shall we think it will suffice once or twice to give thanks when we have obtained it? Not only *I* do give thanks, but *we* do, I and all my friends. If we share with others in their mercies, we must join with them in their praises. "*Unto thee, O God!* the author of our mercies (and we will not give that glory to the instruments which is due to thee only), *we give thanks*; for that thy name is near (that the complete accomplishment of thy promise made to David is not far off) *thy wondrous works*, which thou hast already done for him, *declare*." Note, 1. There are many works which God does for his people that may truly be called *wondrous works*, out of the common course of providence and quite beyond our expectation. 2. These wondrous works declare the nearness of his name; they show that he himself is at hand, nigh to us in what we call upon him for, and that he is about to do some great things for his people, in pursuance of his purpose and promise. 3. When God's wondrous works declare the nearness of his name it is our duty to give him thanks, again and again to give him thanks.

II. He lays himself under an obligation to use his power well, pursuant to the great trust reposed in him (v. 2): *When I shall receive the congregation I will judge uprightly*. Here he takes it for granted that God would, in due time, perfect that which concerned him, that though the congregation was very

slow in gathering to him, and great opposition was made to it, yet, at length, he should receive it; for what God has spoken in his holiness he will perform by his wisdom and power. Being thus in expectation of the mercy, he promises to make conscience of his duty: "*When I am a judge I will judge, and judge uprightly*; not as those that went before me, who either neglected judgment or, which was worse, perverted it, either did no good with their power or did hurt." Note, 1. Those that are advanced to posts of honour must remember they are posts of service, and must set themselves with diligence and application of mind to do the work to which they are called. He does not say, "*When I shall receive the congregation I will take my ease, and take state upon me, and leave the public business to others*;" but, "*I will mind it myself*." 2. Public trusts are to be managed with great integrity; those that judge must judge uprightly, according to the rules of justice, without respect of persons.

III. He promises himself that his government would be a public blessing to Israel, v. 3. The present state of the kingdom was very bad. *The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved*; and no marvel, when the former reign was so dissolute that all went to wreck and ruin. There was a general corruption of manners, for want of putting the laws in execution against vice and profaneness. They were divided one from another for want of centering, as they ought to have done, in the government God had appointed. They were all to pieces, two against three and three against two, crumbled into factions and parties, which was likely to issue in their ruin; but *I bear up the pillars of it*. Even in Saul's time David did what he could for the public welfare; but he hoped that when he had himself received the congregation he should do much more, and should not only prevent the public ruin, but recover the public strength and beauty. Now, 1. See the mischief of parties; they melt and dissolve a land and the inhabitants of it. 2. See how much one head frequently holds up. The fabric would have sunk if David had not held up the pillars of it. This may well be applied to Christ and his government. *The world and all the inhabitants of it were dissolved by sin*; man's apostasy threatened the destruction of the whole creation. But Christ bore up the pillars of it; he saved the whole world from utter ruin by saving his people from their sins, and into his hand the administration of the kingdom of Providence is committed, for *he upholds all things by the word of his power*, Heb. i. 3.

IV. He checks those that opposed his government, that were against his accession to it and obstructed the administration of it, striving to keep up that vice and profaneness which he had made it his business to suppress (v. 4, 5): *I said unto the fools, Deal not*

foolishly. He had said so to them in Saul's time. When he had not power to restrain them, yet he had wisdom and grace to reprove them, and to give them good counsel; though they bore themselves high, upon the favour of that unhappy prince, he cautioned them not to be too presumptuous. Or, rather, he does now say so to them. As soon as he came to the crown he issued out a proclamation against vice and profaneness, and here we have the contents of it. 1. To the simple sneaking sinners, the fools in Israel, that corrupted themselves, to them he said, "*Deal not foolishly; do not act so directly contrary both to your reason and to your interest as you do while you walk contrary to the laws God has given to Israel and the promises he has made to David.*" Christ, the Son of David, gives us this counsel, issues out this edict, *Deal not foolishly.* He who is made of God to us wisdom bids us be wise for ourselves, and not make fools of ourselves. 2. To the proud daring sinners, the wicked, that set God himself at defiance, he says, "*Lift not up the horn; boast not of your power and prerogatives; persist not in your contumacy and contempt of the government set over you; lift not up your horn on high, as though you could have what you will and do what you will; speak not with a stiff neck, in which is an iron sinew, that will never bend to the will of God in the government; for those that will not bend shall break; those whose necks are stiffened are so to their own destruction.*" This is Christ's word of command in his gospel, that *every mountain will be brought low before him*, Isa. xl. 4. Let not the anti-christian power, with its heads and horns, lift up itself against him, for it shall certainly be broken to pieces; what is said with a stiff neck must be unsaid again with a broken heart, or we are undone. Pharaoh said with a stiff neck, *Who is the Lord?* But God made him know to his cost.

6 For promotion *cometh* neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. 7 But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another. 8 For in the hand of the LORD *there is a cup*, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring *them* out, and drink *them*. 9 But I will declare for ever; I will sing praises to the God of Jacob. 10 All the horns of the wicked also will I cut off; *but* the horns of the righteous shall be exalted.

In these verses we have two great doctrines laid down and two good inferences drawn from them, for the confirmation of what he had before said.

I. Here are two great truths laid down concerning God's government of the world, which we ought to mix faith with, both pertinent to the occasion:—

1. That from God alone kings receive their power (v. 6, 7), and therefore to God alone David would give the praise of his advancement; having his power from God he would use it for him, and therefore those were fools that lifted up the horn against him. We see strange revolutions in states and kingdoms, and are surprised at the sudden disgrace of some and elevation of others; we are all full of such changes, when they happen; but here we are directed to look at the author of them, and are taught where the original of power is, and whence promotion comes. Whence comes preferment to kingdoms, to the sovereignty of them? And whence come preferments in kingdoms, to places of power and trust in them? The former depends not upon the will of the people, nor the latter on the will of the prince, but both on the will of God, who has all hearts in his hands; to him therefore those must look who are in pursuit of preferment, and then they begin aright. We are here told, (1.) Negatively, which way we are not to look for the fountain of power. *Promotion comes not from the east, nor from the west, nor from the desert*, that is, neither from the desert on the north of Jerusalem nor from that on the south; so that the fair gale of preferment is not to be expected to blow from any point of the compass, but only from above, directly thence. Men cannot gain promotion either by the wisdom or wealth of the children of the east, nor by the numerous forces of the isles of the Gentiles, that lay westward, nor those of Egypt or Arabia, that lay south; no concurring smiles of second causes will raise men to preferment without the first cause. The learned bishop Lloyd (*Serm. in loc.*) gives this gloss upon it: "All men took the original of power to be from heaven, but from whom there many knew not; the eastern nations, who were generally given to astrology, took it to come from their stars, especially the sun, their god. No, says David, it comes neither from the east nor from the west, neither from the rising nor from the setting of such a planet, or such a constellation, nor from the south, nor from the exaltation of the sun or any star in the mid-heaven." He mentions not the north, because none supposed it to come thence; or because the same word that signifies the north signifies the secret place, and from the secret of God's counsel it does come, or from the oracle in Zion, which lay on the north side of Jerusalem. Note, No wind is so good as to blow promotion, but as he directs who has the winds in his fists. (2.) Positively: *God is the judge*, the governor or umpire. When parties contend for the prize, he *puts down one and sets up another* as he sees fit, so as to serve his own purposes and bring to pass his own counsels. Herein he acts by preroga-

tive, and is not accountable to us for any of these matters; nor is it any damage, danger, or disgrace that he, who is infinitely wise, holy, and good, has an arbitrary and despotic power to set up and put down whom, and when, and how he pleases. This is a good reason why magistrates should rule for God as those that must give account to him, because it is by him that kings reign.

2. That from God alone all must receive their doom (v. 8): *In the hand of the Lord there is a cup*, which he puts into the hands of the children of men, a cup of providence, mixed up (as he thinks fit) of many ingredients, a cup of affliction. The sufferings of Christ are called a *cup*, Matt. xx. 22; John xviii. 11. The judgments of God upon sinners are *the cup of the Lord's right hand*, Hab. ii. 16. *The wine is red*, denoting the wrath of God, which is infused into the judgments executed on sinners, and is the wormwood and the gall in the affliction and the misery. It is red as fire, red as blood, for it burns, it kills. It is *full of mixture*, prepared in wisdom, so as to answer the end. There are mixtures of mercy and grace in the cup of affliction when it is put into the hands of God's own people, mixtures of the curse when it is put into the hands of the wicked; it is wine mingled with gall. These vials, (1.) Are poured out upon all; see Rev. xv. 7, xvi. 1, where we read of the angels pouring out the vials of God's wrath upon the earth. Some drops of this wrath may light on good people; when God's judgments are abroad, they have their share in common calamities; but, (2.) The dregs of the cup are reserved for the wicked. The calamity itself is but the vehicle into which the wrath and curse is infused, the top of which has little of the infusion; but the sediment is pure wrath, and that shall fall to the share of sinners; they have the dregs of the cup now in the terrors of conscience, and hereafter in the torments of hell. They shall *wring them out*, that not a drop of the wrath may be left behind, *and they shall drink them*, for the curse shall *enter into their bowels like water and like oil into their bones*. The cup of the Lord's indignation will be to them a cup of trembling, everlasting trembling, Rev. xiv. 10. The wicked man's cup, while he prospers in the world, is full of mixture, but the worst is at the bottom. The wicked are reserved unto the day of judgment.

II. Here are two good practical inferences drawn from these great truths, and they are the same purposes of duty that he began the psalm with. This being so, 1. He will praise God, and give him glory, for the power to which he has advanced him (v. 9): *I will declare for ever that which thy wondrous works declare*, v. 1. He will praise God for his elevation, not only at first, while the mercy was fresh, but for ever, so long as he lives. The exaltation of the Son of David will be the subject of the saints' everlasting praises. He

will give glory to God, not only as his God, but as the God of Jacob, knowing it was for Jacob his servant's sake, and because he loved his people Israel, that he made him king over them. 2. He will use the power with which he is entrusted for the great ends for which it was put into his hands, v. 10, as before, v. 2, 4. According to the duty of the higher powers, (1.) He resolves to be a terror to evil-doers, to humble their pride and break their power: *"Though not all the heads, yet all the horns, of the wicked will I cut off, with which they push their poor neighbours; I will disable them to do mischief."* Thus God promises to raise up carpenters who should *fray the horns of the Gentiles that had scattered Judah and Israel*, Zech. i. 18—21. (2.) He resolves to be a protection and praise to those that do well: *The horns of the righteous shall be exalted*; they shall be preferred and be put into places of power; and those that are good, and have hearts to do good, shall not want ability and opportunity for it. This agrees with David's resolutions, ci. 3, &c. Herein David was a type of Christ, who with the breath of his mouth shall slay the wicked, but shall *exalt with honour the horn of the righteous*, cxii. 9.

PSALM LXXVI.

This psalm seems to have been penned upon occasion of some great victory obtained by the church over some threatening enemy or other, and designed to grace the triumph. The LXX. call it, "A song upon the Assyrians," whence many good interpreters conjecture that it was penned when Sennacherib's army, then besieging Jerusalem, was entirely cut off by a destroying angel in Hezekiah's time; and several passages in the psalm are very applicable to that work of wonder: but there was a religious triumph upon occasion of another victory, in Jehoshaphat's time, which might as well be the subject of this psalm (2 Chron. xx. 28), and it might be called "a song of Asaph" because always sung by the sons of Asaph. Or it might be penned by Asaph who lived in David's time, upon occasion of the many triumphs with which God delighted to honour that reign. Upon occasion of this glorious victory, whatever it was, I. The psalmist congratulates the happiness of the church in having God so nigh, ver. 1—3. II. He celebrates the glory of God's power, which this was an illustrious instance of, ver. 4—6. III. He infers hence what reason all have to fear before him, ver. 7—9. And, IV. What reason his people have to trust in him and to pay their vows to him, ver. 10—12. It is a psalm proper for a thanksgiving day, upon the account of public successes, and not improper at other times, because it is never out of season to glorify God for the great things he has done for his church formerly, especially for the victories of the Redeemer over the powers of darkness, which all those Old-Testament victories were types of, at least those that are celebrated in the psalms.

To the chief musician on Neginoth. A psalm or song of Asaph.

IN Judah is God known: his name is great in Israel. 2 In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion. 3 There brake he the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle. Selah. 4 Thou art more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey. 5 The stout-hearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep: and none of the men of might have found their hands. 6 At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep.

The church is here triumphant even in the

midst of its militant state. The psalmist, in the church's name, triumphs here in God, the centre of all our triumphs.

I. In the revelation God had made of himself to them, *v. 1*. It is the honour and privilege of Judah and Israel that among them *God is known*, and where he is known *his name will be great*. God is known as he is pleased to make himself known; and those are happy to whom he discovers himself—happy people that have their land filled with the knowledge of God, happy persons that have their hearts filled with that knowledge. In Judah God was known as he was not known in other nations, which made the favour the greater, inasmuch as it was distinguishing, *cxlviii. 19, 20*.

II. In the tokens of God's special presence with them in his ordinances, *v. 2*. In the whole land of Judah and Israel God was known and his name was great; but in *Salem, in Zion*, were *his tabernacle and his dwelling-place*. There he kept court; there he received the homage of his people by their sacrifices and entertained them by the feasts upon the sacrifices; thither they came to address themselves to him, and thence by his oracles he issued out his orders; there he recorded his name, and of that place he said, *Here will I dwell, for I have desired it*. It is the glory and happiness of a people to have God among them by his ordinances; but his dwelling-place is a tabernacle, a movable dwelling. *Yet a little while is that light with us*.

III. In the victories they had obtained over their enemies (*v. 3*): *There broke he the arrows of the bow*. Observe how threatening the danger was. Though Judah and Israel, Salem and Zion, were thus privileged, yet war is raised against them, and the weapons of war are furnished.

1. Here are bow and arrows, shield and sword, and all for battle; but all are broken and rendered useless. And it was done there, (1.) In Judah and in Israel, in favour of that people near to God. While the weapons of war were used against other nations they answered their end, but, when turned against that holy nation, they were immediately broken. The Chaldee paraphrases it thus: When the house of Israel did his will he placed his majesty among them, and there he broke the arrows of the bow; while they kept closely to his service they were great and safe, and every thing went well with them. Or, (2.) In the tabernacle and dwelling-place in Zion, there he broke the arrows of the bow; it was done in the field of battle, and yet it is said to be done in the sanctuary, because done in answer to the prayers which God's people there made to him and in the performance of the promises which he there made to them, of both which see that instance, 2 Chron. *xx. 5, 14*. Public successes are owing as much to what is done in the church as to what is done in the camp. Now,

2. This victory redounded very much, (1.)

To the immortal honour of Israel's God (*v. 4*): *Thou art*, and hast manifested thyself to be, *more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey*. [1.] "Than the great and mighty ones of the earth in general, who are high, and think themselves firmly fixed like mountains, but are really mountains of prey, oppressive to all about them. It is their glory to destroy; it is thine to deliver." [2.] "Than our invaders in particular. When they besieged the cities of Judah, they cast up mounts against them, and raised batteries; but thou art more able to protect us than they are to annoy us." Wherein the enemies of the church deal proudly it will appear that God is above them. (2.) To the perpetual disgrace of the enemies of Israel, *v. 5, 6*. They were *stout-hearted*, men of great courage and resolution, flushed with their former victories, enraged against Israel, confident of success; they were *men of might*, robust and fit for service; they had *chariots and horses*, which were then greatly valued and trusted to in war, *xx. 7*. But all this force was of no avail when it was levelled against Jerusalem. [1.] *The stout-hearted have despoiled and disarmed themselves* (so some read it); when God pleases he can make his enemies to weaken and destroy themselves. *They have slept*, not the sleep of the righteous, who sleep in Jesus, but *their sleep*, the sleep of sinners, that shall awake to everlasting shame and contempt. [2.] The men of might can no more *find their hands* than the stout-hearted can their spirit. As the bold men are cowed, so the strong men are lamed, and cannot so much as find their hands, to save their own heads, much less to hurt their enemies. [3.] The chariots and horses may be truly said to be *cast into a dead sleep* when their drivers and their riders were so. God did but speak the word, as the God of Jacob that commands deliverances for Jacob, and, at his rebuke, the chariot and horse were both cast into a dead sleep. When the men were laid dead upon the spot by the destroying angel the chariot and horse were not at all formidable. See the power and efficacy of God's rebukes. With what pleasure may we Christians apply all this to the advantages we enjoy by the Redeemer! It is through him that God is known; it is in him that God's name is great; to him it is owing that God has a tabernacle and a dwelling-place in his church. He it was that vanquished the strong man armed, spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly.

7 *Thou, even thou, art* to be feared: and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry? 8 *Thou didst* cause judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth feared, and was still, 9 *When God arose* to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth. Selah. 10 *Surely the wrath of man shall praise*

thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain. 11 Vow, and pay unto the LORD your God: let all that be round about him bring presents unto him that ought to be feared. 12 He shall cut off the spirit of princes: *he is terrible to the kings of the earth.*

This glorious victory with which God had graced and blessed his church is here made to speak three things:—

I. Terror to God's enemies (v. 7—9): "*Thou, even thou, art to be feared*"; thy majesty is to be revered, thy sovereignty to be submitted to, and thy justice to be dreaded by those that have offended thee." Let all the world learn by this event to stand in awe of the great God. 1. Let all be afraid of his wrath against the daring impiety of sinners: *Who may stand in thy sight from the minute that thou art angry?* If God be a consuming fire, how can chaff and stubble stand before him, though his *anger be kindled but a little?* ii. 12. 2. Let all be afraid of his jealousy for oppressed innocence and the injured cause of his own people: "*Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven, then when thou didst arise to save all the meek of the earth* (v. 8, 9); and then *the earth feared and was still*, waiting what would be the issue of those glorious appearances of thine." Note, (1.) God's people are the *meek of the earth* (Zeph. ii. 3), the *quiet in the land* (xxxv. 20), that can hear any wrong, but do none. (2.) Though the meek of the earth are by their meekness exposed to injury, yet God will, sooner or later, appear for their salvation, and plead their cause. (3.) When God comes to *save all the meek of the earth*, he will *cause judgment to be heard from heaven*; he will make the world know that he is angry at the oppressors of his people, and takes what is done against them as done against himself. The righteous God long seems to keep silence, yet, sooner or later, he will make judgment to be heard. (4.) When God is speaking judgment from heaven it is time for the earth to compose itself into an awful and reverent silence: *The earth feared and was still*, as silence is made by proclamation when the court sits. *Be still and know that I am God*, xlv. 10. *Be silent, O all flesh! before the Lord, for he is raised up to judgment*, Zech. ii. 13. Those that suppose this psalm to have been penned upon the occasion of the routing of Sennacherib's army take it for granted that the descent of the destroying angel, who did the execution, was accompanied with thunder, by which *God caused judgment to be heard from heaven*, and that the earth feared (that is, there was an earthquake), but it was soon over. But this is altogether uncertain.

II. Comfort to God's people, v. 10. We live in a very angry provoking world; we often feel much, and are apt to fear more, from the wrath of man, which seems boundless.

But this is a great comfort to us, 1. That as far as God permits the wrath of man to break forth at any time he will make it turn to his praise, will bring honour to himself and serve his own purposes by it: *Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee*, not only by the cheeks given to it, when it shall be forced to confess its own impotency, but even by the liberty given to it for a time. The hardships which God's people suffer by the wrath of their enemies are made to redound to the glory of God and his grace; and the more *the heathen rage and plot against the Lord and his anointed* the more will God be praised for setting *his King upon his holy hill of Zion* in spite of them, ii. 1, 6. When the heavenly hosts make this the matter of their thanksgiving-song that *God has taken to himself his great power and has reigned, though the nations were angry* (Rev. xi. 17, 18), then the wrath of man adds lustre to the praises of God. 2. That what will not turn to his praise shall not be suffered to break out: *The remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain*. Men must never permit sin, because they cannot check it when they will; but God can. He can set bounds to the wrath of man, as he does to the raging sea. *Hitherto it shall come and no further; here shall its proud waves be stayed*. God restrained the remainder of Sennacherib's rage, for he put *a hook in his nose and a bridle in his jaws* (Isa. xxxvii. 29); and, though he permitted him to talk big, he restrained him from doing what he designed.

III. Duty to all, v. 11, 12. Let all submit themselves to this great God and become his loyal subjects. Observe, 1. The duty required of us all, all that are about him, that have any dependence upon him or any occasion to approach to him; and who is there that has not? We are therefore every one of us commanded to do our homage to the King of kings: *Vow and pay*; that is, take an oath of allegiance to him and make conscience of keeping it. Vow to be his, and pay what you vow. Bind your souls with a bond to him (for that is the nature of a vow), and then live up to the obligations you have laid upon yourselves; for *better it is not to vow than to vow and not to pay*. And, having taken him for our King, let us bring presents to him, as subjects to their sovereign, 1 Sam. x. 27. *Send you the lamb to the ruler of the land*, Isa. xvi. 1. Not that God needs any present we can bring, or can be benefited by it; but thus we must give him honour and own that we have our all from him. Our prayers and praises, and especially our hearts, are the presents we should bring to the Lord our God. 2. The reasons to enforce this duty: *Render to all their due, fear to whom fear is due*; and is it not due to God? Yes; (1.) He ought to be feared: *He is the fear* (so the word is); his name is glorious and fearful; and he is the proper object of our fear; with him is terrible majesty. The God of Abraham is called *the fear of Isaac* (Gen.

xxi. 42), and we are commanded to make him our fear, Isa. viii. 13. When we bring presents to him we must have an eye to him as greatly to be feared; for he is terrible in his holy places. (2.) He will be feared, even by those who think it their own sole prerogative to be feared (v. 12): He shall cut off the spirit of princes; he shall slip it off as easily as we slip off a flower from the stalk or a bunch of grapes from the vine; so the word signifies. He can dispirit those that are most daring and make them heartless; for he is, or will be, terrible to the kings of the earth; and sooner or later, if they be not so wise as to submit themselves to him, he will force them to call in vain to rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from his wrath, Rev. vi. 16. Since there is no contending with God, it is as much our wisdom as it is our duty to submit to him.

PSALM LXXVII.

This psalm, according to the method of many other psalms, begins with sorrowful complaints but ends with comfortable encouragements. The complaints seem to be of personal grievances, but the encouragements relate to the public concerns of the church, so that it is not certain whether it was penned upon a personal or a public account. If they were private troubles that he was groaning under, it teaches us that what God has wrought for his church in general may be improved for the comfort of particular believers; if it was some public calamity that he is here lamenting, his speaking of it so feelingly, as if it had been some particular trouble of his own, shows how much we should lay to heart the interests of the church of God and make them ours. One of the rabbins says, This psalm is spoken in the dialect of the captives; and therefore some think it was penned in the captivity in Babylon. 1. The psalmist complains here of the deep impressions which his troubles made upon his spirit, and the temptation he was in to despair of relief, ver. 1.—10. 11. He encourages himself to hope that it would be well at last, by the remembrance of God's former appearances for the help of his people, of which he gives several instances, ver. 11.—20. In singing this psalm we must take shame to ourselves for all our sinful distrusts of God, and of his providence and promise, and give to him the glory of his power and goodness by a thankful commemoration of what he has done for us formerly and a cheerful dependence on him for the future.

To the chief musician, to Jeduthun. A psalm of Asaph.

I CRIED unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice; and he gave ear unto me. 2 In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted. 3 I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah. 4 Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak. 5 I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times. 6 I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search. 7 Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? 8 Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? 9 Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah. 10 And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will

remember the years of the right hand of the most high.

We have here the lively portraiture of a good man under prevailing melancholy, fallen into and sinking in that horrible pit and that miry clay, but struggling to get out. Drooping saints, that are of a sorrowful spirit, may here as in a glass see their own faces. The conflict which the psalmist had with his grief and fears seems to have been over when he penned this record of it; for he says (v. 1), *I cried unto God, and he gave ear unto me*, which, while the struggle lasted, he had not the comfortable sense of, as he had afterwards; but he inserts it in the beginning of his narrative as an intimation that his trouble did not end in despair; for God heard him, and, at length, he knew that he heard him. Observe,

I. His melancholy prayers. Being afflicted, he prayed (Jam. v. 13), and, being in agony, he prayed more earnestly (v. 1): *My voice was unto God, and I cried, even with my voice unto God*. He was full of complaints, loud complaints, but he directed them to God, and turned them all into prayers, vocal prayers, very earnest and importunate. Thus he gave vent to his grief and gained some ease; and thus he took the right way in order to relief (v. 2): *In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord*. Note, Days of trouble must be days of prayer, days of inward trouble especially, when God seems to have withdrawn from us; we must seek him and seek till we find him. In the day of his trouble he did not seek for the diversion of business or recreation, to shake off his trouble that way, but he sought God, and his favour and grace. Those that are under trouble of mind must not think to drink it away, or laugh it away, but must pray it away. *My hand was stretched out in the night and ceased not*; so Dr. Hammond reads the following words, as speaking the incessant importunity of his prayers. Compare cxliii. 5, 6.

II. His melancholy grief. Grief may thus be called melancholy indeed, 1. When it admits of no intermission; such was his: *My sore, or wound, ran in the night, and bled inwardly, and it ceased not, no, not in the time appointed for rest and sleep*. 2. When it admits of no consolation; and that also was his case: *My soul refused to be comforted*; he had no mind to hearken to those that would be his comforters. *As vinegar upon nitre, so is he that sings songs to a heavy heart*, Prov. xxv. 20. Nor had he any mind to think of those things that would be his comforts; he put them far from him, as one that indulged himself in sorrow. Those that are in sorrow, upon any account, do not only prejudice themselves, but affront God, if they refuse to be comforted.

III. His melancholy musings. He pored so much upon the trouble, whatever it was, personal or public, that, 1. The methods that

should have relieved him did but increase his grief, v. 3. (1.) One would have thought that the remembrance of God would comfort him, but it did not: *I remembered God and was troubled*, as poor Job (*ch. xxiii. 15*); *I am troubled at his presence; when I consider I am afraid of him*. When he remembered God his thoughts fastened only upon his justice, and wrath, and dreadful majesty, and thus God himself became a terror to him. (2.) One would have thought that pouring out his soul before God would give him ease, but it did not; *he complained, and yet his spirit was overwhelmed*, and sank under the load. 2. The means of his present relief were denied him, v. 4. He could not enjoy sleep, which, if it be quiet and refreshing, is a parenthesis to our griefs and cares: "*Thou holdest my eyes waking with thy terrors, which make me full of tossings to and fro until the dawning of the day.*" He could not speak, by reason of the disorder of his thoughts, the tumult of his spirits, and the confusion his mind was in: *He kept silence even from good while his heart was hot within him; he was ready to burst like a new bottle* (*Job xxxii. 19*), and yet so troubled that he could not speak and refresh himself. Grief never preys so much upon the spirits as when it is thus smothered and pent up.

IV. His melancholy reflections (v. 5, 6): "*I have considered the days of old, and compared them with the present days; and our former prosperity does but aggravate our present calamities: for we see not the wonders that our fathers told us off.*" Melancholy people are apt to pore altogether upon the days of old and the years of ancient times, and to magnify them, for the justifying of their own uneasiness and discontent at the present posture of affairs. But say not thou that *the former days were better than these*, because it is more than thou knowest whether they were or no, *Ecc. vii. 10*. Neither let the remembrance of the comforts we have lost make us unthankful for those that are left, or impatient under our crosses. Particularly, he called to remembrance his song in the night, the comforts with which he had supported himself in his former sorrows and entertained himself in his former solitude. These songs he remembered, and tried if he could not sing them over again; but he was out of tune for them, and the remembrance of them did but pour out his soul in him, *xl. 4*. See *Job xxxv. 10*.

V. His melancholy fears and apprehensions: "*I communed with my own heart, v. 6*. Come, my soul, what will be the issue of these things? What can I think of them and what can I expect they will come to at last? *I made diligent search into the causes of my trouble, enquiring wherefore God contented with me and what would be the consequences of it.* And thus I began to reason, *Will the Lord cast off for ever*, as he does for the present? He is not now favourable;

and will he be favourable no more? His mercy is now gone; and is it clean gone for ever? His promise now fails; and does it fail for evermore? God is not now gracious; but has he forgotten to be gracious? His tender mercies have been withheld, perhaps in wisdom; but are they shut up, shut up in anger?" v. 7—9. This is the language of a disconsolate deserted soul, walking in darkness and having no light, a case not uncommon even with those that fear the Lord and obey the voice of his servant, *Isa. i. 10*. He may here be looked upon, 1. As groaning under a sore trouble. God hid his face from him, and withdrew the usual tokens of his favour. Note, Spiritual trouble is of all trouble most grievous to a gracious soul; nothing wounds and pierces it like the apprehensions of God's being angry, the suspending of his favour and the superseding of his promise; this wounds the spirit; and who can bear that? 2. As grappling with a strong temptation. Note, God's own people, in a cloudy and dark day, may be tempted to make desperate conclusions about their own spiritual state and the condition of God's church and kingdom in the world, and, as to both, to give up all for gone. We may be tempted to think that God has abandoned us and cast us off; that the covenant of grace fails us, and that the tender mercy of our God shall be for ever withheld from us. But we must not give way to such suggestions as these. If fear and melancholy ask such peevish questions, let faith answer them from the Scripture: *Will the Lord cast off for ever?* God forbid, *Rom. xi. 1*. No; *the Lord will not cast off his people, xciv. 14*. Will he be favourable no more? Yes, he will; for, though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion, *Lam. iii. 32*. Is his mercy clean gone for ever? No; his mercy endures for ever; as it is from everlasting, it is to everlasting, *ciii. 17*. Doth his promise fail for evermore? No; it is impossible for God to lie, *Heb. vi. 18*. Hath God forgotten to be gracious? No; he cannot deny himself, and his own name which he hath proclaimed gracious and merciful, *Exod. xxxiv. 6*. Has he in anger shut up his tender mercies? No; they are new every morning (*Lam. iii. 23*); and therefore, *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?* *Hos. xi. 8, 9*. Thus was he going on with his dark and dismal apprehensions when, on a sudden, he first checked himself with that word, *Selah*, "Stop there; go no further, let us hear no more of these unbelieving surmises;" and he then chid himself (v. 10): *I said, This is my infirmity*. He is soon aware that it is not well said, and therefore, "*Why art thou cast down, O my soul?*" *I said, This is my affliction*" (so some understand it); "this is the calamity that falls to my lot and I must make the best of it; every one has his affliction, his trouble in the flesh; and this is mine, the cross I must take up." Or, rather, "This is my sin; it is my iniquity, the plague of my own

heart." These doubts and fears proceed from the want and weakness of faith and the corruption of a distempered mind. Note, (1.) We all know that concerning ourselves of which we must say, "*This is our infirmity*," a sin that most easily besets us." (2.) Despondency of spirit, and distrust of God, under affliction, are too often the infirmities of good people; and, as such, are to be reflected upon by us with sorrow and shame, as by the psalmist here: *This is my infirmity*. When at any time it is working in us we must thus suppress the rising of it, and not suffer the evil spirit to speak. We must argue down the insurrections of unbelief, as the psalmist here: *But I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High*. He had been considering the *years of ancient times* (v. 5), the blessings formerly enjoyed, the remembrance of which did only add to his grief; but now he considered them as *the years of the right hand of the Most High*, that those blessings of ancient times came from the Ancient of days, from the power and sovereign disposal of his right hand who is *over all, God, blessed for ever*, and this satisfied him; for may not the Most High with his right hand make what changes he pleases?

11 I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. 12 I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings. 13 Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God! 14 Thou art the God that doest wonders: thou hast declared thy strength among the people. 15 Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah. 16 The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled. 17 The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound: thine arrows also went abroad. 18 The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook. 19 Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known. 20 Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

The psalmist here recovers himself out of the great distress and plague he was in, and silences his own fears of God's casting off his people by the remembrance of the great things he had done for them formerly, which though he had in vain tried to quiet himself with (v. 5, 6) yet he tried again, and, upon

this second trial, found it not in vain. It is good to persevere in the proper means for the strengthening of faith, though they do not prove effectual at first: "*I will remember, surely I will*, what God has done for his people of old, till I can thence infer a happy issue of the present dark dispensations," v. 11, 12. Note, 1. The works of the Lord, for his people, have been wondrous works. They are recorded for us, that they may be remembered by us. 3. That we may have benefit by the remembrance of them we must meditate upon them, and dwell upon them in our thoughts, and must talk of them, that we may inform ourselves and others further concerning them. 4. The due remembrance of the works of God will be a powerful antidote against distrust of his promise and goodness; for he is God and changes not. If he begin, he will finish his work and bring forth the top-stone.

Two things, in general, satisfied him very much:—

I. That *God's way is in the sanctuary*, v. 13. It is *in holiness*, so some. When we cannot solve the particular difficulties that may arise in our constructions of the divine providence, this we are sure of, in general, that God is holy in all his works, that they are all worthy of himself and consonant to the eternal purity and rectitude of his nature. He has holy ends in all he does, and will be sanctified in every dispensation of his providence. His way is according to his promise, which he has spoken in his holiness and made known in the sanctuary. What he has done is according to what he has said and may be interpreted by it; and from what he has said we may easily gather that he will not cast off his people for ever. God's way is for the sanctuary, and for the benefit of it. All he does is intended for the good of his church.

II. That *God's way is in the sea*. Though God is holy, just, and good, in all he does, yet we cannot give an account of the reasons of his proceedings, nor make any certain judgment of his designs: *His path is in the great waters and his footsteps are not known*, v. 19. God's ways are like the deep waters which cannot be fathomed (xxxvi. 6), like the way of a ship in the sea, which cannot be tracked, Prov. xxx. 18, 19. God's proceedings are always to be acquiesced in, but cannot always be accounted for. He specifies some particulars, for which he goes as far back as the infancy of the Jewish church, and from which he gathers, 1. That there is no God to be compared with the God of Israel (v. 13): *Who is so great a God as our God?* Let us first give to God the glory of the great things he has done for his people, and acknowledge him, therein, great above all comparison; and then we may take to ourselves the comfort of what he has done and encourage ourselves with it. 2. That he is a God of almighty power (v. 14): "*Thou art the God*

that alone doest wonders, above the power of any creature: *thou hast* visibly, and beyond any contradiction, *declared thy strength among the people.*" What God has done for his church has been a standing declaration of his almighty power, for therein he has made bare his everlasting arm. (1.) God brought Israel out of Egypt, v. 15. This was the beginning of mercy to them, and was yearly to be commemorated among them in the passover: "*Thou hast with thy arm, stretched out in so many miracles, redeemed thy people out of the hand of the Egyptians.*" Though they were delivered by power, yet they are said to be redeemed, as if it had been done by price, because it was typical of the great redemption, which was to be wrought out, in the fulness of time, both by price and power. Those that were redeemed are here called not only *the sons of Jacob*, to whom the promise was made, but of *Joseph* also, who had a most firm and lively belief of the performance of it; for, when he was dying, he made mention of the departing of the children of Israel out of Egypt, and gave commandment concerning his bones. (2.) He divided the Red Sea before them (v. 16): *The waters gave way, and a lane was made through that crowd instantly*, as if they had seen God himself at the head of the armies of Israel, and had retired for fear of him. Not only the surface of the waters, but *the depths, were troubled*, and opened to the right and to the left, in obedience to his word of command. (3.) He destroyed the Egyptians (v. 17): *The clouds poured out water upon them*, while the pillar of fire, like an umbrella over the camp of Israel, sheltered it from the shower, in which, as in the deluge, the waters that were above the firmament concurred with those that were beneath the firmament to destroy the rebels. Then *the skies sent out a sound; thy arrows also went abroad*, which is explained (v. 18): *The voice of thy thunder was heard in the heaven* (that was the sound which the skies sent forth); *the lightnings lightened the world*—those were the arrows which went abroad, by which the host of the Egyptians was discomfited, with so much terror that the earth of the adjacent coast trembled and shook. Thus God's way was in the sea, for the destruction of his enemies, as well as for the salvation of his people; and yet when the waters returned to their place *his footsteps were not known* (v. 19); there was no mark set upon the place, as there was, afterwards, in Jordan, Josh. iv. 9. We do not read in the story of Israel's passing through the Red Sea that there were thunders and lightnings, and an earthquake; yet there might be, and Josephus says there were, such displays of the divine terror upon that occasion. But it may refer to the thunders, lightnings, and earthquakes, that were at Mount Sinai when the law was given. (4.) He took his people Israel under his own guidance and protection

(v. 20): *Thou leddest thy people like a flock.* They being weak and helpless, and apt to wander like a flock of sheep, and lying exposed to the beasts of prey, God went before them with all the care and tenderness of a shepherd, that they might not fail. The pillar of cloud and fire led them; yet that is not here taken notice of, but the agency of Moses and Aaron, by whose hand God led them; they could not do it without God, but God did it with and by them. Moses was their governor, Aaron their high priest; they were guides, overseers, and rulers to Israel, and by them God led them. The right and happy administration of the two great ordinances of magistracy and ministry is, though not so great a miracle, yet as great a mercy to any people as the pillar of cloud and fire was to Israel in the wilderness.

The psalm concludes abruptly, and does not apply those ancient instances of God's power to the present distresses of the church, as one might have expected. But as soon as the good man began to meditate on these things he found he had gained his point; his very entrance upon this matter *gave him light and joy* (cxix. 130); his fears suddenly and strangely vanished, so that he needed to go no further; *he went his way, and did eat, and his countenance was no more sad*, like Hannah, 1 Sam. i. 18

PSALM LXXXVIII.

This psalm is historical; it is a narrative of the great mercies God had bestowed upon Israel, the great sins wherewith they had provoked him, and the many tokens of his displeasure they had been under for their sins. The psalmist began, in the foregoing psalm, to relate God's wonders of old, for his own encouragement in a difficult time; there he broke off abruptly, but here resumes the subject, for the edification of the church, and enlarges much upon it, showing not only how good God had been to them, which was an earnest of further finishing mercy, but how basely they had conducted themselves towards God, which justified him in correcting them as he did at this time, and forbade all complaints. Here is, I. The preface to this church history, commanding the attention of the present age to it and recommending it to the study of the generations to come, ver. 1—8. II. The history itself from Moses to David; it is put into a psalm or song that it might be the better remembered and transmitted to posterity, and that the singing of it might affect them with the things here related, more than they would be with a bare narrative of them. The general scope of this psalm we have ver. 9—11, where notice is taken of the present rebukes they were under (ver. 9), the sin which brought them under those rebukes (ver. 10), and the mercies of God to them formerly, which aggravated that sin, ver. 11. As to the particulars, we are here told, 1. What wonderful works God had wrought for them in bringing them out of Egypt (ver. 12—16), providing for them in the wilderness (ver. 23—29), plaguing and running their enemies (ver. 32—33), and at length putting them in possession of the land of promise, ver. 54, 55. 2. How ungrateful they were to God for his favours to them and how many and great provocations they were guilty of. How they murmured against God and distrusted him (ver. 17—20), and did but counterfeit repentance and submission when he punished them (ver. 34—37), thus grieving and tempting him, ver. 40—42. How they affronted God with their idolatries after they came to Canaan, ver. 46—53. 3. How God had justly punished them for their sins (ver. 21, 22) in the wilderness, making their sin their punishment (ver. 29—33), and now, of late, when the ark was taken by the Philistines, ver. 59—64. 4. How graciously God had spared them and returned in mercy to them, notwithstanding their provocations. He had forgiven them formerly (ver. 38, 39), and now, of late, had removed the judgments they had brought upon themselves, and brought them under a happy establishment both in church and state, ver. 65—72. As the general scope of this psalm may be of use to us in the singing of it, to put us upon recollecting what God has done for us and for his church formerly, and what we have done against him, so the particulars also may be of use to us, for warning against those sins of unbelief and ingratitude which Israel of old was notoriously guilty of, and the record of which was preserved for our learning. "These things happened unto them for examples," 1 Cor. x. 11; Heb. iv. 11.

Maschil of Asaph.

GIVE ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. 2 I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: 3 Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. 4 We will not hide *them* from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. 5 For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: 6 That the generation to come might know *them*, even the children which should be born; *who* should arise and declare *them* to their children: 7 That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments: 8 And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation: a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God.

These verses, which contain the preface to this history, show that the psalm answers the title; it is indeed *Maschil—a psalm to give instruction*; if we receive not the instruction it gives, it is our own fault. Here,

I. The psalmist demands attention to what he wrote (v. 1): *Give ear, O my people! to my law*. Some make these the psalmist's words. David, as a king, or Asaph, in his name, as his secretary of state, or scribe to the sweet singer of Israel, here calls upon the people, as his people committed to his charge, to give ear to his law. He calls his instructions *his law or edict*; such was their commanding force in themselves. Every good truth, received in the light and love of it, will have the power of a law upon the conscience; yet that was not all: David was a king, and he would interpose his royal power for the edification of his people. If God, by his grace, make great men good men, they will be capable of doing more good than others, because their word will be a law to all about them, who must therefore give ear and hearken; for to what purpose is divine revelation brought to our ears if we will not incline our ears to it, both humble ourselves and engage ourselves to hear it and heed it? Or the psalmist, being a prophet, speaks as God's mouth, and so calls them *his people*, and demands subjection to what was said as to a law. Let him that has an ear thus *hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches*, Rev. ii. 7.

II. Several reasons are given why we should diligently attend to that which is here related.

1. The things here discoursed of are weighty, and deserve consideration, strange, and need it (v. 2): *I will open my mouth in a parable*, in that which is sublime and uncommon, but very excellent and well worthy your attention; *I will utter dark sayings*, which challenge your most serious regards as much as the enigmas with which the eastern princes and learned men used to try one another. These are called *dark sayings*, not because they are hard to be understood, but because they are greatly to be admired and carefully to be looked into. This is said to be fulfilled in the parables which our Saviour put forth (Matt. xiii. 35), which were (as this) representations of the state of the kingdom of God among men. 2. They are the monuments of antiquity—*dark sayings of old which our fathers have told us*, v. 3. They are things of undoubted certainty; we have heard them and known them, and there is no room left to question the truth of them. The gospel of Luke is called a *declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us* (Luke i. 1), so were the things here related. The honour we owe to our parents and ancestors obliges us to attend to that which our fathers have told us, and, as far as it appears to be true and good, to receive it with so much the more reverence and regard. 3. They are to be transmitted to posterity, and it lies as a charge upon us carefully to hand them down (v. 4); because our fathers told them to us *we will not hide them from their children*. Our children are called *theirs*, for they were in care for their seed's seed, and looked upon them as theirs; and, in teaching our children the knowledge of God, we repay to our parents some of that debt we owe to them for teaching us. Nay, if we have no children of our own, we must declare the things of God to *their children*, the children of others. Our care must be for posterity in general, and not only for our own posterity; and for the generation to come hereafter, the children that shall be born, as well as for the generation that is next rising up and the children that are born. That which we are to transmit to our children is not only the knowledge of languages, arts and sciences, liberty and property, but especially the praises of the Lord, and his strength appearing in the wonderful works he has done. Our great care must be to lodge our religion, that great deposit, pure and entire in the hands of those that succeed us. There are two things the full and clear knowledge of which we must preserve the entail of to our heirs:—(1.) The law of God; for this was given with a particular charge to teach it diligently to their children (v. 5): *He established a testimony or covenant*, and enacted a law, in Jacob and Israel, gave them precepts and promises, which he commanded *them to make known to their children*, Deut. vi. 7, 20. The church of God, as the historian says of the Roman commonwealth, was

not to be *res unus ætatis*—a thing of one age, but was to be kept up from one generation to another; and therefore, as God provided for a succession of ministers in the tribe of Levi and the house of Aaron, so he appointed that parents should train up their children in the knowledge of his law: and, when they had grown up, they must arise and declare them to their children (v. 6), that, as one generation of God's servants and worshippers passes away, another generation may come, and the church, as the earth, may abide for ever; and thus God's name among men may be as the days of heaven. (2.) The providences of God concerning them, both in mercy and in judgment. The former seem to be mentioned for the sake of this; since God gave order that his laws should be made known to posterity, it is requisite that with them his works also should be made known, the fulfilling of the promises made to the obedient and the threatenings denounced against the disobedient. Let these be told to our children and our children's children, [1.] That they may take encouragement to conform to the will of God (v. 7): *that, not forgetting the works of God wrought in former days, they might set their hope in God and keep his commandments*, might make his command their rule and his covenant their stay. Those only may with confidence hope for God's salvation that make conscience of doing his commandments. The works of God, duly considered, will very much strengthen our resolution both to set our hope in him and to keep his commandments, for he is able to bear us out in both. [2.] That they may take warning not to conform to the example of their fathers (v. 8): *That they might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation*. See here, *First*, What was the character of their fathers. Though they were the seed of Abraham, taken into covenant with God, and, for aught we know, the only professing people he had then in the world, yet they were stubborn and rebellious, and walked contrary to God, in direct opposition to his will. They did indeed profess relation to him, but they did not set their hearts aright; they were not cordial in their engagements to God, nor inward with him in their worship of him, and therefore their *spirit was not steadfast with him*, but upon every occasion they flew off from him. Note, Hypocrisy is the high road to apostasy. Those that do not set their hearts aright will not be steadfast with God, but play fast and loose. *Secondly*, What was a charge to the children: *That they be not as their fathers*. Note, Those that have descended from wicked and ungodly ancestors, if they will but consider the word and works of God, will see reason enough not to tread in their steps. It will be no excuse for a vain conversation that it was received by tradition from our fathers (1 Pet. i. 18); for what we know of them that was evil must be

an admonition to us, that we dread that which was so pernicious to them as we would shun those courses which they took that were ruinous to their health or estates.

9 The children of Ephraim, *being armed, and carrying bows*, turned back in the day of battle. 10 They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law; 11 And forgot his works, and his wonders that he had showed them. 12 Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, *in the field of Zoan*. 13 He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through; and he made the waters to stand as a heap. 14 In the daytime also he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire. 15 He clave the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink as *out of the great depths*. 16 He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers. 17 And they sinned yet more against him by provoking the most high in the wilderness. 18 And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust. 19 Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? 20 Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people? 21 Therefore the LORD heard *this*, and was wroth: so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel: 22 Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation: 23 Though he had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven, 24 And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven. 25 Man did eat angels' food: he sent them meat to the full. 26 He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven: and by his power he brought in the south wind. 27 He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea: 28 And he let it fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitations. 29 So they did eat, and were well filled: for he gave them

their own desire; 30 They were not estranged from their lust. But while their meat *was* yet in their mouths, 31 The wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen *men* of Israel. 32 For all this they sinned still, and believed not for his wondrous works. 33 Therefore their days did he consume in vanity, and their years in trouble. 34 When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and enquired early after God. 35 And they remembered that God *was* their rock, and the high God their redeemer. 36 Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. 37 For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant. 38 But he, *being* full of compassion, forgave *their* iniquity, and destroyed *them* not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath. 39 For he remembered that they *were but* flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again.

In these verses,

I. The psalmist observes the late rebukes of Providence that the people of Israel had been under, which they had brought upon themselves by their dealing treacherously with God, v. 9—11. *The children of Ephraim*, in which tribe Shiloh was, though they were well armed and shot with bows, yet *turned back in the day of battle*. This seems to refer to that shameful defeat which the Philistines gave them in Eli's time, when they took the ark prisoner, 1 Sam. iv. 10, 11. Of this the psalmist here begins to speak, and, after a long digression, returns to it again, v. 61. Well might that event be thus fresh in mind in David's time, above forty years after, for the ark, which in that memorable battle was seized by the Philistines, though it was quickly brought out of captivity, was never brought out of obscurity till David fetched it from Kirjath-jearim to his own city. Observe, 1. The shameful cowardice of the children of Ephraim, that warlike tribe, so famed for valiant men, Joshua's tribe; the children of that tribe, though as well armed as ever, turned back when they came to face the enemy. Note, Weapons of war stand men in little stead without a martial spirit, and that is gone if God be gone. Sin dispirits men and takes away the heart. 2. The causes of their cowardice, which were no less shameful; and these were, (1.) A shameful violation of

God's law and their covenant with him (v. 10); they were basely treacherous and perfidious, *for they kept not the covenant of God*, and basely stubborn and rebellious (as they were described, v. 8), for they peremptorily refused to walk in his law, and, in effect, told him to his face they would not be ruled by him. (2.) A shameful ingratitude to God for the favours he had bestowed upon them. *They forgot his works and his wonders*, his works of wonder which they ought to have admired, v. 11. Note, Our forgetfulness of God's works is at the bottom of our disobedience to his laws.

II. He takes occasion hence to consult precedents and to compare this with the case of their fathers, who were in like manner unmindful of God's mercies to them and ungrateful to their founder and great benefactor, and were therefore often brought under his displeasure. The narrative in these verses is very remarkable, for it relates a kind of struggle between God's goodness and man's badness, and mercy, at length, rejoices against judgment.

1. God did great things for his people Israel, when he first incorporated them and formed them into a people: *Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers*, and not only in their sight, but in their cause, and for their benefit, so strange, so kind, that one would think they should never be forgotten. What he did for them in the land of Egypt is only just mentioned here (v. 12), but afterwards resumed, v. 43. He proceeds here to show,

(1.) How he made a lane for them through the Red Sea, and caused them, gave them courage, to pass through, though the waters stood over their heads as a heap, v. 13. See Isa. lxxiii. 12, 13, where God is said to *lead them by the hand*, as it were, *through the deeps*, that they should not stumble. (2.) How he provided a guide for them through the untrodden paths of the wilderness (v. 14); he led them step by step, *in the day time by a cloud*, which also sheltered them from the heat, and *all the night with a light of fire*, which perhaps warmed the air; at least it made the darkness of night less frightful, and perhaps kept off wild beasts, Zech. ii. 5. (3.) How he furnished their camp with fresh water in a dry and thirsty land where no water was, not by opening the bottles of heaven (that would have been a common way), but by broaching a rock (v. 15, 16): *He clave the rocks in the wilderness*, which yielded water, though they were not capable of receiving it either from the clouds above or the springs beneath. Out of the dry and hard rock he gave them drink, not distilled as out of an alembic, drop by drop, but in streams *running down like rivers*, and as out of the great depths. God gives abundantly, and is rich in mercy; he gives seasonably, and sometimes makes us to feel the want of mercies that we may the better know the worth of them. This water which God gave Israel out of the rock was

the more valuable because it was spiritual drink. *And that rock was Christ.*

2. When God began thus to bless them they began to affront him (v. 17): *They sinned yet more against him*, more than they had done in Egypt, though there they were bad enough, Ezek. xx. 8. They bore the miseries of their servitude better than the difficulties of their deliverance, and never murmured at their taskmasters so much as they did at Moses and Aaron; as if they were delivered to do all these abominations, Jer. vii. 10. As sin sometimes takes occasion by the commandment, so at other times it takes occasion by the deliverance, to become more exceedingly sinful. *They provoked the Most High.* Though he is most high, and they knew themselves an unequal match for him, yet they provoked him and even bade defiance to his justice; and this in the wilderness, where he had them at his mercy and therefore they were bound in interest to please him, and where he showed them so much mercy and therefore they were bound in gratitude to please him; yet there they said and did that which they knew would provoke him: *They tempted God in their heart*, v. 18. Their sin began in their heart, and thence it took its malignity. *They do always err in their heart*, Heb. iii. 10. Thus they tempted God, tried his patience to the utmost, whether he would bear with them or no, and, in effect, bade him do his worst. Two ways they provoked him:—(1.) By desiring, or rather demanding, that which he had not thought fit to give them: *They asked meat for their lust.* God had given them meat for their hunger, in the manna, wholesome pleasant food and in abundance; he had given them meat for their faith out of the heads of leviathan which *he broke in pieces*, lxxiv. 14. But all this would not serve; they must have meat for their lust, dainties and varieties to gratify a luxurious appetite. Nothing is more provoking to God than our quarrelling with our allotment and indulging the desires of the flesh. (2.) By distrusting his power to give them what they desired. This was tempting God indeed. They challenged him to give them flesh; and, if he did not, they would say it was because he could not, not because he did not see it fit for them (v. 19): *They spoke against God.* Those that set bounds to God's power speak against him. It was as injurious a reflection as could be cast upon God to say, *Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?* They had manna, but they did not think they had a table furnished unless they had boiled and roast, a first, a second, and a third course, as they had in Egypt, where they had both flesh and fish, and sauce too (Exod. xvi. 3, Num. xi. 5), dishes of meat and salvers of fruit. What an unreasonable insatiable thing is luxury! Such a mighty thing did these epicures think a table well furnished to be that they thought it was more than God himself could give them in that wilderness;

whereas the *beasts of the forest*, and all the *fowls of the mountains*, are his, 1. 10, 11. Their disbelief of God's power was so much the worse in that they did at the same time own that he had done as much as that came out (v. 20): *Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out*, which they and their cattle drank of. And which is easier, to furnish a table in the wilderness, which a rich man can do, or to fetch water out of a rock, which the greatest potentate on the earth cannot do! Never did unbelief, though always unreasonable, ask so absurd a question: "Can he that melted down a rock into streams of water give bread also? Or can he that has given bread provide flesh also?" Is any thing too hard for Omnipotence? When once the ordinary powers of nature are exceeded God has made bare his arm, and we must conclude that nothing is impossible with him. Be it ever so great a thing that we ask, it becomes us to own, *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst.*

3. God justly resented the provocation and was much displeased with them (v. 21): *The Lord heard this, and was wroth.* Note, God is a witness to all our murmurings and distrusts; he hears them and is much displeased with them. *A fire was kindled for this against Jacob; the fire of the Lord burnt among them*, Num. xi. 1. Or it may be understood of the fire of God's anger which came up against Israel. To unbelievers our God is himself a consuming fire. Those that will not believe the power of God's mercy shall feel the power of his indignation, and be made to confess that it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands. Now here we are told, (1.) Why God thus resented the provocation (v. 22): *Because by this it appeared that they believed not in God*; they did not give credit to the revelation he had made of himself to them, for they durst not commit themselves to him, nor venture themselves with him: *They trusted not in the salvation he had begun to work for them*; for then they would not thus have questioned its progress. Those cannot be said to trust in God's salvation as their felicity at last who cannot find in their hearts to trust in his providence for food convenient in the way to it. That which aggravated their unbelief was the experience they had had of the power and goodness of God, v. 23—25. He had given them undeniable proofs of his power, not only on earth beneath, but in heaven above; for he commanded the clouds from above, as one that had created them and commanded them into being; he made what use he pleased of them. Usually by their showers they contribute to the earth's producing corn; but now, when God so commanded them, they showered down corn themselves, which is therefore called here *the corn of heaven*; for heaven can do the work without the earth, but not the earth without heaven. God, who has the key of the clouds, opened the doors of heaven, and that is more than opening the windows. which yet is spoken of as a great

blessing, Mal. iii. 10. To all that by faith and prayer ask, seek, and knock, these doors shall at any time be opened; for the God of heaven is rich in mercy to all that call upon him. He not only keeps a good house, but keeps open house. Justly might God take it ill that they should distrust him when he had been so very kind to them that he had rained down manna upon them to eat, substantial food, daily, duly, enough for all, enough for each. *Man did eat angels' food*, such as angels, if they had occasion for food, would eat and be thankful for; or rather such as was given by the ministry of angels, and (as the Chaldee reads it) such as descended from the dwelling of angels. Every one, even the least child in Israel, did eat the bread of the mighty (so the margin reads it); the weakest stomach could digest it, and yet it was so nourishing that it was strong meat for strong men. And, though the provision was so good, yet they were not stinted, nor ever reduced to short allowance; for he sent them meat to the fall. If they gathered little, it was their own fault; and yet even then they had no lack, Exod. xvi. 18. The daily provision God makes for us, and has made ever since we came into the world, though it has not so much of miracle as this, has no less of mercy, and is therefore a great aggravation of our distrust of God.

(2.) How he expressed his resentment of the provocation, not in denying them what they so inordinately lasted after, but in granting it to them. [1.] Did they question his power? He soon gave them a sensible conviction that he could furnish a table in the wilderness. Though the winds seem to blow where they list, yet, when he pleased, he could make them his caterers to fetch in provisions, v. 26. *He caused an east wind to blow and a south wind*, either a south-east wind, or an east wind first to bring in the quails from that quarter and then a south wind to bring in more from that quarter; so that he rained flesh upon them, and that of the most delicate sort, not butchers' meat, but wild-fowl, and abundance of it, as dust, as the sand of the sea (v. 27), so that the meanest Israelite might have sufficient; and it cost them nothing, no, not the pains of fetching it from the mountains, for he let it fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitation, v. 28. We have the account Num. xi. 31, 33. See how good God is even to the evil and unthankful, and wonder that his goodness does not overcome their badness. See what little reason we have to judge of God's love by such gifts of his bounty as these; dainty bits are no tokens of his peculiar favour. Christ gave dry bread to the disciples that he loved, but a sop dipped in the sauce to Judas that betrayed him. [2.] Did they defy his justice and boast that they had gained their point? He made them pay dearly for their quails; for, though he gave them their own desire, they were not estranged from their lust (v. 29, 30); their appetite was insatiable; they

were well filled and yet they were not satisfied; for they knew not what they would have. Such is the nature of lust; it is content with nothing, and the more it is humoured the more humourous it grows. Those that indulge their lust will never be estranged from it. Or it intimates that God's liberality did not make them ashamed of their ungrateful lustings, as it would have done if they had had any sense of honour. But what came of it? *While the meat was yet in their mouth*, rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel, the wrath of God came upon them and slew the fattest of them (v. 31), those that were most luxurious and most daring. See Num. xi. 33, 34. They were fed as sheep for the slaughter: the butcher takes the fattest first. We may suppose there were some pious and contented Israelites, that did eat moderately of the quails and were never the worse; for it was not the meat that poisoned them, but their own lust. Let epicures and sensualists here read their doom. The end of those who make a god of their belly is destruction, Phil. iii. 19. *The prosperity of fools shall destroy them*, and their ruin will be the greater.

4. The judgments of God upon them did not reform them, nor attain the end, any more than his mercies (v. 32): *For all this, they sinned still; they murmured and quarrelled with God and Moses as much as ever. Though God was wrath and smote them, yet they went on forwardly in the way of their heart* (Isa. lvii. 17); they believed not for his wondrous works. Though his works of justice were as wondrous and as great proofs of his power as his works of mercy, yet they were not wrought upon by them to fear God, nor convinced how much it was their interest to make him their friend. Those hearts are hard indeed that will neither be melted by the mercies of God nor broken by his judgments.

5. They persisting in their sins, God proceeded in his judgments, but they were judgments of another nature, which wrought not suddenly, but slowly. He punished them not now with such acute diseases as that was which slew the fattest of them, but a lingering chronic distemper (v. 33): *Therefore their days did he consume in vanity in the wilderness and their years in trouble*. By an irreversible doom they were condemned to wear out thirty-eight tedious years in the wilderness, which indeed were consumed in vanity; for in all those years there was not a step taken nearer Canaan, but they were turned back again, and wandered to and fro as in a labyrinth, not one stroke struck towards the conquest of it: and not only in vanity, but in trouble, for their carcases were condemned to fall in the wilderness and there they all perished but Caleb and Joshua. Note, Those that sin still must expect to be in trouble still. And the reason why we spend our days in so much vanity and trou-

ble, why we live with so little comfort and to so little purpose, is because we do not live by faith.

6. Under these rebukes they professed repentance, but they were not cordial and sincere in this profession. (1.) Their profession was plausible enough (v. 34, 35): *When he slew them, or condemned them to be slain, then they sought him; they confessed their fault, and begged his pardon.* When some were slain others in a fright cried to God for mercy, and promised they would reform and be very good; then *they returned to God, and enquired early after him.* So one would have taken them to be such as desired to find him. And they pretended to do this because, however they had forgotten it formerly, now they remembered that *God was their rock* and therefore now that they needed him they would fly to him and take shelter in him, and that *the high God was their Redeemer*, who brought them out of Egypt and to whom therefore they might come with boldness. Afflictions are sent to put us in mind of God as our rock and our redeemer; for, in prosperity, we are apt to forget him. (2.) They were not sincere in this profession (v. 36, 37): *They did but flatter him with their mouth, as if they thought by fair speeches to prevail with him to revoke the sentence and remove the judgment, with a secret intention to break their word when the danger was over; they did not return to God with their whole heart, but feignedly,* Jer. iii. 10. All their professions, prayers, and promises, were extorted by the rack. It was plain that they did not mean as they said, for they did not adhere to it. They thawed in the sun, but froze in the shade. They did but *lie to God with their tongues, for their heart was not with him*, was not right with him, as appeared by the issue, for they were not steadfast in his covenant. They were not sincere in their reformation, for they were not constant; and, by thinking thus to impose upon a heart-searching God, they really put as great an affront upon him as by any of their reflections.

7. God hereupon, in pity to them, put a stop to the judgments which were threatened and in part executed (v. 38, 39): *But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity.* One would think this counterfeit repentance should have filled up the measure of their iniquity. What could be more provoking than to lie thus to the holy God, than thus to keep back part of the price, the chief part? Acts v. 3. And yet he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity thus far, that he did not destroy them and cut them off from being a people, as he justly might have done, but spared their lives till they had reared another generation which should enter into the promised land. *Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it,* Isa. lxxviii. 8. Many a time he turned his anger away (for he is Lord of his anger) and did not stir up all his wrath, to deal with them as they de-

served: and why did he not? Not because their ruin would have been any loss to him, but, (1.) Because he was full of compassion and, when he was going to destroy them, his repentings were kindled together, and he said, *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel?* Hos. xi. 8. (2.) Because, though they did not rightly remember that he was their rock, he remembered that they were but flesh. He considered the corruption of their nature, which inclined them to evil, and was pleased to make that an excuse for his sparing them, though it was really no excuse for their sin. See Gen. vi. 3. He considered the weakness and frailty of their nature, and what an easy thing it would be to crush them: *They are as a wind that passeth away and cometh not again.* They may soon be taken off; but, when they are gone, they are gone irrecoverably, and then what will become of the covenant with Abraham? They are flesh, they are wind; whence it were easy to argue they may justly, they may immediately, be cut off, and there would be no loss of them: but God argues, on the contrary, therefore he will not destroy them; for the true reason is, *He is full of compassion.*

40 How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert! 41 Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. 42 They remembered not his hand, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy. 43 How he had wrought his signs in Egypt, and his wonders in the field of Zoan: 44 And had turned their rivers into blood; and their floods, that they could not drink. 45 He sent divers sorts of flies among them, which devoured them; and frogs, which destroyed them. 46 He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labour unto the locust. 47 He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycamore trees with frost. 48 He gave up their cattle also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts. 49 He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them. 50 He made a way to his anger; he spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence; 51 And smote all the first-born in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham: 52 But made his own people to go

forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock. 53 And he led them on safely, so that they feared not: but the sea overwhelmed their enemies. 54 And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, *even to this mountain, which* his right hand had purchased. 55 He cast out the heathen also before them, and divided them an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents. 56 Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies; 57 But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow. 58 For they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images. 59 When God heard *this*, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel: 60 So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent *which* he placed among men; 61 And delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand. 62 He gave his people over also unto the sword; and was wroth with his inheritance. 63 The fire consumed their young men; and their maidens were not given to marriage. 64 Their priests fell by the sword; and their widows made no lamentation. 65 Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, *and* like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine. 66 And he smote his enemies in the hinder part: he put them to a perpetual reproach. 67 Moreover he refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim: 68 But chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved. 69 And he built his sanctuary like high *palaces*, like the earth which he hath established for ever. 70 He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: 71 From following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. 72 So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.

The matter and scope of this paragraph

are the same with the former, showing what great mercies God had bestowed upon Israel, how provoking they had been, what judgments he had brought upon them for their sins, and yet how, in judgment, he remembered mercy at last. Let not those that receive mercy from God be thereby emboldened to sin, for the mercies they receive will aggravate their sin and hasten the punishment of it; yet let not those that are under divine rebukes for sin be discouraged from repentance, for their punishments are means of repentance, and shall not prevent the mercy God has yet in store for them. Observe,

I. The sins of Israel in the wilderness again reflected on, because written for our admonition (*v.* 40, 41): *How often did they provoke him in the wilderness!* Not once, nor twice, but many a time; and the repetition of the provocation was a great aggravation of it, as well as the place, *v.* 17. God kept an account how often they provoked him, though they did not. Num. xiv. 22, *They have tempted me these ten times.* By provoking him they did not so much anger him as grieve him, for he looked upon them as his children (*Israel is my son, my first-born*), and the undutiful disrespectful behaviour of children does more grieve than anger the tender parents; they lay it to heart, and take it unkindly, Isa. i. 2. They grieved him because they put him under a necessity of afflicting them, which he did not willingly. After they had humbled themselves before him they *turned back and tempted God*, as before, and *limited the Holy One of Israel*, prescribing to him what proofs he should give of his power and presence with them and what methods he should take in leading them and providing for them. They limited him to their way and their time, as if he did not observe that they quarrelled with him. It is presumption for us to limit *the Holy One of Israel*; for, being *the Holy One*, he will do what is most for his own glory; and, being *the Holy One of Israel*, he will do what is most for their good; and we both impeach his wisdom and betray our own pride and folly if we go about to prescribe to him. That which occasioned their limiting God for the future was their forgetting his former favours (*v.* 42): *They remembered not his hand*, how strong it is and how it had been stretched out for them, nor *the day when he delivered them from the enemy*, Pharaoh, that great enemy who sought their ruin. There are some days made remarkable by signal deliverances, which ought never to be forgotten; for the remembrance of them would encourage us in our greatest straits.

II. The mercies of God to Israel, which they were unmindful of when they tempted God and limited him; and this catalogue of the works of wonder which God wrought for them begins higher, and is carried down further, than that before, *v.* 12, &c.

1. This begins with their deliverance out

of Egypt, and the plagues with which God compelled the Egyptians to let them go: these were the *signs* God wrought in Egypt (v. 43), the *wonders* he wrought in the field of Zoan, that is, in the country of Zoan, as we say, in *Agro N.*, meaning in such a county.

(1.) Several of the plagues of Egypt are here specified, which speak aloud the power of God and his favour to Israel, as well as terror to his and their enemies. As, [1.] The turning of the waters into blood; they had made themselves drunk with the blood of God's people, even the infants, and now God gave them blood to drink, *for they were worthy*, v. 44. [2.] The flies and frogs which infested them, mixtures of insects in swarms, in shoals, which devoured them, which destroyed them, v. 45. For God can make the weakest and most despicable animals instruments of his wrath when he pleases; what they want in strength may be made up in number. [3.] The plague of locusts, which devoured their increase, and that which they had laboured for, v. 46. They are called *God's great army*, Joel ii. 25. [4.] The hail, which destroyed their trees, especially their vines, the weakest of trees (v. 47), and their cattle, especially their flocks of sheep, the weakest of their cattle, which were killed with hot thunder-bolts (v. 48), and the frost, or congealed rain (as the word signifies), was so violent that it destroyed even the *sycamore-trees*. [5.] The death of the first-born was the last and sorest of the plagues of Egypt, and that which perfected the deliverance of Israel; it was first in intention (Exod. iv. 23), but last in execution; for, if gentler methods would have done the work, this would have been prevented: but it is here largely described, v. 49—51. *First*, The anger of God was the cause of it. Wrath had now come upon the Egyptians to the uttermost; Pharaoh's heart having been often hardened after less judgments had softened it, God now stirred up all his wrath; for he cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, anger in the highest degree, *wrath and indignation* the cause, and trouble (tribulation and anguish, Rom. ii. 8, 9) the effect. This from on high he cast upon them and did not spare, and they could not flee out of his hands, Job xxvii. 22. He made a way, or (as the word is) he weighed a path, to his anger. He did not cast it upon them uncertainly, but by weight. His anger was weighed with the greatest exactness in the balances of justice; for, in his greatest displeasure, he never did, nor ever will do, any wrong to any of his creatures: the path of his anger is always weighed. *Secondly*, The angels of God were the instruments employed in this execution: He sent evil angels among them, not evil in their own nature, but in respect to the errand upon which they were sent; they were destroying angels, or angels of punishment, which passed through all the land of Egypt, with orders, according to the weighed paths

of God's anger, not to kill all, but the first-born only. Good angels become evil angels to sinners. Those that make the holy God their enemy must never expect the holy angels to be their friends. *Thirdly*, The execution itself was very severe: He spared not their soul from death, but suffered death to ride in triumph among them and gave their life over to the pestilence, which cut the thread of life off immediately; for he smote all the first-born in Egypt (v. 51), the chief of their strength, the hopes of their respective families; children are the parents' strength, and the first-born the chief of their strength. Thus, because Israel was precious in God's sight, he gave men for them and people for their life, Isa. xliii. 4.

(2.) By these plagues on the Egyptians God made a way for his own people to go forth like sheep, distinguishing between them and the Egyptians, as the shepherd divides between the sheep and the goats, having set his own mark on these sheep by the blood of the lamb sprinkled on their door-posts. He made them go forth like sheep, not knowing whither they went, and guided them in the wilderness, as a shepherd guides his flock, with all possible care and tenderness, v. 52. He led them on safely, though in dangerous paths, so that they feared not, that is, they needed not to fear; they were indeed frightened at the Red Sea (Exod. xiv. 10), but that was said to them, and done for them, which effectually silenced their fears. But the sea overwhelmed their enemies that ventured to pursue them into it, v. 53. It was a lane to them, but a grave to their persecutors.

2. It is carried down as far as their settlement in Canaan (v. 54): He brought them to the border of his sanctuary, to that land in the midst of which he set up his sanctuary, which was, as it were, the centre and metropolis, the crown and glory, of it. That is a happy land which is the border of God's sanctuary. It was the happiness of that land that there God was known, and there were his sanctuary and dwelling-place, lxxvi. 1, 2. The whole land in general, and Zion in particular, was the mountain which his right hand had purchased, which by his own power he had set apart for himself. See xlv. 3. He made them to ride on the high places of the earth, Isa. lviii. 14; Deut. xxxii. 13. They found the Canaanites in the full and quiet possession of that land, but God cast out the heathen before them, not only took away their title to it, as the Lord of the whole earth, but himself executed the judgment given against them, and, as Lord of hosts, turned them out of it, and made his people Israel tread upon their high places, dividing each tribe an inheritance by line, and making them to dwell in the houses of those whom they had destroyed. God could have turned the uninhabited uncultivated wilderness (which perhaps was nearly of the same extent as Ca-

naam) into fruitful soil, and have planted them there; but the land he designed for them was to be a type of heaven, and therefore must be the glory of all lands; it must likewise be fought for, for the kingdom of heaven suffers violence.

III. The sins of Israel after they were settled in Canaan, v. 56—58. The children were like their fathers, and brought their old corruptions into their new habitations. Though God had done so much for them, yet they tempted and provoked the most high God still. He gave them his testimonies, but they did not keep them; they began very promisingly, but they turned back, gave God good words, but dealt unfaithfully, and were like a deceitful bow, which seemed likely to send the arrow to the mark, but, when it is drawn, breaks, and drops the arrow at the archer's foot, or perhaps makes it recoil in his face. There was no hold of them, nor any confidence to be put in their promises or professions. They seemed sometimes devoted to God, but they presently turned aside, and provoked him to anger with their high places and their graven images. Idolatry was the sin that did most easily beset them, and which, though they often professed their repentance for, they as often relapsed into. It was spiritual adultery either to worship idols or to worship God by images, as if he had been an idol, and therefore by it they are said to move him to jealousy, Deut. xxxii. 16, 21.

IV. The judgments God brought upon them for these sins. Their place in Canaan would no more secure them in a sinful way than their descent from Israel. *You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you*, Amos iii. 2. Idolatry is winked at among the Gentiles, but not in Israel. 1. God was displeased with them (v. 59): *When God heard this*, when he heard the cry of their iniquity, which came up before him, *he was wrath*, he took it very heinously, as well he might, and he greatly abhorred Israel, whom he had greatly loved and delighted in. Those that had been the people of his choice became the generation of his wrath. Presumptuous sins, idolatries especially, render even Israelites odious to God's holiness and obnoxious to his justice. 2. He deserted his tabernacle among them, and removed the defence which was upon that glory, v. 60. God never leaves us till we leave him, never withdraws till we have driven him from us. His name is *Jealous*, and he is a jealous God; and therefore no marvel if a people whom he had betrothed to himself be loathed and rejected, and he refuse to cohabit with them any longer, when they have embraced the bosom of a stranger. *The tabernacle at Shiloh was the tent God had placed among men*, in which God would in very deed dwell with men upon the earth; but, when his people treacherously forsook it, he justly forsook it, and then all its glory de-

parted. Israel has small joy of the tabernacle without the presence of God in it. 3. He gave up all into the hands of the enemy. Those whom God forsakes become an easy prey to the destroyer. The Philistines are sworn enemies to the Israel of God, and no less so to the God of Israel, and yet God will make use of them to be a scourge to his people. (1.) God permits them to take the ark prisoner, and carry it off as a trophy of their victory, to show that he had not only forsaken the tabernacle, but even the ark itself, which shall now be no longer a token of his presence (v. 61): *He delivered his strength into captivity*, as if it had been weakened and overcome, and his glory fell under the disgrace of being abandoned into the enemy's hand. We have the story 1 Sam. iv. 11. When the ark has become as a stranger among Israelites, no marvel if it soon be made a prisoner among Philistines. (2.) He suffers the armies of Israel to be routed by the Philistines (v. 62, 63): *He gave his people over unto the sword*, to the sword of his own justice and of the enemy's rage, for he was *wroth with his inheritance*; and that wrath of his was the fire which consumed their young men, in the prime of their time, by the sword or sickness, and made such a devastation of them that their maidens were not praised, that is, were not given in marriage (which is honourable in all), because there were no young men for them to be given to, and because the distresses and calamities of Israel were so many and great that the joys of marriage-solemnities were judged unseasonable, and it was said, *Blessed is the womb that beareth not*. General destructions produce a scarcity of men. Isa. xiii. 12, *I will make a man more precious than fine gold*, so that *seven women shall take hold of one man*, Isa. iv. 1; iii. 25. Yet this was not the worst: (3.) *Even their priests, who attended the ark, fell by the sword*, Hophni and Phinehas. Justly they fell, for they made themselves vile, and were sinners before the Lord exceedingly; and their priesthood was so far from being their protection that it aggravated their sin and hastened their fall. Justly did they fall by the sword, because they exposed themselves in the field of battle, without call or warrant. We throw ourselves out of God's protection when we go out of our place and out of the way of our duty. When the priests fell *their widows made no lamentation*, v. 64. All the ceremonies of mourning were lost and buried in substantial grief; the widow of Phinehas, instead of lamenting her husband's death, died herself, when she had called her son *Ichabod*, 1 Sam. iv. 19, &c.

V. God's return, in mercy, to them, and his gracious appearances for them after this. We read not of their repentance and return to God, but God was grieved for the miseries of Israel (Judg. x. 16) and concerned for his own honour, *fearing the wrath of the enemy, lest they should behave themselves strangely*,

Deut. xxxii. 27. And therefore *then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep* (v. 65), and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine, not only like one that is raised out of sleep and recovers himself from the slumber which by drinking he was overcome with, who then regards that which before he seemed wholly to neglect, but like one that is refreshed with sleep, and whose heart is made glad by the sober and moderate use of wine, and is therefore the more lively and vigorous, and fit for business. When God had delivered the ark of his strength into captivity, as one jealous of his honour, he soon put forth the arm of his strength to rescue it, stirred up his strength to do great things for his people.

1. He plagued the Philistines who held the ark in captivity, v. 66. He smote them with emerods in the *hinder parts*, wounded them behind, as if they were fleeing from him, even when they thought themselves more than conquerors. He put them to reproach, and they themselves helped to make it a perpetual reproach by the golden images of their emerods, which they returned with the ark for a trespass-offering (1 Sam. vi. 5), to remain *in perpetuum rei memoriam*—as a perpetual memorial. Note, Sooner or later God will glorify himself by putting disgrace upon his enemies, even when they are most elevated with their successes.

2. He provided a new settlement for his ark after it had been some months in captivity and some years in obscurity: He did indeed *refuse the tabernacle of Joseph*; he never sent it back to Shiloh, in the tribe of Ephraim, v. 67. The ruins of that place were standing monuments of divine justice. Go, see what I did to Shiloh, Jer. vii. 12. But he did not wholly take away the glory from Israel; the moving of the ark is not the removing of it. Shiloh has lost it, but Israel has not. God will have a church in the world, and a kingdom among men, though this or that place may have its candlestick removed; nay, the rejection of Shiloh is the election of Zion, as, long after, the fall of the Jews was the riches of the Gentiles, Rom. xi. 12. When God *chose not the tribe of Ephraim*, of which tribe Joshua was, he *chose the tribe of Judah* (v. 68), because of that tribe Jesus was to be, who is greater than Joshua. Kirjath-jearim, the place to which the ark was brought after its rescue out of the hands of the Philistines, was in the tribe of Judah. There it took possession of that tribe; but thence it was removed to Zion, *that Mount Zion which he loved* (v. 68), which was *beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth*; there it was that he *built his sanctuary like high palaces and like the earth*, v. 69. David indeed erected only a tent for the ark, but a temple was then designed and prepared for, and finished by his son; and that was, (1.) A very stately place. It was built like the palaces of princes, and the great men of the earth, nay, it excelled them all in splendour

and magnificence. Solomon built it, and yet here it is said *God built it*, for his father had taught him, perhaps with reference to this undertaking, that *except the Lord build the house those labour in vain that build it*, cxxvii. 1, which is a psalm for Solomon. (2.) A very stable place, like the earth, though not to continue as long as the earth, yet while it was to continue it was as firm as the earth, which God *upholds by the word of his power*, and it was not finally destroyed till the gospel temple was erected, which is to continue *as long as the sun and moon endure* (lxxxix. 36, 37) and against which the *gates of hell shall not prevail*.

3. He set a good government over them, a monarchy, and a monarch after his own heart: *He chose David his servant* out of all the thousands of Israel, and put the sceptre into his hand, out of whose loins Christ was to come, and who was to be a type of him, v. 70. Concerning David observe here, (1.) The meanness of his beginning. His extraction indeed was great, for he descended from the prince of the tribe of Judah, but his education was poor. He was bred not a scholar, not a soldier, but a shepherd. He was *taken from the sheep-folds*, as Moses was; for God delights to put honour upon the humble and diligent, to raise the poor out of the dust and to set them among princes; and sometimes he finds those most fit for public action that have spent the beginning of their time in solitude and contemplation. The Son of David was upbraided with the obscurity of his original: *Is not this the carpenter?* David was taken, he does not say from leading the rams, but from *following the ewes*, especially those *great with young*, which intimated that of all the good properties of a shepherd he was most remarkable for his tenderness and compassion to those of his flock that most needed his care. This temper of mind fitted him for government, and made him a type of Christ, who, when he feeds his flock like a shepherd, does with a particular care *gently lead those that are with young*, Isa. xl. 11. (2.) The greatness of his advancement. God preferred him to *feed Jacob his people*, v. 71. It was a great honour that God put upon him, in advancing him to be a king, especially to be king over Jacob and Israel, God's peculiar people, near and dear to him; but withal it was a great trust reposed in him when he was charged with the government of those that were God's own inheritance. God advanced him to the throne that he might feed them, not that he might feed himself, that he might do good, not that he might make his family great. It is the charge given to all the under-shepherds, both magistrates and ministers, that they *feed the flock of God*. (3.) The happiness of his management. David, having so great a trust put into his hands, obtained mercy of the Lord to be found both skilful and faithful in the discharge of it (v. 72): *So he fed them; he ruled them and taught them, guided and*

protected them, [1.] Very honestly; he did it *according to the integrity of his heart*, aiming at nothing but the glory of God and the good of the people committed to his charge; the principles of his religion were the maxims of his government, which he administered, not with carnal policy, but with *godly sincerity, by the grace of God*. In every thing he did he meant well and had no by-end in view. [2.] Very discreetly; he did it *by the skilfulness of his hands*. He was not only very sincere in what he designed, but very prudent in what he did, and chose out the most proper means in pursuit of his end, for his God did instruct him to discretion. Happy the people that are under such a government! With good reason does the psalmist make this the finishing crowning instance of God's favour to Israel, for David was a type of Christ the great and good Shepherd, who was humbled first and then exalted, and of whom it was foretold that he should be filled with the *spirit of wisdom and understanding* and should *judge and reprove with equity*, Isa. xi. 3, 4. On the integrity of his heart and the skilfulness of his hands all his subjects may entirely rely, and *of the increase of his government and people there shall be no end*.

PSALM LXXIX.

This psalm, if penned with any particular event in view, is with most probability made to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and the woful havoc made of the Jewish nation by the Chaldeans under Nebuchadnezzar. It is set to the same tune, as I may say, with the Lamentations of Jeremiah, and that weeping prophet borrows two verses out of it (ver. 6, 7) and makes use of them in his prayer, Jer. x. 25. Some think it was penned long before by the spirit of prophecy, prepared for the use of the church in that cloudy and dark day. Others think that it was penned then by the spirit of prayer, either by a prophet named Asaph or by some other prophet for the sons of Asaph. Whatever the particular occasion was, we have here, I. A representation of the very deplorable condition that the people of God were in at this time, ver. 1-5. II. A petition to God for succour and relief, that their enemies might be reckoned with (ver. 6, 7, 10, 12), that their sins might be pardoned (ver. 8, 9), and that they might be delivered, ver. 11. III. A plea taken from the readiness of his people to praise him, ver. 13. In times of the church's peace and prosperity this psalm may, in the singing of it, give us occasion to bless God that we are not thus trampled on and insulted. But it is especially reasonable in a day of treading down and perplexity, for the exciting of our desires towards God and the encouragement of our faith in him as the church's patron.

A psalm of Asaph.

O GOD, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps. 2 The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth. 3 Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and *there was none to bury them*. 4 We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. 5 How long, LORD? wilt thou be angry for ever? shall thy jealousy burn like fire?

We have here a sad complaint exhibited in

the court of heaven. The world is full of complaints, and so is the church too, for it suffers, not only with it, but from it, as *a lily among thorns*. God is complained to; whither should children go with their grievances, but to their father, to such a father as is able and willing to help? The heathen are complained of, who, being themselves aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, were sworn enemies to it. Though they knew not God, nor owned him, yet, God having them in a chain, the church very fitly appeals to him against them; for he is King of nations, to overrule them, to judge among the heathen, and King of saints, to favour and protect them.

I. They complain here of the anger of their enemies and the outrageous fury of the oppressor, exerted,

1. Against places, v. 1. They did all the mischief they could, (1.) To the holy land; they invaded that, and made inroads into it: "*The heathen have come into thy inheritance, to plunder that, and lay it waste.*" Canaan was dearer to the pious Israelites as it was God's inheritance than as it was their own, as it was the land in which God was known and his name was great rather than as it was the land in which they were bred and born and which they and their ancestors had been long in possession of. Note, Injuries done to religion should grieve us more than even those done to common right, nay, to our own right. We should better bear to see our own inheritance wasted than God's inheritance. This psalmist had mentioned it in the foregoing psalm as an instance of God's great favour to Israel that he had *cast out the heathen before them*, lxxviii. 55. But see what a change sin made; now the heathen are suffered to pour in upon them. (2.) To the holy city: *They have laid Jerusalem on heaps*, heaps of rubbish, such heaps as are raised over graves, so some. The inhabitants were buried in the ruins of their own houses, and their dwelling places became their sepulchres, their long homes. (3.) To the holy house. That sanctuary which God had built like high palaces, and which was thought to be established as the earth, was now laid level with the ground: *Thy holy temple have they defiled*, by entering into it and laying it waste. God's own people had defiled it by their sins, and therefore God suffered their enemies to defile it by their insolence.

2. Against persons, against the bodies of God's people; and further their malice could not reach. (1.) They were prodigal of their blood, and killed them without mercy; their eye did not spare, nor did they give any quarter (v. 3): *Their blood have they shed like water*, wherever they met with them, *round about Jerusalem*, in all the avenues to the city; whoever went out or came in was waited for of the sword. Abundance of human blood was shed, so that the channels of water ran with blood. And they shed it with no more reluctance or regret than if they had spilt so much water, little thinking that every drop

of it will be reckoned for in the day when God shall make inquisition for blood. (2.) They were abusive to their dead bodies. When they had killed them they would let none bury them. Nay, those that were buried, even the dead bodies of God's servants, the flesh of his saints, whose names and memories they had a particular spite at, they dug up again, and gave them to be meat to the fowls of the heaven and to the beasts of the earth; or, at least, they left those so exposed whom they slew; they hung them in chains, which was in a particular manner grievous to the Jews to see, because God had given them an express law against this, as a barbarous thing, Deut. xxi. 23. This inhuman usage of Christ's witnesses is foretold (Rev. xi. 9), and thus even the dead bodies were witnesses against their persecutors. This is mentioned (says Austin, *De Civitate Dei*, lib. i. cap. 12) not as an instance of the misery of the persecuted (for the bodies of the saints shall rise in glory, however they became meat to the birds and the fowls), but of the malice of the persecutors.

3. Against their names (v. 4): "*We that survive have become a reproach to our neighbours*; they all study to abuse us and load us with contempt, and represent us as ridiculous, or odious, or both, upbraiding us with our sins and with our sufferings, or giving the lie to our relation to God and expectations from him; so that we have become a scorn and derision to those that are round about us." If God's professing people degenerate from what themselves and their fathers were, they must expect to be told of it; and it is well if a just reproach will help to bring us to a true repentance. But it has been the lot of the gospel-Israel to be made unjustly a reproach and derision; the apostles themselves were counted as the offscouring of all things.

II. They wonder more at God's anger, v. 5. This they discern in the anger of their neighbours, and this they complain most of: *How long, Lord, wilt thou be angry?* Shall it be for ever? This intimates that they desired no more than that God would be reconciled to them, that his anger might be turned away, and then the remainder of men's wrath would be restrained. Note, Those who desire God's favour as better than life cannot but dread and deprecate his wrath as worse than death.

6 Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name. 7 For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling place. 8 O remember not against us former iniquities: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us: for we are brought very low. 9 Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy

name's sake. 10 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God? let him be known among the heathen in our sight by the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed. 11 Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee; according to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die; 12 And render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord. 13 So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks for ever: we will show forth thy praise to all generations.

The petitions here put up to God are very suitable to the present distresses of the church, and they have pleas to enforce them, interwoven with them, taken mostly from God's honour.

I. They pray that God would so turn away his anger from them as to turn it upon those that persecuted and abused them (v. 6): "*Pour out thy wrath*, the full vials of it, *upon the heathen*; let them wring out the dregs of it, and drink them." This prayer is in effect a prophecy, in which the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Observe here, 1. The character of those he prays against; they are such as have not known God, nor called upon his name. The reason why men do not call upon God is because they do not know him, how able and willing he is to help them. Those that persist in ignorance of God, and neglect of prayer, are the ungodly, who live without God in the world. There are kingdoms that know not God and obey not the gospel, but neither their multitude nor their force united will secure them from his just judgments. 2. Their crime: *They have devoured Jacob*, v. 7. That is crime enough in the account of him who reckons that those who touch his people touch the apple of his eye. They have not only disturbed, but devoured, Jacob, not only encroached upon his dwelling-place, the land of Canaan, but laid it waste by plundering and depopulating it. (3.) Their condemnation: *Pour out thy wrath upon them*; do not only restrain them from doing further mischief, but reckon with them for the mischief they have done."

II. They pray for the pardon of sin, which they own to be the procuring cause of all their calamities. How unrighteous soever men were, God was righteous in permitting them to do what they did. They pray, 1. That God would not remember against them their former iniquities (v. 8), either their own former iniquities, that now, when they were old, they might not be made to possess the iniquities of their youth, or the former iniquities of their peo-

ple, the sins of their ancestors. In the captivity of Babylon former iniquities were brought to account; but God promises not again to do so (Jer. xxxi. 29, 30), and so they pray, "Remember not against us our first sins," which some make to look as far back as the golden calf, because God said, *In the day when I visit I will visit for this sin of theirs upon them*, Exod. xxxii. 34. If the children by repentance and reformation cut off the entail of the parents' sin, they may in faith pray that God will not remember them against them. When God pardons sin he blots it out and remembers it no more. 2. That he would purge away the sins they had been lately guilty of, by the guilt of which their minds and consciences had been defiled: *Deliver us, and purge away our sins*, v. 9. Then deliverances from trouble are granted in love, and are mercies indeed, when they are grounded upon the pardon of sin and flow from that; we should therefore be more earnest with God in prayer for the removal of our sins than for the removal of our afflictions, and the pardon of them is the foundation and sweetness of our deliverances.

III. They pray that God would work deliverance for them, and bring their troubles to a good end and that speedily: *Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us*, v. 8. They had no hopes but from God's mercies, his tender mercies; their case was so deplorable that they looked upon themselves as the proper objects of divine compassion, and so near to desperate that, unless divine mercy did speedily interpose to prevent their ruin, they were undone. This whets their importunity: "Lord, help us; Lord, deliver us; help us under our troubles; that we may bear them well; help us out of our troubles, that the spirit may not fail. Deliver us from sin, from sinking." Three things they plead.—1. The great distress they were reduced to: "*We are brought very low, and, being low, shall be lost if thou help us not.*" The lower we are brought the more need we have of help from heaven and the more will divine power be magnified in raising us up. 2. Their dependence upon him: "*Thou art the God of our salvation, who alone canst help. Salvation belongs to the Lord, from whom we expect help; for in the Lord alone is the salvation of his people.*" Those who make God the God of their salvation shall find him so. 3. The interest of his own honour in their case. They plead no merit of theirs; they pretend to none; but, "*Help us for the glory of thy name; pardon us for thy name's sake.*" The best encouragements in prayer are those that are taken from God only, and those things whereby he has made himself known. Two things are insinuated in this plea:—(1.) That God's name and honour would be greatly injured if he did not deliver them; for those that derided them blasphemed God, as if he were weak and could not help them, or had withdrawn and would not; therefore they

plead (v. 10), "*Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God? He has forsaken them, and forgotten them; and this they get by worshipping a God whom they cannot see.*" (*Nil præter nubes et cæli numen adorant.* Juv. — *They adore no other divinity than the clouds and the sky.*) That which was their praise (that they served a God that is every where) was now turned to their reproach and his ton, as if they served a God that is nowhere. "Lord," say they, "make it to appear that thou art by making it to appear that thou art with us and for us, that when we are asked, *Where is your God?* we may be able to say, *He is nigh unto us in all that which we call upon him for, and you see he is so by what he does for us.*" (2.) That God's name and honour would be greatly advanced if he did deliver them, his mercy would be glorified in delivering those that were so miserable and helpless. By making bare his everlasting arm on their behalf he would make unto himself an everlasting name; and their deliverance would be a type and figure of the great salvation, which in the fulness of time Messiah the Prince would work out, to the glory of God's name.

IV. They pray that God would avenge them on their adversaries, 1. For their cruelty and barbarity (v. 10): "*Let the avenging of our blood*" (according to the ancient law, Gen. ix. 6) "*be known among the heathen; let them be made sensible that what judgments are brought upon them are punishments of the wrong they have done to us; let this be in our sight, and by this means let God be known among the heathen as the God to whom vengeance belongs*" (xciv. 1) and the God that espouses his people's cause." Those that have intoxicated themselves with the blood of the saints shall have blood given them to drink, for they are worthy. 2. For their insolence and scorn (v. 12): "*Render to them their reproach.*" The indignities which by word and deed they have done to the people of God himself and his name let them be repaid to them with interest." The reproach wherewith men have reproached us only we must leave it to God whether he will render to them or no, and must pray that he would forgive them; but the reproach wherewith they have blasphemed God himself we may in faith pray that God would render seven-fold into their bosoms, so as to strike at their hearts, to humble them, and bring them to repentance. This prayer is a prophecy, of the same import with that of Enoch, that God will convince sinners of all their hard speeches which they have spoken against him (Jude 15) and will return them into their own bosoms by everlasting terrors at the remembrance of them.

V. They pray that God would find out a way for the rescue of his poor prisoners, especially the condemned prisoners, v. 11. The case of their brethren who had fallen into the hands of the enemy was very sad; they were kept close prisoners, and, because they

durst not be heard to bemoan themselves, they vented their griefs in deep and silent sighs. All their breathing was sighing, and so was their praying. They were appointed to die, as sheep for the slaughter, and had received the sentence of death within themselves. This deplorable case the psalmist recommends, 1. To the divine pity: "*Let their sighs come up before thee, and be thou pleased to take cognizance of their moans.*" 2. To the divine power: "*According to the greatness of thy arm, which no creature can contest with, preserve thou those that are appointed to die from the death to which they are appointed.*" Man's extremity is God's opportunity to appear for his people. See 2 Cor. i. 8—10.

Lastly, They promise the returns of praise for the answers of prayer (v. 13): *So we will give thee thanks for ever.* Observe, 1. How they please themselves with their relation to God. "Though we are oppressed and brought low, yet we are the sheep of thy pasture, not disowned and cast off by thee for all this: *We are thine; save us.*" 2. How they promise themselves an opportunity of praising God for their deliverance, which they *therefore* desired, and would bid welcome, because it would furnish them with matter for thanksgiving and put their hearts in tune for that excellent work, the work of heaven. 3. How they oblige themselves not only to give God thanks at present, but to *show forth his praise unto all generations*, that is, to do all they could both to perpetuate the remembrance of God's favours to them and to engage their posterity to keep up the work of praise. 4. How they plead this with God: "Lord, appear for us against our enemies; for, if they get the better, they will *blaspheme thee* (v. 12); but, if we be delivered, we will praise thee. Lord, we are that people of thine which thou hast *formed for thyself, to show forth thy praise*; if we be cut off, whence shall that rent, that tribute, be raised?" Note, Those lives that are entirely devoted to God's praise are assuredly taken under his protection.

PSALM LXXX.

This psalm is much to the same purport with the foregoing. Some think it was penned upon occasion of the desolation and captivity of the ten tribes, as the foregoing psalm of the two. But many were the distresses of the Israel of God, many perhaps which are not recorded in the sacred history, some whereof might give occasion for the drawing up of this psalm, which is proper to be sung in the day of Jacob's trouble, and, if, in singing it, we express a true love to the church and a hearty concern for its interest, with a firm confidence in God's power to help it out of its greatest distresses, we make melody with our hearts to the Lord. The psalmist here, I. Begs for the tokens of God's presence with them and favour to them, ver. 1—3. II. He complains of the present rebukes they were under, ver. 4—7. III. He illustrates the present desolations of the church, by the comparison of a vine and a vineyard, which had flourished, but was now destroyed, ver. 8—16. IV. He concludes with prayer to God for the preparing of mercy for them and the preparing of them for mercy, ver. 17—19. This, as many psalms before and after, relates to the public interests of God's Israel, which ought to lie nearer to our hearts than any secular interest of our own.

To the chief musician upon Shoshannim,
Eduth. A psalm of Asaph.

GIVE ear, O Shepherd of Israel,
thou that leadest Joseph like

a flock; thou that dwellest *between* the cherubims, shine forth. 2 Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come *and* save us. 3 Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved. 4 O LORD God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people? 5 Thou feedest them with the bread of tears; and givest them tears to drink in great measure. 6 Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours: and our enemies laugh among themselves. 7 Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

The psalmist here, in the name of the church, applies to God by prayer, with reference to the present afflicted state of Israel.

I. He entreats God's favour for them (v. 1, 2); that is all in all to the sanctuary when it is desolate, and is to be sought in the first place. Observe, 1. How he eyes God in his address as the Shepherd of Israel, whom he had called the *sheep of his pasture* (lxxix. 13), under whose guidance and care Israel was, as the sheep are under the care and conduct of the shepherd. Christ is the great and good Shepherd, to whom we may in faith commit the custody of his sheep that were given to him. He *leads Joseph like a flock*, to the best pastures, and out of the way of danger; if Joseph follow him not as obsequiously as the sheep do the shepherd, it is his own fault. He *dwells between the cherubim*, where he is ready to receive petitions and to give directions. The mercy-seat was between the cherubim; and it is very comfortable in prayer to look up to God as sitting on a throne of grace, and that it is so to us is owing to the great propitiation, for the mercy-seat was the propitiatory. 2. What he expects and desires from God, that he would give ear to the cry of their miseries and of their prayers, that he would shine forth both in his own glory and in favour and kindness to his people, that he would show himself and smile on them, that he would *stir up his strength*, that he would excite it and exert it. It had seemed to slumber: "Lord, awaken it." His cause met with great opposition and the enemies threatened to overpower it: "Lord, put forth thy strength so much the more, and come for salvation to us; be to thy people a powerful help and a present help; Lord, do this *before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh*," that is, "in the sight of all the tribes of Israel; let them see it to their satisfaction." Perhaps these three tribes are named because they were the tribes which formed that squadron of the camp of Israel that in their march through the wilderness followed next after

the tabernacle; so that before them the ark of God's strength rose to scatter their enemies.

II. He complains of God's displeasure against them. God was angry, and he dreads that more than any thing, *v. 4.* 1. It was great anger. He apprehended that God was *angry against the prayer of his people*, not only that he was angry notwithstanding their prayers, by which they hoped to turn away his wrath from them, but that he was angry with their prayers, though they were his own people that prayed. That God should be angry at the sins of his people and at the prayers of his enemies is not strange; but that he should be angry at the prayers of his people is strange indeed. He not only delayed to answer them (that he often does in love), but he was displeased at them. If he be really angry at the prayers of his people, we may be sure it is because they ask amiss, *Jam. iv. 3.* They pray, but they do not wrestle in prayer; their ends are not right, or there is some secret sin harboured and indulged in them; they do not lift up pure hands, or they lift them up with wrath and doubting. But perhaps it is only in their own apprehension; he seems angry with their prayers when really he is not; for thus he will try their patience and perseverance in prayer, as Christ tried the woman of Canaan when he said, *It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs.* 2. It was anger that had continued a great while: "*How long wilt thou be angry?*" We have still continued praying and yet are still under thy frowns." Now the tokens of God's displeasure which they had been long under were both their sorrow and shame. (1.) Their sorrow (*v. 5*): *Thou feedest them with the bread of tears*; they eat their meat from day to day in tears; this is the vinegar in which they *dipped their morsel*, *xlii. 3.* They had tears given them to drink, not now and then a taste of that bitter cup, but in great measure. Note, There are many that spend their time in sorrow who yet shall spend their eternity in joy. (2.) It was their shame, *v. 6.* God, by frowning upon them, made them a strife unto their neighbours; each strove which should expose them most, and such a cheap and easy prey were they made to them that all the strife was who should have the stripping and plundering of them. Their enemies laughed among themselves to see the frights they were in, the straits they were reduced to, and the disappointments they met with. When God is displeased with his people we must expect to see them in tears and their enemies in triumph.

III. He prays earnestly for converting grace in order to their acceptance with God, and their salvation: *Turn us again, O God!* *v. 3.* *Turn us again, O God of hosts!* (*v. 7*) and then *cause thy face to shine and we shall be saved.* It is the burden of the song, for we have it again, *v. 19.* They are conscious

to themselves that they have gone astray from God and their duty, and have turned aside into sinful ways, and that it was this that provoked God to hide his face from them and to give them up into the hand of their enemies; and therefore they desire to begin their work at the right end; "Lord, turn us to thee in a way of repentance and reformation, and then, no doubt, thou wilt return to us in a way of mercy and deliverance." Observe, 1. No salvation but from God's favour: "*Cause thy face to shine*, let us have thy love and the light of thy countenance, and then we shall be saved." 2. No obtaining favour with God unless we be converted to him. We must turn again to God from the world and the flesh, and then he will cause his face to shine upon us. 3. No conversion to God but by his own grace; we must frame our doings to turn to him (*Hos. v. 4*) and then pray earnestly for his grace, *Turn thou me, and I shall be turned*, pleading that gracious promise (*Prov. i. 23*), *Turn you at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you.* The prayer here is for a national conversion; in this method we must pray for national mercies, that what is amiss may be amended, and then our grievances would be soon redressed. National holiness would secure national happiness.

8 Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. 9 Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. 10 The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof *were like* the goodly cedars. 11 She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river. 12 Why hast thou *then* broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? 13 The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it. 14 Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; 15 And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch *that* thou madest strong for thyself. 16 *It is* burned with fire, *it is* cut down: they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance. 17 Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man *whom* thou madest strong for thyself. 18 So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name. 19 Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause

thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

The psalmist is here presenting his suit for the Israel of God, and pressing it home at the throne of grace, pleading with God for mercy and grace for them. The church is here represented as a vine (v. 8, 14) and a vineyard, v. 15. The root of this vine is Christ, Rom. xi. 18. The branches are believers, John xv. 5. The church is like a vine, weak and needing support, unsightly and having an unpromising outside, but spreading and fruitful, and its fruit most excellent. The church is a choice and noble vine; we have reason to acknowledge the goodness of God that he has planted such a vine in the wilderness of this world, and preserved it to this day. Now observe here,

I. How the vine of the Old-Testament church was planted at first. It was *brought out of Egypt* with a high hand; *the heathen were cast out of Canaan* to make room for it, seven nations to make room for that one. *Thou didst sweep before it* (so some read v. 9), to make clear work; the nations were swept away as dirt with the besom of destruction. God, having made room for it, and planted it, caused it to take deep root by a happy establishment of their government both in church and state, which was so firm that, though their neighbours about them often attempted it, they could not prevail to pluck it up.

II. How it spread and flourished. 1. The land of Canaan itself was fully peopled. At first they were not so numerous as to replenish it, Exod. xxiii. 29. But in Solomon's time *Judah and Israel were many as the sand of the sea*; the land was filled with them, and yet such a fruitful land that it was not over-stocked, v. 10. The hills of Canaan were covered with their shadow, and the branches, though they extended themselves far, like those of the vine, yet were not weak like them, but as strong as those of the goodly cedars. Israel not only had abundance of men, but those mighty men of valour. 2. They extended their conquests and dominion to the neighbouring countries (v. 11): *She sent out her boughs to the sea*, the great sea westward, and *her branches to the river*, to the river of Egypt southward, the river of Damascus northward, or rather the river Euphrates eastward, Gen. xv. 18. Nebuchadnezzar's greatness is represented by a flourishing tree, Dan. iv. 20, 21. But it is observable here concerning this vine that it is praised for its *shadow*, its *boughs*, and its *branches*, but not a word of its fruit, for *Israel was an empty vine*, Hos. x. 1. God came looking for grapes, but, behold, wild grapes, Isa. v. 2. And, if a vine do not bring forth fruit, no tree so useless, so worthless, Ezek. xv. 2, 6.

III. How it was wasted and ruined: "Lord, thou hast done great things for this vine, and why shall it be all undone again? If it were

a plant not of God's planting, it were not strange to see it rooted up; but will God desert and abandon that which he himself gave being to?" v. 12. *Why hast thou then broken down her hedges?* There was a good reason for this change in God's way towards them. This noble vine had become *the degenerate plant of a strange vine* (Jer. ii. 21), to the reproach of its great owner, and then no marvel if he *took away its hedge* (Isa. v. 5); yet God's former favours to this vine are urged as pleas in prayer to God, and improved as encouragements to faith, that, notwithstanding all this, God would not wholly cast them off. Observe, 1. The malice and enmity of the Gentile nations against Israel. As soon as ever God *broke down their hedges* and left them exposed troops of enemies presently broke in upon them, that waited for an opportunity to destroy them. Those that passed by the way plucked at them; the *boar out of the wood* and the *wild beast of the field* were ready to ravage it, v. 13. But, 2. See also the restraint which these cruel enemies were under; for till God had *broken down their hedges* they could not pluck a leaf of this vine. The devil could not hurt Job so long as God continued the *hedge round about him*, Job i. 10. See how much it is the interest of any people to keep themselves in the favour of God and then they need not fear any wild beast of the field, Job v. 23. If we provoke God to withdraw, *our defence has departed from us*, and we are undone. The deplorable state of Israel is described (v. 16): *It is burnt with fire; it is cut down*; the people are treated like thorns and briers, that are nigh unto cursing and whose end is to be burned, and no longer like vines that are protected and cherished. They perish not through the rage of the wild beast and the boar, but *at the rebuke of thy countenance*; that was it which they dreaded and to which they attributed all their calamities. It is well or ill with us according as we are under God's smiles or frowns.

IV. What their requests were to God hereupon. 1. That God would help the vine (v. 14, 15), that he would graciously take cognizance of its case and do for it as he thought fit: "*Return, we beseech thee, O Lord of hosts! for thou hast seemed to go away from us. Look down from heaven, to which thou hast retired,—from heaven, that place of prospect, whence thou seest all the wrongs that are done us, that place of power, whence thou canst send effectual relief,—from heaven, where thou hast prepared thy throne of judgment, to which we appeal, and where thou hast prepared a better country for those that are Israelites indeed,—thence give a gracious look, thence make a gracious visit, to this vine. Take our woeful condition into thy compassionate consideration, and for the particular fruits of thy pity we refer ourselves to thee. Only behold the vineyard, or rather the root, which thy right*

hand hath planted, and which therefore we hope thy right hand will protect, that branch which thou madest strong for thyself, to show forth thy praise (Isa. xliii. 21), that with the fruit of it thou mightest be honoured. Lord, it is formed by thyself and for thyself, and therefore it may with a humble confidence be committed to thyself and to thy own care." As for God, his work is perfect. What we read the *branch* in the Hebrew is the *son* (*Ben*), whom in thy counsel thou hast made strong for thyself. That branch was to come out of the stock of Israel (*my servant the branch*, Zech. iii. 8), and therefore, till he should come, Israel in general, and the house of David in particular, must be preserved, and upheld, and kept in being. *He is the true vine*, John xv. 1; Isa. xi. 1. *Destroy it not for that blessing is in it*, Isa. lxxv. 8. 2. That he would help the vine-dresser (v. 17, 18): "*Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand,*" that king (whoever it was) of the house of David that was now to go in and out before them; "let thy hand be upon him, not only to protect and cover him, but to own him, and strengthen him, and give him success." We have this phrase, Ezra vii. 28, *And I was strengthened as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me*. Their king is called the *man of God's right hand* as he was the representative of their state, which was dear to God, as his Benjamin, the *son of his right hand*, as he was president in their affairs and an instrument in God's right hand of much good to them, defending them from themselves and from their enemies and directing them in the right way, and as he was under-shepherd under him who was the great shepherd of Israel. Princes, who have power, must remember that they are *sons of men*, of Adam (so the word is), that, if they are strong, it is God that has made them strong, and he has made them so for himself, for they are his ministers to serve the interests of his kingdom among men, and, if they do this in sincerity, *his hand shall be upon them*; and we should pray in faith that it may be so, adding this promise, that, if God will adhere to our governors, we will adhere to him: *So will not we go back from thee*; we will never desert a cause which we see that God espouses and is the patron of. Let God be our leader and we will follow him. Adding also this prayer, "*Quicken us*, put life into us, revive our dying interests, revive our drooping spirits, and then *we will call upon thy name*. We will continue to do so upon all occasions, having found it not in vain to do so." We cannot call upon God's name in a right manner unless he quicken us; but it is he that puts life into our souls, that puts liveliness into our prayers. But many interpreters, both Jewish and Christian, apply this to the Messiah, the Son of David, the protector and Saviour of the church and the keeper of the vineyard. (1.) He is the man of God's right hand, to whom he has

sworn by his right hand (so the Chaldee), whom he has exalted to his right hand, and who is indeed his right hand, the arm of the Lord, for all power is given to him. (2.) He is that son of man whom he made strong for himself, for the glorifying of his name and the advancing of the interests of his kingdom among men. (3.) God's hand is upon him throughout his whole undertaking, to bear him out and carry him on, to protect and animate him, that the *good pleasure of the Lord might prosper in his hand*. (4.) The stability and constancy of believers are entirely owing to the grace and strength which are laid up for us in Jesus Christ, lxxviii. 28. In him is our strength found, by which we are enabled to persevere to the end. Let thy hand be upon him; on him let our help be laid who is mighty; let him be made able to save to the uttermost and that will be our security; *so will not we go back from thee*.

Lastly, The psalm concludes with the same petition that had been put up twice before, and yet it is no vain repetition (v. 19): *Turn us again*. The title given to God rises, v. 3, *O God! v. 7, O God of hosts! v. 19, O Lord (Jehovah) God of hosts!* When we come to God for his grace, his good-will towards us and his good work in us, we should pray earnestly, continue instant in prayer, and pray more earnestly.

PSALM LXXXI.

This psalm was penned, as is supposed, not upon occasion of any particular providence, but for the solemnity of a particular ordinance, either that of the new-moon in general or that of the feast of trumpets on the new moon of the seventh month, Lev. xxiii. 24; Num. xxix. 1. When David, by the Spirit, introduced the singing of psalms into the temple-service this psalm was intended for that day, to excite and assist the proper devotions of it. All the psalms are profitable; but, if one psalm be more suitable than another to the day and the circumstances of it, we should choose that. The two great intentions of our religious assemblies, and which we ought to have in our eye in our attendance on them, are answered in this psalm, which are, to give glory to God and to receive instruction from God, so "to behold the beauty of the Lord and to enquire in his temple;" accordingly by this psalm we are assisted on our solemn feast-days, I. In praising God for what he is to his people (ver. 1-8), and has done for them, ver. 4-7. II. In teaching and admonishing one another concerning the obligations we lie under to God (ver. 8-10), the danger of revolting from him (ver. 11, 12), and the happiness we should have if we would but keep close to him, ver. 13-16. This, though spoken primarily of Israel of old, is written for our learning, and is therefore to be sung with application.

To the chief musician upon Gittith. A psalm of Asaph.

SING aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. 2 Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery. 3 Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day. 4 For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob. 5 This he ordained in Joseph for a testimony, when he went out through the land of Egypt: where I heard a language that I understood not. 6 I removed his shoulder from the burden: his hands were delivered from the pots. 7 Thou

calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee; I answered thee in the secret place of thunder: I proved thee at the waters of Meribah. Selah.

When the people of God were gathered together in the solemn day, the day of the feast of the Lord, they must be told that they had business to do, for we do not go to church to sleep nor to be idle; no, there is that which the duty of every day requires, work of the day, which is to be done in its day. And here,

I. The worshippers of God are excited to their work, and are taught, by singing this psalm, to stir up both themselves and one another to it, v. 1—3. Our errand is, to give unto God the glory due unto his name, and in all our religious assemblies we must mind this as our business. 1. In doing this we must eye God as *our strength*, and as *the God of Jacob*, v. 1. He is the strength of Israel, as a people; for he is a God in covenant with them, who will powerfully protect, support, and deliver them, who fights their battles and makes them do valiantly and victoriously. He is the strength of every Israelite; by his grace we are enabled to go through all our services, sufferings, and conflicts; and to him, as our strength, we must pray, and we must sing praise to him as the God of all the wrestling seed of Jacob, with whom we have a spiritual communion. 2. We must do this by all the expressions of holy joy and triumph. It was then to be done by musical instruments, the *timbrel*, *harp*, and *psaltery*; and by blowing the *trumpet*, some think in remembrance of the sound of the trumpet on Mount Sinai, which waxed louder and louder. It was then and is now to be done by singing psalms, singing *aloud*, and making a *joyful noise*. The pleasantness of the harp and the awfulness of the trumpet intimate to us that God is to be worshipped with cheerfulness and holy joy, with reverence and godly fear. Singing aloud and making a noise intimate that we must be warm and affectionate in praising God, that we must with a hearty good-will show forth his praise, as those that are not ashamed to own our dependence on him and obligations to him, and that we should join many together in this work; the more the better; it is the more like heaven. 3. This must be done in the time appointed. No time is amiss for praising God (*Seven times a day will I praise thee; nay, at midnight will I rise and give thanks unto thee*); but some are times appointed, not for God to meet us (he is always ready), but for us to meet one another, that we may join together in praising God. The solemn feast-day must be a day of praise; when we are receiving the gifts of God's bounty, and rejoicing in them, then it is proper to sing his praises.

II. They are here directed in their work.

1. They must look up to the divine institu-

tion which it is the observation of. In all religious worship we must have an eye to the command (v. 4): *This was a statute for Israel, for the keeping up of a face of religion among them; it was a law of the God of Jacob*, which all the seed of Jacob are bound by, and must be subject to. Note, Praising God is not only a good thing, which we do well to do, but it is our indispensable duty, which we are obliged to do; it is at our peril if we neglect it; and in all religious exercises we must have an eye to the institution as our warrant and rule: "This I do because God has commanded me; and therefore I hope he will accept me;" then it is done in faith. 2. They must look back upon those operations of divine Providence which it is the memorial of. This solemn service was *ordained for a testimony* (v. 5), a standing traditional evidence, for the attesting of the matters of fact. It was a testimony to Israel, that they might know and remember what God had done for their fathers, and would be a testimony against them if they should be ignorant of them and forget them. (1.) The psalmist, in the people's name, puts himself in mind of the general work of God on Israel's behalf, which was kept in remembrance by this and other solemnities, v. 5. When God went out against the land of Egypt, to lay it waste, that he might force Pharaoh to let Israel go, then he ordained solemn feast-days to be observed by a statute for ever in their generations, as a memorial of it, particularly the passover, which perhaps is meant by the *solemn feast-day* (v. 3); that was appointed just then when God went out through the land of Egypt to destroy the first-born, and passed over the houses of the Israelites, *Exod. xii. 23, 24*. By it that work of wonder was to be kept in perpetual remembrance, that all ages might in it behold the goodness and severity of God. The psalmist, speaking for his people, takes notice of this aggravating circumstance of their slavery, in Egypt that there they heard a language that they understood not; there they were strangers in a strange land. The Egyptians and the Hebrews understood not one another's language; for Joseph spoke to his brethren by an interpreter (*Gen. xlii. 23*), and the Egyptians are said to be to the house of Jacob *a people of a strange language*, *cxiv. 1*. To make a deliverance appear the more gracious, the more glorious, it is good to observe every thing that makes the trouble we are delivered from appear the more grievous. (2.) The psalmist, in God's name, puts the people in mind of some of the particulars of their deliverance. Here he changes the person, v. 6. God speaks by him, saying, *I removed the shoulder from the burden*. Let him remember this on the feast-day, [1.] That God had brought them out of the house of bondage, had removed their shoulder from the burden of oppression under which they were ready to sink, *had delivered their hands*

from the pots, or panniers, or baskets, in which they carried clay or bricks. Deliverance out of slavery is a very sensible mercy and one which ought to be had in everlasting remembrance. But this was not all. [2.] God had delivered them at the Red Sea; then they called in trouble, and he rescued them and disappointed the designs of their enemies against them, Exod. xiv. 10. Then he answered them with a real answer, out of the secret place of thunder; that is, out of the pillar of fire, through which God looked upon the host of the Egyptians and troubled it, Exod. xiv. 24, 25. Or it may be meant of the giving of the law at Mount Sinai, which was the secret place, for it was death to gaze (Exod. xix. 21), and it was in thunder that God then spoke. Even the terrors of Sinai were favours to Israel, Deut. iv. 33. [3.] God had borne their manners in the wilderness: "*I proved thee at the waters of Meribah; thou didst there show thy temper, what an unbelieving murmuring people thou wast, and yet I continued my favour to thee.*" *Selah*—Mark that; compare God's goodness and man's badness, and they will serve as foils to each other. Now if they, on their solemn feast-days, were thus to call to mind their redemption out of Egypt, much more ought we, on the Christian sabbath, to call to mind a more glorious redemption wrought out for us by Jesus Christ from worse than Egyptian bondage, and the many gracious answers he has given to us, notwithstanding our manifold provocations.

8 Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me; 9 There shall no strange god be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god. 10 I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it. 11 But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. 12 So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels. 13 Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! 14 I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. 15 The haters of the LORD should have submitted themselves unto him: but their time should have endured for ever. 16 He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.

God, by the psalmist, here speaks to Israel,

and in them to us, on whom the ends of the world are come.

I. He demands their diligent and serious attention to what he was about to say (v. 8): "*Hear, O my people! and who should hear me if my people will not? I have heard and answered thee; now wilt thou hear me? Hear what is said with the greatest solemnity and the most unquestionable certainty, for it is what I will testify unto thee. Do not only give me the hearing, but hearken unto me, that is, be advised by me, be ruled by me.*" Nothing could be more reasonably nor more justly expected, and yet God puts an if upon it: "*If thou wilt hearken unto me. It is thy interest to do so, and yet it is questionable whether thou wilt or no; for thy neck is an iron sinew.*"

II. He puts them in mind of their obligation to him as the Lord their God and Redeemer (v. 10): "*I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt;*" this is the preface to the ten commandments, and a powerful reason for the keeping of them, showing that we are bound to it in duty, interest, and gratitude, all which bonds we break asunder if we be disobedient.

III. He gives them an abstract both of the precepts and of the promises which he gave them, as the Lord and their God, upon their coming out of Egypt. 1. The great command was that they should have no other gods before him (v. 9): "*There shall no strange god be in thee, none besides thy own God. Other gods might well be called strange gods, for it was very strange that ever any people who had the true and living God for their God should hanker after any other. God is jealous in this matter, for he will not suffer his glory to be given to another; and therefore in this matter they must be circumspect,* Exod. xxiii. 13. 2. The great promise was that God himself, as a God all-sufficient, would be nigh unto them in all that which they called upon him for (Deut. iv. 7), that, if they would adhere to him as their powerful protector and ruler, they should always find him their bountiful benefactor: "*Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it,* as the young ravens that cry open their mouths wide and the old ones fill them." See here, (1.) What is our duty—to raise our expectations from God and enlarge our desires towards him. We cannot look for too little from the creature nor too much from the Creator. We are not straitened in him; why therefore should we be straitened in our own bosoms? (2.) What is God's promise. I will fill thy mouth with good things, ciii. 5. There is enough in God to fill our treasures (Prov. viii. 21), to replenish every hungry soul (Jer. xxxi. 25), to supply all our wants, to answer all our desires, and to make us completely happy. The pleasures of sense will surfeit and never satisfy (Isa. lv. 2); divine pleasures will satisfy and never surfeit. And we may have enough from God if we pray for it in faith. *Ask, and it shall be given you. He gives liberally, and upbraids not.* God

assured his people Israel that it would be their own fault if he did not do as great and kind things for them as he had done for their fathers. Nothing should be thought too good, too much, to give them, if they would but keep close to God. He would moreover have given them such and such things, 2 Sam. xii. 8.

IV. He charges them with a high contempt of his authority as their lawgiver and his grace and favour as their benefactor, v. 11. He had done much for them, and designed to do more; but all in vain: "*My people would not hearken to my voice, but turned a deaf ear to all I said.*" Two things he complains of:—1. Their disobedience to his commands. They did hear his voice, so as never any people did; but they would not hearken to it, they would not be ruled by it, neither by the law nor by the reason of it. 2. Their dislike of his covenant-relation to them: *They would none of me. They acquiesced not in my word* (so the Chaldee); God was willing to be to them a God, but they were not willing to be to him a people; they did not like his terms. "I would have gathered them, but they would not." They had none of him; and why had they not? It was not because they might not; they were fairly invited into covenant with God. It was not because they could not; for the word was nigh them, even in their mouth and in their heart. But it was purely because they would not. God calls them his people, for they were bought by him, bound to him, his by a thousand ties, and yet even they had not hearkened, had not obeyed. "Israel, the seed of Jacob my friend, set me at nought, and would have none of me." Note, All the wickedness of the wicked world is owing to the wilfulness of the wicked will. The reason why people are not religious is because they will not be so.

V. He justifies himself with this in the spiritual judgments he had brought upon them (v. 12): *So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts*, which would be more dangerous enemies and more mischievous oppressors to them than any of the neighbouring nations ever were. God withdrew his Spirit from them, took off the bridle of restraining grace, left them to themselves, and justly; they will do as they will, and therefore let them do as they will. *Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone.* It is a righteous thing with God to give those up to their own hearts' lusts that indulge them, and give up themselves to be led by them; for why should his Spirit always strive? His grace is his own, and he is debtor to no man, and yet, as he never gave his grace to any that could say they deserved it, so he never took it away from any but such as had first forfeited it: *They would none of me, so I gave them up; let them take their course.* And see what follows: *They walked in their own counsels*, in the way of their heart and in the sight of their eye, both in their worships and in their conversations. "I left them to do as they would,

and then they did all that was ill;" they walked in their own counsels, and not according to the counsels of God and his advice. God therefore was not the author of their sin; he left them to the lusts of their own hearts and the counsels of their own heads; if they do not well, the blame must lie upon their own hearts and the blood upon their own heads.

VI. He testifies his good-will to them in wishing they had done well for themselves. He saw how sad their case was, and how sure their ruin, when they were delivered up to their own lusts; that is worse than being given up to Satan, which may be in order to reformation (1 Tim. i. 20) and to salvation (1 Cor. v. 5); but to be delivered up to their own hearts' lusts is to be sealed under condemnation. *He that is filthy, let him be filthy still.* What fatal precipices will not these hurry a man to! Now here God looks upon them with pity, and shows that it was with reluctance that he thus abandoned them to their folly and fate. *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?* Hos. xi. 8, 9. So here, *O that my people had hearkened!* See Isa. xlvi. 18. Thus Christ lamented the obstinacy of Jerusalem. *If thou hadst known*, Luke xix. 42. The expressions here are very affecting (v. 13—16), designed to show how unwilling God is that any should perish and desirous that all should come to repentance (he delights not in the ruin of sinful persons or nations), and also what enemies sinners are to themselves and what an aggravation it will be of their misery that they might have been happy upon such easy terms. Observe here,

1. The great mercy God had in store for his people, and which he would have wrought for them if they had been obedient. (1.) He would have given them victory over their enemies and would soon have completed the reduction of them. They should not only have kept their ground, but have gained their point, against the remaining Canaanites, and their encroaching vexatious neighbours (v. 14): *I should have subdued their enemies*; and it is God only that is to be depended on for the subduing of our enemies. Nor would he have put them to the expense and fatigue of a tedious war: he would soon have done it; for he would have turned his hand against their adversaries, and then they would not have been able to stand before them. It intimates how easily he would have done it and without any difficulty. With the turn of a hand, nay, with the breath of his mouth, shall he slay the wicked, Isa. xi. 4. If he but turn his hand, the haters of the Lord will submit themselves to him (v. 15); and, though they are not brought to love him, yet they shall be made to fear him and to confess that he is too hard for them and that it is in vain to contend with him. God is honoured, and so is Israel, by the submission of those that have been in rebellion against them, though it be but a forced and feigned submission. (2.)

He would have confirmed and perpetuated their posterity, and established it upon sure and lasting foundations. In spite of all the attempts of their enemies against them, *their time should have endured for ever*, and they should never have been disturbed in the possession of the good land God had given them, much less evicted and turned out of possession. (3.) He would have given them great plenty of all good things (v. 16): *He should have fed them with the finest of the wheat*, with the best grain and the best of the kind. Wheat was the staple commodity of Canaan, and they exported a great deal of it, Ezek. xxvii. 17. He would not only have provided for them the best sort of bread, but *with honey out of the rock would he have satisfied them*. Besides the precious products of the fruitful soil, that there might not be a barren spot in all their land, even the clefts of the rock should serve for bee-hives and in them they should find honey in abundance. See Deut. xxxii. 13, 14. In short, God designed to make them every way easy and happy.

2. The duty God required from them as the condition of all this mercy. He expected no more than that they should *hearken to him*, as a scholar to his teacher, to receive his instructions—as a servant to his master, to receive his commands; and that they should *walk in his ways*, those ways of the Lord which are right and pleasant, that they should observe the institutions of his ordinances and attend the intimations of his providence. There was nothing unreasonable in this.

3. Observe how the reason of the withholding of the mercy is laid in their neglect of the duty: If they had *hearkened to me*, *I would soon have subdued their enemies*. National sin or disobedience is the great and only thing that retards and obstructs national deliverance. *When I would have healed Israel*, and set every thing to-rights among them, then *the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered*, and so a stop was put to the cure, Hos. vii. 1. We are apt to say, "If such a method had been taken, such an instrument employed, we should soon have subdued our enemies;" but we mistake; if we had hearkened to God, and kept to our duty, the thing would have been done, but it is sin that makes our troubles long and salvation slow. And this is that which God himself complains of, and wishes it had been otherwise. Note, *Therefore God would have us do our duty to him*, that we may be qualified to receive favour from him. He delights in our serving him, not because he is the better for it, but because we shall be.

PSALM LXXXII.

This psalm is calculated for the meridian of princes' courts and courts of justice, not in Israel only, but in other nations; yet it was probably penned primarily for the use of the magistrates of Israel, the great Sanhedrim, and their other elders who were in places of power, and perhaps by David's direction. This psalm is designed to make kings wise, and "to instruct the judges of the earth" (as ii. and x.), to tell them their duty (as 2 Sam. xxiii. 3), and to tell them of their faults, as lviii. 1. We have here, I. The dignity of magistracy and its dependence upon God, ver. 1. II. The duty of magistrates, ver. 3, 4. III. The degeneracy of bad magistrates and the mischief they do, ver. 2,

5. IV. Their doom read, ver. 6, 7. V. The desire and prayer of all good people that the kingdom of God may be set up more and more, ver. 8. Though magistrates may most closely apply this psalm to themselves, yet we may any of us sing it with understanding when we give glory to God, in singing it, as presiding in all public affairs, providing for the protection of the innocent, and ready to punish the most powerful injustice; and when we comfort ourselves with the belief of his present government and with the hopes of his future judgment.

A psalm of Asaph.

GOD standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods. 2 How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Selah. 3 Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. 4 Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked. 5 They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course.

We have here,

I. God's supreme presidency and power in all councils and courts asserted and laid down, as a great truth necessary to be believed both by princes and subjects (v. 1): *God standeth as chief director, in the congregation of the mighty*, the mighty One, *in actu fortis—in the councils of the prince*, the supreme magistrate, and he judges among the gods, the inferior magistrates; both the legislative and the executive power of princes under his eye and his hand. Observe here, 1. The power and honour of magistrates: they are the *mighty*. They are so in authority, for the public good (it is a great power that they are entrusted with), and they ought to be so in wisdom and courage. They are, in the Hebrew dialect, called *gods*; the same word is used for these subordinate governors that is used for the sovereign rulers of the world. They are *elohim*. Angels are so called both because they are great in power and might and because God is pleased to make use of their service in the government of this lower world; and magistrates in an inferior capacity are likewise the ministers of his providence in general, for the keeping up of order and peace in human societies, and particularly of his justice and goodness in punishing evil-doers and protecting those that do well. Good magistrates, who answer the ends of magistracy, are as God; some of his honour is put upon them; they are his vicegerents, and great blessings to any people. *A divine sentence is in the lips of the king*, Prov. xvi. 10. But, as *roaring lions and ranging bears*, so are *wicked rulers over the poor people*, Prov. xxviii. 15. 2. A good form and constitution of government intimated, and that is a mixed monarchy like ours; here is the mighty one, the sovereign, and here is his congregation, his privy-council, his parliament, his bench of judges, who are called the *gods*. 3. God's incontestable sovereignty maintained in and over all the congregations

of the mighty. *God stands, he judges among them*; they have their power from him and are accountable to him. *By him kings reign*. He is present at all their debates, and inspects all they say and do, and what is said and done amiss will be called over again, and they reckoned with for their mal-administrations. God has their hearts in his hands, and their tongues too, and he directs them *which way soever he will*, Prov. xxi. 1. So that he has a negative voice in all their resolves, and his counsels shall stand, whatever devices are in men's hearts. He makes what use he pleases of them, and serves his own purposes and designs by them, though their hearts little think so, Isa. x. 7. Let magistrates consider this and be awed by it; God is with them in the judgment, 2 Chron. xix. 6; Deut. i. 17. Let subjects consider this and be comforted with it; for good princes and good judges, who mean well, are under a divine direction, and bad ones, who mean ever so ill, are under a divine restraint.

II. A charge given to all magistrates to do good with their power, as they will answer it to him by whom they are entrusted with it, v. 3, 4. 1. They are to be the protectors of those who lie exposed to injury and the patrons of those who want advice and assistance: *Defend the poor*, who have no money wherewith to make friends or fee counsel, and the *fatherless*, who, while they are young and unable to help themselves, have lost those who would have been the guides of their youth. Magistrates, as they must be fathers to their country in general, so particularly to those in it who are fatherless. Are they called *gods*? Herein they must be followers of him, they must be *fathers of the fatherless*. Job was so, Job xxix. 12. 2. They are to administer justice impartially, and do *right to the afflicted and needy*, who, being weak and helpless, have often wrongs done them; and will be in danger of losing all if magistrates do not, *ex officio*—officially, interpose for their relief. If a poor man has an honest cause, his poverty must be no prejudice to his cause, how great and powerful soever those are that contend with him. 3. They are to rescue those who have already fallen into the hands of oppressors and deliver them (v. 4): *Rid them out of the hand of the wicked*. *Avenge them of their adversary*, Luke xviii. 3. These are clients whom there is nothing to be got by, no pay for serving them, no interest by obliging them; yet these are those whom judges and magistrates must concern themselves for, whose comfort they must consult and whose cause they must espouse.

III. A charge drawn up against bad magistrates, who neglect their duty and abuse their power, forgetting that God standeth among them, v. 2, 5. Observe, 1. What the sin is they are here charged with; they *judge unjustly*, contrary to the rules of equity and the dictates of their consciences, giving judgment against those who have right on their

side, out of malice and ill-will, or for those who have an unrighteous cause, out of favour and partial affection. To do unjustly is bad, but to judge unjustly is much worse, because it is doing wrong under colour of right; against such acts of injustice there is least fence for the injured and by them encouragement is given to the injurious. It was as great an evil as any Solomon saw under the sun when he observed the *place of judgment, that iniquity was there*, Eccl. iii. 16; Isa. v. 7. They not only accepted the persons of the rich because they were rich, though that is bad enough, but (which is much worse) they *accepted the persons of the wicked* because they were wicked; they not only countenanced them in their wickedness, but loved them the better for it, and fell in with their interests. Woe unto thee, O land! when thy judges are such as these. 2. What was the cause of this sin. They were told plainly enough that it was their office and duty to protect and deliver the poor; it was many a time given them in charge; yet they judge unjustly, *for they know not, neither will they understand*. They do not care to hear their duty; they will not take pains to study it; they have no desire to take things right, but are governed by interest, not by reason or justice. *A gift in secret blinds their eyes*. They know not because they will not understand. None so blind as those that will not see. They have baffled their own consciences, and so they walk on in darkness, not knowing nor caring what they do nor whither they go. Those that walk on in darkness are walking on to everlasting darkness. 3. What were the consequences of this sin: *All the foundations of the earth (or of the land) are out of course*. When justice is perverted what good can be expected? *The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved*, as the psalmist speaks in a like case, lxxv. 3. The miscarriages of public persons are public mischiefs.

6 I have said, *Ye are gods*; and all of you *are children of the most high*. 7 But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes. 8 Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations.

We have here,

I. Earthly gods abased and brought down, v. 6, 7. The dignity of their character is acknowledged (v. 6): *I have said, You are gods*. They have been honoured with the name and title of gods. God himself called them so in the statute against treasonable words Exod. xxii. 28, *Thou shalt not revile the gods*. And, if they have this style from the fountain of honour, who can dispute it? But what is man, that he should be thus magnified? He called them *gods* because *unto them the word of God came*, so our Saviour expounds it (John x. 35); they had a commission from

God, and were delegated and appointed by him to be the shields of the earth, the conservators of the public peace, and revengers to execute wrath upon those that disturb it, Rom. xiii. 4. All of them are in this sense *children of the Most High*. God has put some of his honour upon them, and employs them in his providential government of the world, as David made his sons chief rulers. Or, "Because *I said, You are gods*, you have carried the honour further than was intended and have imagined yourselves to be *the children of the Most High*," as the king of Babylon (Isa. xiv. 14), *I will be like the Most High*, and the king of Tyre (Ezek. xxviii. 2), *Thou hast set thy heart as the heart of God*. It is a hard thing for men to have so much honour put upon them by the hand of God, and so much honour paid them, as ought to be by the children of men, and not to be proud of it and puffed up with it, and so to think of themselves above what is meet. But here follows a mortifying consideration: *You shall die like men*. This may be taken either, 1. As the punishment of bad magistrates, such as judged unjustly, and by their misrule put the *foundations of the earth out of course*. God will reckon with them, and will cut them off in the midst of their pomp and prosperity; they shall die like other wicked men, *and fall like one of the heathen princes* (and their being Israelites shall not secure them any more than their being judges) or like one of the angels that sinned, or like one of the giants of the old world. Compare this with that which Elihu observed concerning the mighty oppressors in his time. Job xxxiv. 26, *He striketh them as wicked men in the open sight of others*. Let those that abuse their power know that God will take both it and their lives from them; for wherein they deal proudly he will *show himself above them*. Or, 2. As the period of the glory of all magistrates in this world. Let them not be puffed up with their honour nor neglect their work, but let the consideration of their mortality be both mortifying to their pride and quickening to their duty. "You are called gods, but you have no patent for immortality; *you shall die like men*, like common men; and like one of them, *you, O princes! shall fall*." Note, Kings and princes, all the judges of the earth, though they are gods to us, are men to God, and shall die like men, and all their honour shall be laid in the dust. *Mors sceptris ligonibus æquat—Death mingles sceptres with spades*.

II. The God of heaven exalted and raised high, v. 8. The psalmist finds it to little purpose to reason with these proud oppressors; they turned a deaf ear to all he said and walked on in darkness; and therefore he looks up to God, appeals to him, and begs of him to *take unto himself his great power*: *Arise, O God! judge the earth*; and, when he prays that he would do it, he believes that he will do it: *Thou shalt inherit all nations*.

This has respect, 1. To the kingdom of providence. God governs the world, sets up and puts down whom he pleases; he inherits all nations, has an absolute dominion over them, to dispose of them as a man does of his inheritance. This we are to believe and to comfort ourselves with, that the earth is not given so much *into the hands of the wicked*, the wicked rulers, as we are tempted to think it is, Job ix. 24. But God has reserved the power to himself and overrules them. In this faith we must pray, "*Arise, O God! judge the earth*, appear against those that judge unjustly, and set shepherds over thy people after thy own heart." There is a righteous God to whom we may have recourse, and on whom we may depend for the effectual relief of all that find themselves aggrieved by unjust judges. 2. To the kingdom of the Messiah. It is a prayer for the hastening of that, that Christ would come, who is to judge the earth, and that promise is pleaded, that God shall *give him the heaven for his inheritance*. Thou, O Christ! shalt *inherit all nations*, and be the governor over them, ii. 8; xxii. 28. Let the second coming of Christ set to-rights all these disorders. There are two words with which we may comfort ourselves and one another in reference to the mismanagements of power among men: one is Rev. xix. 6, *Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth*; the other is Rev. xxii. 20, *Surely I come quickly*.

PSALM LXXXIII.

This psalm is the last of those that go under the name of Asaph. It is penned, as most of those, upon a public account, with reference to the insults of the church's enemies, who sought its ruin. Some think it was penned upon occasion of the threatening descent which was made upon the land of Judah in Jehoshaphat's time by the Moabites and Ammonites, those children of Lot here spoken of (ver. 8), who were at the head of the alliance and to whom all the other states here mentioned were auxiliaries. We have the story 2 Chron. xx. 1, where it is said, The children of Moab and Ammon, and others besides them, invaded the land. Others think it was penned with reference to all the confederacies of the neighbouring nations against Israel, from first to last. The psalmist here makes an appeal and application, 1. To God's knowledge, by a representation of their designs and endeavours to destroy Israel, ver. 1—8. II. To God's justice and jealousy, both for his church and for his own honour, by an earnest prayer for the defeat of their attempts, that the church might be preserved, the enemies humbled, and God glorified, ver. 9—28. This, in the singing of it, we may apply to the enemies of the gospel-church, all anti-christian powers and factions, representing to God their confederacies against Christ and his kingdom, and rejoicing in the hope that all their projects will be baffled and the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church.

A song or psalm of Asaph.

KEEP not thou silence, O God: hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God. 2 For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate thee have lifted up the head. 3 They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones. 4 They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance. 5 For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against

thee: 6 The tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites; of Moab, and the Hagarenes; 7 Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre; 8 Assur also is joined with them: they have holpen the children of Lot. Selah.

The Israel of God were now in danger, and fear, and great distress, and yet their prayer is called, *A song or psalm*; for singing psalms is not unseasonable, no, not when the harps are hung upon the willow-trees.

1. The psalmist here, begs of God to appear on the behalf of his injured threatened people (v. 1): "*Keep not thou silence, O God! but give judgment for us against those that do us an apparent wrong.*" Thus Jehoshaphat prayed upon occasion of that invasion (2 Chron. xx. 11), *Behold, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession.* Sometimes God seems to connive at the unjust treatment which is given to his people; he keeps silence, as one that either did not observe it or did not concern himself in it; he holds his peace, as if he would observe an exact neutrality, and let them fight it out; he is still, and gives not the enemies of his people any disturbance or opposition, but seems to sit by as a man astonished, or as a mighty man that cannot save. Then he gives us leave to call upon him, as here, "*Keep not thou silence, O God! Lord, speak to us by the prophets for our encouragement against our fears*" (as he did in reference to that invasion, 2 Chron. xx. 14, &c.); "*Lord, speak for us by thy providence and speak against our enemies; speak deliverance to us and disappointment to them.*" God's speaking is his acting; for with him saying and doing are the same thing.

11. He here gives an account of the grand alliance of the neighbouring nations against Israel, which he begs of God to break, and blast the projects of. Now observe here,

1. Against whom this confederacy is formed; it is against the Israel of God, and so, in effect, against the God of Israel. Thus the psalmist takes care to interest God in their cause, not doubting but that, if it appeared that they were for God, God would make it appear that he was for them, and then they might set all their enemies at defiance; or who then could be against them? "Lord," says he, "they are thy enemies, and they hate thee." All wicked people are God's enemies (the carnal mind is enmity against God), but especially wicked persecutors; they hated the religious worshippers of God, because they hated God's holy religion and the worship of him. This was that which made God's people so zealous against them—that they fought against God: *They are confederate against thee, v. 5.* Were our interest only concerned, we could the better bear it; but, when God himself is struck at, it is time

to cry, Help, Lord. *Keep not thou silence O God!* He proves that they are confederate against God, for they are so against the people of God, who are near and dear to him, his son, his first-born, his portion, and the lot of his inheritance; he may truly be said to fight against me that endeavours to destroy my children, to root out my family, and to ruin my estate. "Lord," says the psalmist, "they are thy enemies, for they consult against thy hidden ones." Note, God's people are his hidden ones, hidden, (1.) In respect of secrecy. Their life is hid with Christ in God; the world knows them not; if they knew them, they would not hate them as they do: (2.) In respect of safety. God takes them under his special protection, hides them in the hollow of his hand; and yet, in defiance of God and his power and promise to secure his people, they will consult to ruin them and cast them down from their excellency (Ixii. 4), and to make a prey of those whom the Lord has set apart for himself, iv. 3. They resolve to destroy those whom God resolves to preserve.

2. How this confederacy is managed. The devil is at the bottom of it, and therefore it is carried on, (1.) With a great deal of heat and violence: *Thy enemies make a tumult, v. 2. The heathen rage, ii. 1. The nations are angry, Rev. xi. 18.* They are noisy in their clamours against the people whom they hope to run down with their loud calumnies. This comes in as a reason why God should not keep silence: "The enemies talk big and talk much; Lord, let them not talk all, but do thou speak to them in thy wrath," ii. 5. (2.) With a great deal of pride and insolence: *They have lifted up the head.* In confidence of their success, they are so elevated as if they could over-top the Most High and overpower the Almighty. (3.) With a great deal of art and policy: *They have taken crafty counsel, v. 3.* The subtlety of the old serpent appears in their management, and they contrive by all possible means, though ever so base, ever so bad, to gain their point. They are *profound to make slaughter* (Hos. v. 2), as if they could outwit Infinite Wisdom. (4.) With a great deal of unanimity. Whatever separate clashing interest they have among themselves, against the people of God they consult with one consent (v. 5), nor is Satan's kingdom divided against itself. To push on this unholy war, they lay their heads together, and their horns, and their hearts too. *Fas est et ab hoste doceri—Even an enemy may instruct.* Do the enemies of the church act with one consent to destroy it? Are the kings of the earth of one mind to give their power and honour to the beast? And shall not the church's friends be unanimous in serving her interests? If Herod and Pilate are made friends, that they may join in crucifying Christ, surely Paul and Barnabas, Paul and Peter, will soon be made friends, that they may join in preaching Christ.

3. What it is that is aimed at in this confederacy. They consult not like the Gibeonites to make a league with Israel, that they might strengthen themselves by such a desirable alliance, which would have been their wisdom. They consult, not only to clip the wings of Israel, to recover their new conquests, and check the progress of their victorious arms, not only to keep the balance even between them and Israel, and to prevent their power from growing exorbitant; this will not serve. It is no less than the utter ruin and extirpation of Israel that they design (v. 4): "*Come, let us cut them off from being a nation, as they cut off the seven nations of Canaan; let us leave them neither root nor branch, but lay their country so perfectly waste that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance, no, not in history;*" for with them they would destroy their Bibles and burn all their records. Such is the enmity of the serpent's seed against the seed of the woman. It is the secret wish of many wicked men that the church of God might not have a being in the world, that there might be no such thing as religion among mankind. Having banished the sense of it out of their own hearts, they would gladly see the whole earth as well rid of it, all its laws and ordinances abolished, all its restraints and obligations shaken off, and all that preach, profess, or practise it cut off. This they would bring it to if it were in their power; but *he that sits in heaven shall laugh at them.*

4. Who they are that are drawn into this confederacy. The nations that entered into this alliance are here mentioned (v. 6—8); the Edomites and Ishmaelites, both descendants from Abraham, lead the van; for apostates from the church have been its most bitter and spiteful enemies, witness Julian. These were allied to Israel in blood and yet in alliance against Israel. There are no bonds of nature so strong but the spirit of persecution has broken through them. *The brother shall betray the brother to death.* Moab and Ammon were the children of righteous Lot; but, as an incestuous, so a degenerate race. The Philistines were long a thorn in Israel's side, and very vexatious. How the inhabitants of Tyre, who in David's time were Israel's firm allies, come in among their enemies, I know not; but that *Assur* (that is, the Assyrian) *also is joined with them* is not strange, or that (as the word is) they were an arm to the children of Lot. See how numerous the enemies of God's church have always been. *Lord, how are those increased that trouble it!* God's heritage was as a speckled bird; all the birds round about were against her (Jer. xii. 9), which highly magnifies the power of God in preserving to himself a church in the world, in spite of the combined force of earth and hell.

9 Do unto them as unto the Mi-

dianites; as to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kison: 10 Which perished at En-dor: they became a dung for the earth. 11 Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb: yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna: 12 Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession. 13 O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind. 14 As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire; 15 So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm. 16 Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O LORD. 17 Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish: 18 That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth.

The psalmist here, in the name of the church, prays for the destruction of those confederate forces, and, in God's name, foretells it; for this prayer that it might be so amounts to a prophecy that it shall be so, and this prophecy reaches to all the enemies of the gospel-church; whoever they be that oppose the kingdom of Christ, here they may read their doom. The prayer is, in short, that these enemies, who were confederate against Israel, might be defeated in all their attempts, and that they might prove their own ruin, and so God's Israel might be preserved and perpetuated. Now this is here illustrated.

I. By some precedents. Let that be their punishment which has been the fate of others who have formerly set themselves against God's Israel. The defeat and discomfiture of former combinations may be pleaded in prayer to God and improved for the encouragement of our own faith and hope, because God is the same still that ever he was, the same to his people and the same against his and their enemies; with him is no variability. 1. He prays that their armies might be destroyed as the armies of former enemies had been (v. 9, 10): *Do to them as to the Midianites*; let them be routed by their own fears, for so the Midianites were, more than by Gideon's 300 men. *Do to them as to the army under the command of Sisera* (who was general under Jabin king of Canaan) which God discomfited (Judg. iv. 15) at the brook Kishon, near to which was Endor. *They became as dung on the earth*; their dead bodies were thrown like dung laid in heaps, or spread, to fatten the ground; they were trodden to dirt by Barak's small but victorious

army; and this was fitly made a precedent here, because Deborah made it so to after-times when it was fresh. Judg. v. 31, *So let all thy enemies perish, O Lord! that is, So they shall perish.* 2. He prays that their leaders might be destroyed as they had been formerly. The common people would not have been so mischievous if their princes had not set them on, and therefore they are particularly prayed against, v. 11, 12. Observe, (1.) What their malice was against the Israel of God. They said, *Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession* (v. 12), the *pleasant places of God* (so the word is), by which we may understand the land of Canaan, which was a pleasant land and was Immanuel's land, or the temple, which was indeed God's pleasant place (Isa. lxiv. 11), or (as Dr. Hammond suggests) the pleasant pastures, which these Arabians, who traded in cattle, did in a particular manner seek after. The princes and nobles aimed to enrich themselves by this war; and their armies must be made as dung for the earth, to serve their covetousness and their ambition. (2.) What their lot should be. They shall be made *like Oreb and Zeeb* (two princes of the Midianites, who, when their forces were routed, were taken in their flight by the Ephraimites and slain, Judg. vii. 25), and *like Zeba and Zalmunna*, whom Gideon himself slew, Judg. viii. 21. "Let these enemies of ours be made as easy a prey to us as they were to the conquerors then." We may not prescribe to God, but we may pray to God that he will deal with the enemies of his church in our days as he did with those in the days of our fathers.

II. He illustrates it by some similitudes, and prays, 1. That God would *make them like a wheel* (v. 13), that they might be in continual motion, unquiet, unsettled, and giddy in all their counsels and resolves, that they might roll down easily and speedily to their own ruin. Or, as some think, that they might be broken by the judgments of God, as the corn is broken, or beaten out, by the wheel which was then used in threshing. Thus, when a *wise king scatters the wicked*, he is said to *bring the wheel over them*, Prov. xx. 26. Those that trust in God have their hearts fixed; those that fight against him are unfixed, like a wheel. 2. That they might be chased as *stubble*, or chaff, *before the fierce wind*. "The wheel, though it continually turn round, is fixed on its own axis; but let them have no more fixation than the light stubble has, which the wind hurries away, and nobody desires to save it, but is willing it should go," Ps. i. 4. Thus shall *the wicked be driven away in his wickedness, and chased out of the world.* 3. That they might be consumed, as wood by the fire, or as briars and thorns, as fern or furze, upon the mountains, by the flames, v. 14. When the stubble is driven by the wind it will rest, at last, under some hedge, in some ditch or other; but he prays that they might not only be driven away as stubble, but burnt up

as stubble. And this will be the end of wicked men (Heb. vi. 8) and particularly of all the enemies of God's church. The application of these comparisons we have (v. 15): *So persecute them with thy tempest, persecute them to their utter ruin, and make them afraid with thy storm.* See how sinners are made miserable; the storm of God's wrath raises terrors in their own hearts, and so they are made completely miserable. God can deal with the proudest and most daring sinner that has bidden defiance to his justice, and can make him afraid as a grasshopper. It is the torment of devils that they tremble.

III. He illustrates it by the good consequences of their confusion, v. 16—18. He prays here that God, having filled their hearts with terror, would thereby fill their faces with shame, that they might be ashamed of their enmity to the people of God (Isa. xxvi. 11), ashamed of their folly in acting both against Omnipotence itself and their own true interest. They did what they could to put God's people to shame, but the shame will at length return upon themselves. Now, 1. The beginning of this shame might be a means of their conversion: "Let them be broken and baffled in their attempts, *that they may seek thy name, O Lord!* Let them be put to a stand, that they may have both leisure and reason to pause a little, and consider who it is that they are fighting against and what an unequal match they are for him, and may therefore humble and submit themselves and desire conditions of peace. Let them be made to fear thy name, and perhaps that will bring them to seek thy name." Note, That which we should earnestly desire and beg of God for our enemies and persecutors is that God would bring them to repentance, and we should desire their abasement in order to this, no other confusion to them than what may be a step towards their conversion. 2. If it did not prove a means of their conversion, the perfecting of it would redound greatly to the honour of God. If they will not be ashamed and repent, let them be put to shame and perish; if they will not be troubled and turned, which would soon put an end to all their trouble, a happy end, *let them be troubled for ever*, and never have peace: this will be for God's glory (v. 18), that other men may know and own, if they themselves will not, *that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH* (that incommunicable, though not ineffable name) *art the Most High over all the earth.* God's triumphs over his and his church's enemies will be incontestable proofs, (1.) That he is, according to his name JEHOVAH, a self-existent self-sufficient Being, that has all power and perfection in himself. (2.) That he is the most high God, sovereign Lord of all, above all gods, above all kings, above all that exalt themselves and pretend to be high. (3.) That he is so, not only over the land of Israel, but *over all the earth*, even those nations of the earth that do not know

him or own him; for his kingdom rules over all. These are great and unquestionable truths, but men will hardly be persuaded to know and believe them; therefore the psalmist prays that the destruction of some might be the conviction of others. The final ruin of all God's enemies, in the great day, will be the effectual proof of this, before angels and men, when the everlasting shame and contempt to which sinners shall rise (Dan. xii. 2) shall redound to the everlasting honour and praise of that God to whom vengeance belongs.

PSALM LXXXIV.

Though David's name be not in the title of this psalm, yet we have reason to think he was the psalmist of it, because it breathes so much of his excellent spirit and is so much like the sixty-third psalm which was penned by him; it is supposed that David penned this psalm when he was forced by Absalom's rebellion to quit his city, which he lamented his absence from, not so much because it was the royal city as because it was the holy city, witness this psalm, which contains the pious breathing of a gracious soul after God and communion with him. Though it be not entitled, yet it may fitly be looked upon as a psalm or song for the sabbath day, the day of our solemn assemblies. The psalmist here with great devotion expressed his affection, 1. To the ordinances of God; his value for them (ver. 1), his desire towards them (ver. 2, 3), his conviction of the happiness of those that did enjoy them (ver. 4-7), and he placing his own happiness so very much in the enjoyment of them, ver. 10. 11. To the God of the ordinances; his desire towards him (ver. 8, 9), his faith in him (ver. 11), and his conviction of the happiness of those that put their confidence in him, ver. 12. In singing this psalm we should have the same devout affections working towards God that David had, and then the singing of it will be very pleasant.

To the chief musician upon Gittith. A psalm for the sons of Korah.

HOW amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! 2 My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. 3 Yea, the sparrow hath found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God. 4 Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah. 5 Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them. 6 Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools. 7 They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.

The psalmist here, being by force restrained from waiting upon God in public ordinances, by the want of them is brought under a more sensible conviction than ever of the worth of them. Observe,

I. The wonderful beauty he saw in holy institutions (v. 1): *How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!* Some think that he here calls God the *Lord of hosts* (that is, in a special manner of the angels, the heavenly hosts) because of the presence of the angels in God's sanctuary; they attended the Shechinah, and were (as some think) signified by

the cherubim. God is the Lord of these hosts, and his tabernacle is: it is spoken of as more than one (*thy tabernacles*) because there were several courts in which the people attended, and because the tabernacle itself consisted of a holy place and a most holy. How amiable are these! How lovely is the sanctuary in the eyes of all that are truly sanctified! Gracious souls see a wonderful, an inexpressible, beauty in holiness, and in holy work. A tabernacle was a mean habitation, but the disadvantage of external circumstances makes holy ordinances not at all the less amiable; for the beauty of holiness is spiritual, and their glory is within.

II. The longing desire he had to return to the enjoyment of public ordinances, or rather of God in them, v. 2. It was an entire desire; body, soul, and spirit concurred in it. He was not conscious to himself of any rising thought to the contrary. It was an intense desire; it was like the desire of the ambitious, or covetous, or voluptuous. He longed, he fainted, he cried out, importunate to be restored to his place in God's courts, and almost impatient of delay. Yet it was not so much the courts of the Lord that he coveted, but he cried out, in prayer, *for the living God himself*. O that I might know him, and be again taken into communion with him! 1 John i. 3. Ordinances are empty things if we meet not with God in the ordinances.

III. His grudging the happiness of the little birds that made their nests in the buildings that were adjoining to God's altars, v. 3. This is an elegant and surprising expression of his affection to God's altars: *The sparrow has found a house and the swallow a nest for herself*. These little birds, by the instinct and direction of nature, provide habitations for themselves in houses, as other birds do in the woods, both for their own repose and in which to lay their young; some such David supposes there were in the buildings about the courts of God's house, and wishes himself with them. He would rather live in a bird's nest nigh God's altars than in a palace at a distance from them. He sometimes wishes *for the wings of a dove*, on which to fly into the wilderness (lv. 6); here for the wings of a sparrow, that he might fly undiscovered into God's courts; and, though to *watch as a sparrow alone upon the house-top* is the description of a very melancholy state and spirit (cii. 7), yet David would be glad to take it for his lot, provided he might be near God's altars. It is better to be serving God in solitude than serving sin with a multitude. The word for a sparrow signifies any little bird, and (if I may offer a conjecture) perhaps when, in David's time, music was introduced so much into the sacred service, both vocal and instrumental, to complete the harmony they had singing-birds in cages hung about the courts of the tabernacle (for we find the singing of birds taken notice of to the glory of God, civ. 12), and David envies the happiness of

these, and would gladly change places with them. Observe, David envies the happiness of those birds that flew over the altars, and had only a transient view of God's courts, but of those that had nests for themselves here. David will not think it enough to sojourn in God's house as a way-faring man that turns aside to tarry for a night; but let this be his rest, his home; here he will dwell. And he takes notice that these birds not only have nests for themselves there, but that there they lay their young; for those who have a place in God's courts themselves cannot but desire that their children also may have in God's house, and within his walls, a place and name, that they may feed their kids beside the shepherds' tents. Some give another sense of this verse: "Lord, by thy providence thou hast furnished the birds with nests and resting-places, agreeable to their nature, and to them they have free recourse; but thy altar, which is my nest, my resting-place, which I am as desirous of as ever the wandering bird was of her nest, I cannot have access to. Lord, wilt thou provide better for thy birds than for thy babes? As a bird that wanders from her nest so am I, now that I wander from the place of God's altars, for that is my place (Prov. xxvii. 8); I shall never be easy till I return to my place again." Note, Those whose souls are at home, at rest, in God, cannot but desire a settlement near his ordinances. There were two altars, one for sacrifice, the other for incense, and David, in his desire of a place in God's courts, has an eye to both, as we also must, in all our attendance on God, have an eye both to the satisfaction and to the intercession of Christ. And, lastly, Observe how he eyes God in this address: Thou art the Lord of hosts, my King and my God. Where should a poor distressed subject seek for protection but with his king? And should not a people seek unto their God? My King, my God, is Lord of hosts; by him and his altars let me live and die.

IV. His acknowledgment of the happiness both of the ministers and of the people that had liberty of attendance on God's altars: *Blessed are they.* O when shall I return to the enjoyment of that blessedness?" 1. Blessed are the ministers, the priests and Levites, who have their residence about the tabernacle and are in their courses employed in the service of it (v. 4): *Blessed are those that dwell in thy house*, that are at home there, and whose business lies there. He is so far from pitying them, as confined to a constant attendance and obliged to perpetual seriousness, that he would sooner envy them than be the greatest princes in the world. There are those that bless the covetous, but he blesses the religious. *Blessed are those that dwell in thy house* (not because they have good wages, a part of every sacrifice for themselves, which would enable them to keep a good table, but because they have good work): *They will be till praising thee*; and, if there be a heaven

upon earth, it is in praising God, in continually praising him. Apply this to his house above; blessed are those that dwell there, angels and glorified saints, for they rest not day nor night from praising God. Let us therefore spend as much of our time as may be in that blessed work in which we hope to spend a joyful eternity. 2. Blessed are the people, the inhabitants of the country, who, though they do not constantly dwell in God's house as the priests do, yet have liberty of access to it at the times appointed for their solemn feasts, the three great feasts, at which all the males were obliged to give their attendance, Deut. xvi. 16. David was so far from reckoning this an imposition, and a hardship put upon them, that he envies the happiness of those who might thus attend, v. 5—7. Those whom he pronounces blessed are here described. (1.) They are such as act in religion from a rooted principle of dependence upon God and devotedness to him: *Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee*, who makes thee his strength and strongly stays himself upon thee, who makes thy name his strong tower into which he runs for safety, Prov. xviii. 10. *Happy is the man whose hope is in the Lord his God*, Ps. xl. 4; cxlvi. 5. Those are truly happy who go forth, and go on, in the exercises of religion, not in their own strength (for then the work is sure to miscarry), but in the strength of the grace of Jesus Christ, from whom all our sufficiency is. David wished to return to God's tabernacles again, that there he might strengthen himself in the Lord his God for service and suffering. (2.) They are such as have a love for holy ordinances: *In whose heart are the ways of them*, that is, who, having placed their happiness in God as their end, rejoice in all the ways that lead to him, all those means by which their graces are strengthened and their communion with him kept up. They not only walk in these ways, but they have them in their hearts, they lay them near their hearts; no care or concern, no pleasure or delight, lies nearer than this. Note, Those who have the new Jerusalem in their eye must have the ways that lead to it in their heart, must mind them, their eyes must look straight forward in them, must ponder the paths of them, must keep close to them, and be afraid of turning aside to the right hand or to the left. If we make God's promise our strength, we must make God's word our rule, and walk by it. (3.) They are such as will break through difficulties and discouragements in waiting upon God in holy ordinances, v. 6. When they come up out of the country to worship at the feasts their way lies through many a dry and sandy valley (so some), in which they are ready to perish for thirst; but, to guard against that inconvenience, they dig little pits to receive and keep the rain-water, which is ready to them and others for their refreshment. When they make the pools the rain

of heaven fills them. If we be ready to receive the grace of God, that grace shall not be wanting to us, but shall be sufficient for us at all times. Their way lay through many a weeping valley, so Baca signifies, that is (as others understand it), many watery valleys, which in wet weather, when *the rain filled the pools*, either through the rising of the waters or through the dirtiness of the way were impassable; but, by draining and trenching them, they made a road through them for the benefit of those who went up to Jerusalem. Care should be taken to keep those roads in repair that lead to church, as well as those that lead to market. But all this is intended to show, [1.] That they had a good will to the journey. When they were to attend the solemn feasts at Jerusalem they would not be kept back by bad weather, or bad ways, nor make those an excuse for staying at home. Difficulties in the way of duty are designed to try our resolution; and *he that observes the wind shall not sow*. [2.] That they made the best of the way to Zion, contrived and took pains to mend it where it was bad, and bore, as well as they could, the inconveniences that could not be removed. Our way to heaven lies through a valley of Baca, but even that may be made a well if we make a due improvement of the comforts God has provided for the pilgrims to the heavenly city. (4.) They are such as are still pressing forward till they come to their journey's end at length, and do not take up short of it (v. 7): *They go from strength to strength*; their company increases by the accession of more out of every town they pass through, till they become very numerous. Those that were near staid till those that were further off called on them, saying, *Come, and let us go to the house of the Lord* (cxvii. 1, 2), that they might go together in a body, in token of their mutual love. Or the particular persons, instead of being fatigued with the tediousness of their journey and the difficulties they met with, the nearer they came to Jerusalem the more lively and cheerful they were, and so went on *stronger and stronger*, Job xvii. 9. Thus it is promised that those that *wait on the Lord shall renew their strength*, Isa. xl. 31. Even where they are weak, there they are strong. They *go from virtue to virtue* (so some); it is the same word that is used for the virtuous woman. Those that press forward in their Christian course shall find God adding grace to their graces, John i. 16. They shall be changed from glory to glory (2 Cor. iii. 18), from one degree of glorious grace to another, till, at length, *every one of them appears before God in Zion*, to give glory to him and receive blessings from him. Note, Those who grow in grace shall, at last, be perfect in glory. The Chaldee reads it, *They go from the house of the sanctuary to the house of doctrine; and the pains which they have taken about the law shall appear before God, whose majesty dwells in Zion*.

We must go from one duty to another, from prayer to the word, from practising what we have learned to learn more; and, if we do this, the benefit of it will appear, to God's glory and our own everlasting comfort.

8 O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah. 9 Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed. 10 For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather stand a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. 11 For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. 12 O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.

Here, I. The psalmist prays for audience and acceptance with God, not mentioning particularly what he desired God would do for him. He needed to say no more when he had professed such an affectionate esteem for the ordinances of God, which now he was restrained and banished from. All his desire was, in that profession, plainly before God, and his longing, his groaning, was not hidden from him; therefore he prays (v. 8, 9) on that God would hear his prayer and give ear, that he would behold his condition, behold his good affection, and look upon his face, which way it was set, and how his countenance discovered the longing desire he had towards God's courts. He calls himself (many think) *God's anointed*, for David was anointed by him and anointed for him. In this petition, 1. He has an eye to God under several of his glorious titles—as the *LORD God of hosts*, who has all the creatures at his command, and therefore has all power both in heaven and in earth,—as the *God of Jacob*, a God in covenant with his own people, God who never said to the praying seed, *Jacob, Seek you me in vain*,—and as *God's shield*, who takes his people under his special protection, pursuant to his covenant with Abraham their father. Gen. xv. 1, *Fear not Abraham, I am thy shield*. When David could not be hidden in the secret of God's tabernacle (Ps. xxvii. 5), being at a distance from it, yet he hoped to find God his shield ready to him wherever he was. 2. He has an eye to the Mediator; for of him I rather understand those words, *Look upon the face of the Messiah*, thy anointed one, for of his anointing David spoke, xlv. 7. In all our addresses to God we must desire that he would look upon the face of Christ, accept us for his sake, and be well-pleased with us in him. We must look with an eye of faith, and the God will with an eye of favour look upon the face of the anointed, who does show his face when we without him dare not show ours.

II. He pleads his love to God's ordinances and his dependence upon God himself.

1. God's courts were his choice, *v. 10.* A very great regard he had for holy ordinances: he valued them above any thing else, and he expresses his value for them, (1.) By preferring the time of God's worship before all other time: *A day spent in thy courts*, in attending on the services of religion, wholly abstracted from all secular affairs, *is better than a thousand*, not than a thousand in thy courts, but any where else in this world, though in the midst of all the delights of the children of men. Better than a thousand, he does not say *days*, you may supply it with years, with ages, if you will, and yet David will set his hand to it. "A day in thy courts, a sabbath day, a holy day, a feast-day, though but one day, would be very welcome to me; nay" (as some of the rabbin paraphrase it), though I were to die for it the next day, yet that would be more sweet than years spent in the business and pleasure of this world. One of these days shall with its pleasure chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, to shame, as not worthy to be compared." (2.) By preferring the place of worship before any other place: *I would rather be a door-keeper*, rather be in the meanest place and office, *in the house of my God, than dwell in state, as master, in the tents of wickedness.* Observe, He calls even the tabernacle a house, for the presence of God in it made even those curtains more stately than palace and more strong than a castle. It is the house of my God; the covenant-interest he had in God as his God was the sweet thing on which he loved dearly to be harping; those, and those only, who can, upon good ground, call God theirs, delight in the courts of his house. I would rather be a porter in God's house than a prince in those courts where wickedness reigns, rather lie at the threshold (so the word is); that was the beggar's place (Acts iii. 2): "no matter" says David, "let that be my place rather than none." The Pharisees loved synagogues well enough, provided they might have the uppermost seats there (Matt. xxiii. 6), that they might make a figure. Holy David is not solicitous about that; if he may but be admitted to the threshold, he will say, *Master, it is good to be here.* Some read it, *I would rather be fixed to a post in the house of my God than live at liberty in the tents of wickedness*, alluding to the law concerning servants, who, if they would not go out free, were to have their ear bored to the door-post, *Exod. xxi. 5, 6.* David loved his master and loved his work so well that he desired to be devoted to this service for ever, to be more free to it, but never to go out free from it, preferring bonds to duty far before the greatest liberty to sin. Such a superlative delight have holy hearts in holy duties; no satisfaction in their account comparable to that in communion with God.

2. God himself was his hope, and joy, and all. Therefore he loved the house of his God, because his expectation was from his God, and there he used to communicate himself, *v. 11.* See, (1.) What God is, and will be, to his people: *The Lord God is a sun and shield.* We are here in darkness, but, if God be our God, he will be to us a sun, to enlighten and enliven us, to guide and direct us. We are here in danger, but he will be to us a shield to secure us from the fiery darts that fly thickly about us. *With his favour he will compass us as with a shield.* Let us therefore always walk in the light of the Lord, and never throw ourselves out of his protection, and we shall find him a sun to supply us with all good and a shield to shelter us from all evil. (2.) What he does, and will, bestow upon them: *The Lord will give grace and glory.* Grace signifies both the good-will of God towards us and the good work of God in us; glory signifies both the honour which he now puts upon us, in giving us the adoption of sons, and that, which he has prepared for us in the inheritance of sons. God will give them grace in this world as a preparation for glory, and glory in the other world as the perfection of grace; both are God's gift, his free gift. And as, on the one hand, wherever God gives grace he will give glory (for grace is glory begun, and is an earnest of it), so, on the other hand, he will give glory hereafter to none to whom he does not give grace now, or who receive his grace in vain. And if God will give grace and glory, which are the two great things that concur to make us happy in both worlds, we may be sure that *no good thing will be withheld from those that walk uprightly.* It is the character of all good people that they walk uprightly, that they worship God in spirit and in truth, and have their conversation in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity; and such may be sure that God will withhold *no good thing from them*, that is requisite to their comfortable passage through this world. Make sure grace and glory, and *other things shall be added.* This is a comprehensive promise, and is such an assurance of the present comfort of the saints that, whatever they desire, and think they need, they may be sure that either Infinite Wisdom sees it is not good for them or Infinite Goodness will give it to them in due time. Let it be our care to walk uprightly, and then let us trust God to give us every thing that is good for us.

Lastly, He pronounces those blessed who put their confidence in God, as he did, *v. 12.* Those are blessed who have the liberty of ordinances and the privileges of God's house. But, though we should be debarred from them, yet we are not therefore debarred from blessedness if we trust in God. If we cannot go to the house of the Lord, we may go by faith to the Lord of the house, and in him we shall be happy and may be easy.

PSALM LXXXV.

Interpreters are generally of opinion that this psalm was penned after the return of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon, when they still remained under some tokens of God's displeasure, which they here pray for the removal of. And nothing appears to the contrary, but that it might be penned then, as well as Ps. cxxxvii. They are the public interests that lie near the psalmist's heart here, and the psalm is penned for the great congregation. The church was here in a deluge; above were clouds, below were waves; every thing was dark and dismal. The church is like Noah in the ark, between life and death, between hope and fear; being so, I. Here is the dove sent forth in prayer. The petitions are against sin and wrath (ver. 4) and for mercy and grace, ver. 7. The pleas are taken from former favours (ver. 1-3) and present distresses, ver. 5, 6. II. Here is the dove returning with an olive branch of peace and good tidings; the psalmist expects her return (ver. 5) and then recounts the favours to God's Israel which by the spirit of prophecy he gave assurance of to others, and by the spirit of faith he took the assurance of to himself, ver. 9-13. In singing this psalm we may be assisted in our prayers to God both for his church in general and for the land of our nativity in particular. The former part will be of use to direct our desires, the latter to encourage our faith and hope in those prayers.

To the chief musician. A psalm for the sons of Korah.

LORD, thou hast been favourable unto thy land: thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob. 2 Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin. Selah. 3 Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger. 4 Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease. 5 Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations? 6 Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee? 7 Show us thy mercy, O LORD, and grant us thy salvation.

The church, in affliction and distress, is here, by direction from God, making her application to God. So ready is God to hear and answer the prayers of his people that by his Spirit in the word, and in the heart, he indites their petitions and puts words into their mouths. The people of God, in a very low and weak condition, are here taught how to address themselves to God.

I. They are to acknowledge with thankfulness the great things God had done for them (v. 1-3): "Thou hast done so and so for us and our fathers." Note, The sense of present afflictions should not drown the remembrance of former mercies; but, even when we are brought very low, we must call to remembrance past experiences of God's goodness, which we must take notice of with thankfulness, to his praise. They speak of it here with pleasure, 1. That God had shown himself propitious to their land, and had smiled upon it as his own: "Thou hast been favourable to thy land, as thine, with distinguishing favours." Note, The favour of God is the spring-head of all good, and the fountain of happiness, to nations, as well as to particular persons. It was by the favour of God that Israel got and kept possession of Canaan (xliv. 3); and, if he had not con-

tinued very favourable to them, they would have been ruined many a time. 2. That he had rescued them out of the hands of their enemies and restored them to their liberty: "Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob, and settled those in their own land again that had been driven out and were strangers in a strange land, prisoners in the land of their oppressors." The captivity of Jacob, though it may continue long, will be brought back in due time. 3. That he had not dealt with them according to the desert of their provocations (v. 2): "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, and not punished them as in justice thou mightest have done: Thou hast covered all their sin." When God forgives sin he covers it; and, when he covers the sin of his people, he covers it all. The bringing back of their captivity was then an instance of God's favour to them, when it was accompanied with the pardon of the iniquity. 4. That he had not continued his anger against them so far, and so long, as they had reason to fear (v. 3): "Having covered all their sin, thou hast taken away all thy wrath;" for when sin is set aside God's anger ceases; God is pacified if we are purified. See what the pardon of sin is: "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin," and so it is, "Thou hast turned thy anger from warring against us, so as to consume us in the flame of it." In compassion to us thou hast not stirred up all thy wrath, but, when an intercessor has stood before thee in the gap, thou hast turned away thy anger.

II. They are taught to pray to God for grace and mercy, in reference to their present distress; this is inferred from the former: "Thou hast done well for our fathers; do well for us, for we are the children of the same covenant." 1. They pray for converting grace: "Turn us, O God of our salvation!" in order to the turning of our captivity; turn us from iniquity; turn us to thyself and to our duty; turn us, and we shall be turned." All those whom God will save sooner or later he will turn. If no conversion, no salvation. 2. They pray for the removal of the tokens of God's displeasure which they were under: "Cause thine anger towards us to cease, as thou didst many a time cause it to cease in the day of our fathers, when thou didst take away all thy wrath from them." Observe the method, "First turn us to thee, and then cause thy anger to turn from us." When we are reconciled to God, then, and not till then, we may expect the comfort of his being reconciled to us. 3. They pray for the manifestation of God's good-will to them (v. 7): "Show us thy mercy, O Lord! show thyself merciful to us; not only have mercy on us, but let us have the comfortable evidences of that mercy; let us know that thou hast mercy on us and mercy in store for us." 4. They pray that God would, graciously to them and gloriously to himself, appear on their behalf: "Grant us thy salvation; grant it by thy pro-

use, and then, no doubt, thou wilt work it by thy providence." Note, The vessels of God's mercy are the heirs of his salvation; he shows mercy to those to whom he grants salvation; for salvation is of mere mercy.

III. They are taught humbly to expostulate with God concerning their present troubles, v. 5, 6. Here observe, 1. What they dread and deprecate: "*Will thou be angry with us for ever?*" We are undone if thou art, but we hope thou wilt not. *Will thou draw out thy anger unto all generations?* No; thou art gracious, slow to anger, and swift to show mercy, and wilt not contend for ever. Thou wast not angry with our fathers for ever, but didst soon turn thyself from the fierceness of thy wrath; why then wilt thou be angry with us for ever? Are not thy mercies and compassions as plentiful and powerful as ever they were? Impenitent sinners God will be angry with for ever; for what is hell but the wrath of God drawn out unto endless generations? But shall a fall upon earth be the lot of thy people?"

2. What they desire and hope for: "*Will thou not revive us again* (v. 6), revive us with comforts spoken to us, revive us with deliverances wrought for us? Thou hast been favourable to thy land formerly, and that revived it; wilt thou not again be favourable, and so revive it again?" God had granted to the children of the captivity *some reviving in their bondage*, Ezra ix. 8. Their return out of Babylon was as *life from the dead*, Ezek. xxxvii. 11, 12. Now, Lord (say they), *wilt thou not revive us again, and put thy hand again the second time to gather us in?* Isa. i. 11; Ps. cxxvi. 1, 4. *Revive thy work in the midst of the years*, Hab. iii. 2. "Revive us again," (1.) "That thy people may rejoice; and so we shall have the comfort of" Ps. xiv. 7. Give them life, that they may have joy. (2.) "That they may rejoice in thee; and so thou wilt have the glory of." If God be the fountain of all our mercies, he must be the centre of all our joys.

4. I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly. 9 Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land. 10 Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. 11 Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven. 12 Yea, the LORD shall give *that which is good*; and our land shall yield her increase. 13 Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps.

We have here an answer to the prayers and postulations in the foregoing verses.

I. In general, it is an answer of peace. This the psalmist is soon aware of (v. 8), for he stands upon his watch-tower to hear what God will say unto him, as the prophet, Hab.

ii. 1, 2. *I will hear what God the Lord will speak.* This intimates, 1. The stilling of his passions—his grief, his fear—and the tumult of his spirit which they occasioned: "Compose thyself, O my soul! in a humble silence to attend upon God and wait his motions. I have spoken enough, or too much; now I will hear what God will speak, and welcome his holy will. *What saith my Lord unto his servant?*" If we would have God to hear what we say to him by prayer, we must be ready to hear what he says to us by his word.

2. The raising of his expectation; now that he has been at prayer he looks for something very great, and very kind, from the God that hears prayer. When we have prayed we should look after our prayers, and stay for an answer. Now observe here, (1.) What it is that he promises himself from God, in answer to his prayers: *He will speak peace to his people, and to his saints.* There are a people in the world who are God's people, set apart for him, subject to him, and who shall be saved by him. All his people are his saints, sanctified by his grace and devoted to his glory; these may sometimes want peace, when without are fightings and within are fears; but, sooner or later, God will speak peace to them; if he do not command outward peace, yet he will suggest inward peace, speaking that to their hearts by his Spirit which he has spoken to their ears by his word and ministers and making them to hear joy and gladness. (2.) What use he makes of this expectation. [1.] He takes the comfort of it; and so must we: "*I will hear what God the Lord will speak*, hear the assurances he gives of peace, in answer to prayer." When God speaks peace we must not be deaf to it, but with all humility and thankfulness receive it. [2.] He cautions the saints to do the duty which this calls for: *But let them not turn again to folly*; for it is on these terms, and no other, that peace is to be expected.

To those, and those only, peace is spoken, who turn from sin; but, if they return to it again, it is at their peril. All sin is folly, but especially backsliding; it is egregious folly to turn to sin after we have seemed to turn from it, to turn to it after God has spoken peace. God is for peace, but, when he speaks, such are for war.

II. Here are the particulars of this answer of peace. He doubts not but all will be well in a little time, and therefore gives us the pleasing prospect of the flourishing estate of the church in the last five verses of the psalm, which describe the peace and prosperity that God, at length, blessed the children of the captivity with, when, after a great deal of toil and agitation, at length they gained a settlement in their own land. But it may be taken both as a promise also to all who

fear God and work righteousness, that they shall be easy and happy, and as a prophecy of the kingdom of the Messiah and the blessings with which that kingdom should be enriched. Here is,

1. Help at hand (v. 9): "*Surely his salvation is nigh*, nigh to us, nigher than we think it is: it will soon be effected, how great soever our difficulties and distresses are, when God's time shall come, and that time is not far off." When the tale of bricks is doubled, then Moses comes. It is nigh to all who fear him; when trouble is nigh salvation is nigh, for God is a very present help in time of trouble to all who are his; whereas *salvation is far from the wicked*, cxix. 155. This may fitly be applied to Christ the author of eternal salvation: it was the comfort of the Old-Testament saints that, though they lived not to see that redemption in Jerusalem which they waited for, yet they were sure it was nigh, and would be welcome, to all that fear God.

2. Honour secured: "*That glory may dwell in our land*, that we may have the worship of God settled and established among us; for that is the glory of a land. When that goes, *Ichabod—the glory has departed*; when that stays glory dwells." This may refer to the Messiah, who was to be the *glory of his people Israel*, and who came and dwelt among them (John i. 4), for which reason their land is called *Immanuel's land*, Isa. viii. 8.

3. Graces meeting, and happily embracing (v. 10, 11): *Mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, kiss each other*. This may be understood, (1.) Of the reformation of the people and of the government, in the administration of which all those graces should be conspicuous and commanding. The rulers and ruled shall all be merciful and true, righteous and peaceable. When there is no truth nor mercy all goes to ruin (Hos. iv. 1; Isa. lix. 14, 15); but when these meet in the management of all affairs, when these give aim, when these give law, when there is such plenty of truth that it sprouts up like the grass of the earth, and of righteousness that it is showered down like rain from heaven, then things go well. When in every congress mercy and truth meet, in every embrace righteousness and peace kiss, and common honesty is indeed common, then glory dwells in a land, as the sin of reigning dishonesty is a reproach to any people. (2.) Of the return of God's favour, and the continuance of it, thereupon. When a people return to God and adhere to him in a way of duty he will return to them and abide with them in a way of mercy. So some understand this, man's truth and God's mercy, man's righteousness and God's peace, meet together. If God find us true to him, to one another, to ourselves, we shall find him merciful. If we make conscience of righteousness, we shall have the comfort of peace. If *truth spring out of the earth*, that is (as Dr.

Hammond expounds it), out of the hearts of men, the proper soil for it to grow in, righteousness (that is, God's mercy) shall look down from heaven, as the sun does upon the world when it sheds its influences on the productions of the earth and cherishes them. (3.) Of the harmony of the divine attributes in the Messiah's undertaking. In him *truth is both our salvation and our glory*; *mercy and truth have met together*; God's mercy and truth, and his *righteousness and peace, have kissed each other*; that is, the great affair of our salvation is so well contrived, so well concerted, that God may have mercy upon poor sinners, and be at peace with them without any wrong to his truth and righteousness. He is true to the threatening, and just in his government, and yet pardons sinners and takes them into covenant with himself. Christ, as Mediator, brings heaven and earth together again, which sin had set at variance; through him *truth springs out of the earth*, that truth which God desires in the inward part, and then *righteousness looks down from heaven*; for God is just, and the justifier of those who believe in Jesus. Or may denote that in the kingdom of the Messiah these graces shall flourish and prevail and have a universal command.

4. Great plenty of every thing desirable (v. 12): *The Lord shall give that which is good*, every thing that he sees to be good for us. All good comes from God's goodness; and when mercy, truth, and righteousness have a sovereign influence on men's hearts and lives, all good may be expected. If we thus seek the righteousness of God's kingdom, *other things shall be added*; Matt. vi. 33. When the glory of the gospel dwells in our land, then it shall yield its increase, for so prosperity will either bring outward prosperity along with it or sweeten the want of it. See Ps. lxvii. 6.

5. A sure guidance in the good way (v. 13): *The righteousness of his promise which he has made to us*, assuring us of happiness and the righteousness of sanctification, the good work which he has wrought in us, these shall go before him to prepare his way, both to raise our expectations of his favour and to qualify us for it; and these shall go before us also, and be our guide to set us in the way of his steps, that is, to encourage our hope and guide our practice, that we may go forth to meet him when he is coming towards us in ways of mercy. Christ, the sun of righteousness, shall bring us to God, and put us into the way that leads to him. John Baptist a preacher of righteousness, shall go before Christ to prepare his way. Righteousness is a sure guide both in meeting God and in following him.

PSALM LXXXVI.

This psalm is entitled "a prayer of David;" probably it was penned upon any particular occasion, but was a prayer he often used himself, and recommended to others for their use, especially in a day of affliction. Many think that David penned this prayer as a type of Christ, "who in the days of his life

offered up strong cries," Heb. v. 7. David, in this prayer (according to the nature of that duty), 1. Gives glory to God, ver. 8—10, 12, 13. 11. Seeks for grace and favour from God, that God would hear his prayers (ver. 1, 6, 7), preserve and save him, and be merciful to him (ver. 2, 3, 16), that he would give him joy, and grace, and strength, and put honour upon him, ver. 4, 11, 17. He pleads God's goodness (ver. 5, 15) and the malice of his enemies, ver. 14. In singing this we must, as David did, lift up our souls to God with application.

A prayer of David.

BOW down thine ear, O LORD, hear me: for I *am* poor and needy. 2 Preserve my soul; for I *am* holy: O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee. 3 Be merciful unto me, O LORD: for I cry unto thee daily. 4 Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul. 5 For thou, LORD, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee. 6 Give ear, O LORD, unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications. 7 In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me.

This psalm was published under the title of a *prayer of David*; not as if David sung all his prayers, but into some of his songs he inserted prayers; for a psalm will admit the expressions of any pious and devout affections. But it is observable how very plain the language of this psalm is, and how little there is in it of poetic flights or figures, in comparison with some other psalms; for the flourishes of wit are not the proper ornaments of prayer. Now here we may observe, I. The petitions he puts up to God. It is true, prayer accidentally may preach, but it is most fit that (as it is in this prayer) every passage should be directed to God, for such is the nature of prayer as it is here described (v. 4): *Unto thee, O Lord! do I lift up my soul*, as he had said xxv. 1. In all the arts of prayer the soul must ascend upon the wings of faith and holy desire, and be lifted up to God, to meet the communications of his grace, and in an expectation used very high of great things from him. He begs that God would give a gracious audience to his prayers (v. 1): *Bow down thy ear, O Lord! hear me*. When God hears our prayers it is fitly said that he *bows down his ear* to them, for it is admirable condescension in God that he is pleased to take notice of such mean creatures as we are and such defective prayers as ours are. He repeats this again (v. 6): *"Give ear, O Lord! unto my prayer, a favourable ear, though it be whispered, though it be stammered; attend to the voice of my supplications."* Not that God needs to have his affection stirred up by any thing that we can say; but thus we must express our desire of his favour. The Son of David spoke it with assurance

and pleasure (John xi. 41, 42), *Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me; and I know that thou hearest me always*. 2. He begs that God would take him under his special protection, and so be the author of his salvation (v. 2): *Preserve my soul! save thy servant*. It was David's soul that was God's servant; for those only serve God acceptably that *serve him with their spirits*. David's concern is about his soul; if we understand it of his natural life, it teaches us that the best self-preservation is to commit ourselves to God's keeping and by faith and prayer to make our Creator our preserver. But it may be understood of his spiritual life, the life of the soul as distinct from the body: *"Preserve my soul from that one evil and dangerous thing to souls, even from sin; preserve my soul, and so save me."* All those whom God will save he preserves, and will preserve them to his heavenly kingdom. 3. He begs that God would look upon him with an eye of pity and compassion (v. 3): *Be merciful to me, O Lord!* It is mercy in God to pardon our sins and to help us out of our distresses; both these are included in this prayer, *God be merciful to me*. "Men show no mercy; we ourselves deserve no mercy; but, Lord, for mercy-sake, be merciful unto me." 4. He begs that God would fill him with inward comfort (v. 4): *Rejoice the soul of thy servant*. It is God only that can put gladness into the heart and make the soul to rejoice, and then, and not till then, the joy is full; and, as it is the duty of those who are God's servants to *serve him with gladness*, so it is their privilege to be *filled with joy and peace in believing*, and they may in faith pray, not only that God will preserve their souls, but that he will rejoice their souls, and the *joy of the Lord* will be *their strength*. Observe, When he prays, *Rejoice my soul*, he adds, *For unto thee do I lift up my soul*. Then we may expect comfort from God when we take care to keep up our communion with God: prayer is the nurse of spiritual joy.

II. The pleas with which he enforces these petitions. 1. He pleads his relation to God and interest in him: "Thou art my God, to whom I have devoted myself, and on whom I depend, and I am thy servant (v. 2), in subjection to thee, and therefore looking for protection from thee." 2. He pleads his distress: *"Hear me, for I am poor and needy, therefore I want thy help, therefore none else will hear me."* God is the poor man's King, whose glory it is to *save the souls of the needy*; those who are poor in spirit, who see themselves empty and necessitous, are most welcome to the God of all grace. 3. He pleads God's good-will towards all that seek him (v. 5): *"To thee do I lift up my soul in desire and expectation; for thou, Lord, art good;"* and whither should beggars go but to the door of the good house-keeper? The goodness of God's nature is a great encouragement to us in all our addresses to

him. His goodness appears in two things, giving and forgiving. (1.) He is a sin-pardoning God; not only he can forgive, but he is ready to forgive, more ready to forgive than we are to repent. *I said, I will confess, and thou forgavest, xxxii. 5.* (2.) He is a prayer-hearing God; he is plenteous in mercy, very full, and very free, both rich and liberal unto all those that call upon him; he has wherewithal to supply all their needs and is openhanded in granting that supply. 4. He pleads God's good work in himself, by which he had qualified him for the tokens of his favour. Three things were wrought in him by divine grace, which he looked upon as earnest of all good:—(1.) A conformity to God (v. 2): *I am holy*, therefore preserve my soul; for those whom the Spirit sanctifies he will preserve. He does not say this in pride and vain glory, but with humble thankfulness to God. *I am one whom thou favourest* (so the margin reads it), whom thou hast set apart for thyself. If God has begun a good work of grace in us, we must own that *the time was a time of love*. Then was I in his eyes as one that found favour, and whom God hath taken into his favour he will take under his protection. *All his saints are in thy hand*, Deut. xxxiii. 3. Observe, *I am needy* (v. 1), yet *I am holy* (v. 2), holy and yet needy, *poor in the world, but rich in faith*. Those who preserve their purity in their greatest poverty may assure themselves that God will preserve their comforts, will preserve their souls. (2.) A confidence in God: *Save thy servant that trusteth in thee*. Those that are holy must nevertheless not trust in themselves, nor in their own righteousness, but only in God and his grace. Those that trust in God may expect salvation from him. (3.) A disposition to communion with God. He hopes God will answer his prayers, because he had inclined him to pray. [1.] To be constant in prayer: *I cry unto thee daily, and all the day, v. 3.* It is thus our duty to pray always, without ceasing, and to continue instant in prayer; and then we may hope to have our prayers heard which we make in the time of trouble, if we have made conscience of the duty at other times, at all times. It is comfortable if an affliction finds the wheels of prayer a-going, and that they are not then to be set a-going. [2.] To be inward with God in prayer, to *lift up his soul* to him, v. 4. Then we may hope that God will meet us with his mercies, when we in our prayers send forth our souls as it were to meet him. [3.] To be in a special manner earnest with God in prayer when he was in affliction (v. 7): *"In the day of my trouble, whatever others do, I will call upon thee, and commit my case to thee, for thou wilt hear and answer me, and I shall not seek in vain, as those did who cried, O Baal! hear us; but there was no voice, nor any that regarded, 1 Kings xviii. 29.*

8 Among the gods *there is none*

like unto thee, O Lord; neither *are there any works* like unto thy work. 9 All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name. 10 For thou *art* great, and doest wondrous things: thou *art* God alone. Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name. 12 I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart, and I will glorify thy name for evermore. 13 For great is thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell. 14 O God, the proud are risen against me, and the assemblies of violent men have sought after my soul; and have not seen thee before them. 15 But thou, O Lord, *art* a God full of compassion and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth. 16 O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me, give thy strength unto thy servant, and save the son of thine handmaid. 17 Show me a token for good; that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed: because thou, LORD, hast holpen me, and comforted me.

David is here going on in his prayer.

I. He gives glory to God; for we ought in our prayers to praise him, ascribing kingdom, power, and glory, to him, with the most humble and reverent adorations. 1. As a bearing of unparalleled perfection, such a one that there is none like him nor any to be compared with him, v. 8. *Among the gods the false gods, whom the heathens worshipped, the angels, the kings of the earth, among them all, there is none like unto thee, O Lord none so wise, so mighty, so good; neither are there any works like unto thy works*, which is an undeniable proof that there is none like him; his own works praise him, and the best way we have of praising him is by acknowledging that there is none like him. 2. As the fountain of all being and the centre of all praise (v. 9): *"Thou hast made all nations, made them all of one blood; they all derive their being from thee, and have a constant dependence on thee, and therefore they shall come and worship before thee and glorify thy name."* This was in part fulfilled in the multitude of proselytes to the Jewish religion in the days of David and Solomon, but was to have its full accomplishment in the day of the Messiah, when some out of every kingdom and nation should be effectually brought in to praise God, Rev. vii. 9. It was by Christ that God made all nations, for without

him was not any thing made that was made, and therefore through Christ, and by the power of his gospel and grace, all nations shall be brought to worship before God, Isa. lxvi. 23. 3. As a being infinitely great (v. 10): "Therefore all nations shall worship before thee, because as King of nations *thou art great*, thy sovereignty absolute and incontestable, thy majesty terrible and insupportable, thy power universal and irresistible, thy riches vast and inexhaustible, thy dominion boundless and unquestionable; and, for the proof of this, *thou doest wondrous things*, which all nations admire, and whence they might easily infer that thou art God alone, not only none like thee, but none besides thee." Let us always entertain great thoughts of this great God, and be filled with holy admiration of this God who doeth wonders; and let him alone have our hearts who is God alone. 4. As a being infinitely good. Man is bad, very wicked and vile (v. 14); no mercy is to be expected from him; *but thou, O Lord! art a God full of compassion, and gracious*, v. 15. This is that attribute by which he proclaims his name, and by which we are therefore to proclaim it, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. It is his goodness that is over all his works, and therefore should fill all our praises; and this is our comfort, in reference to the wickedness of the world we live in, that, however it be, God is good. Men are barbarous, but God is gracious; men are false, but God is faithful. God is not only compassionate, but full of compassion, and in him *mercy rejoiceth against judgment*. He is long-suffering towards us, though we forfeit his favour and provoke him to anger, and he is *plenteous in mercy and truth*, as faithful in performing as he was free in promising. 5. As a kind friend and bountiful benefactor to him. We ought to praise God as good in himself, but we do it most feelingly when we observe how good he has been to us. This therefore the psalmist dwells upon with most pleasure, v. 12, 13. He had said (v. 9), *All nations shall praise thee, O Lord! and glorify thy name*. It is some satisfaction to a good man to think that others shall praise and glorify God, but it is his greatest care and pleasure to do it himself. "Whatever others do" (says David), "*I will praise thee, O Lord my God!* not only as the Lord, but as my God; and I will do it with all my heart; I will be ready to do it and cordial in it; I will do it with cheerfulness and liveliness, with a sincere regard to thy honour; for *I will glorify thy name*, not for a time, but for evermore. I will do it as long as I live, and hope to be doing it to eternity." With good reason does he resolve to be thus particular in praising God, because God had shown him particular favours: *For great is thy mercy towards me*. The fountain of mercy is inexhaustibly full; the streams of mercy are inestimably rich. When we speak of God's mercy to us, it becomes us thus to

magnify it: *Great is thy mercy towards me*. Of the greatness of God's mercy he gives this instance, *Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell*, from death, from so great a death, as St. Paul (2 Cor. i. 10), from eternal death, so even some of the Jewish writers understand it. David knew he deserved to be cast off for ever into the lowest hell for his sin in the matter of Uriah; but Nathan assured him that the Lord had *taken away his sin*, and by that word he was delivered from the lowest hell, and herein God's mercy was great towards him. Even the best saints owe it, not to their own merit, but to the mercy of God, that they are saved from the lowest hell; and the consideration of that should greatly enlarge their hearts in praising the mercy of God, which they are obliged to glorify for evermore. So glorious, so gracious, a rescue from everlasting misery, justly requires the return of everlasting praise.

II. He prays earnestly for mercy and grace from God. He complains of the restless and implacable malice of his enemies against him (v. 14): "Lord, be thou for me; for there are many against me." He then takes notice of their character; they were *proud men* that looked with disdain upon poor David. (Many are made persecutors by their pride.) They were *violent men*, that would carry all before them by force, right or wrong. They were *terrible formidable men* (so some), that did what they could to frighten all about them. He notices their number: There were *assemblies* of them; they were men in authority and met in councils and courts, or men for conversation, and met in clubs; but, being assembled, they were the more capable of doing mischief. He notices their enmity to him: "*They rise up against me* in open rebellion; they not only plot, but they put their plots in execution as far as they can; and the design is not only to depose me, but to destroy me: they seek after my life, to slay me; after my soul, to damn me, if it lay in their power." And, *lastly*, He notices their distance and estrangement from God, which were at the bottom of their enmity to David: "*They have not set thee before them*"; and what good can be expected from those that have no fear of God before their eyes? Lord, appear against them, for they are thy enemies as well as mine." His petitions are,

1. For the operations of God's grace in him, v. 11. He prays that God would give him, (1.) An understanding heart, that he would inform and instruct him concerning his duty: "*Teach me thy way, O Lord!* the way that thou hast appointed me to walk in; when I am in doubt concerning it, make it plain to me what I should do; let me hear the voice saying, *This is the way*," Isa. xxx. 21. David was well taught in the things of God, and yet was sensible he needed further instruction, and many a time could not trust his own judgment: *Teach me thy way; I will*

walk in thy truth. One would think it should be, *Teach me thy truth, and I will walk in thy way*; but it comes all to one; it is the way of truth that God teaches and that we must choose and walk in, Ps. cxix. 30. Christ is the way and the truth, and we must both learn Christ and walk in him. We cannot walk in God's way and truth unless he teach us; and, if we expect he should teach us, we must resolve to be governed by his teachings, Isa. ii. 3. (2.) An upright heart: "*Unite my heart to fear thy name.* Make me sincere in religion. A hypocrite has a double heart; let mine be single and entire for God, not divided between him and the world, not straggling from him." Our hearts are apt to wander and hang loose; their powers and faculties wander after a thousand foreign things; we have therefore need of God's grace to unite them, that we may serve God with all that is within us, and all little enough to be employed in his service. "Let my heart be fixed for God, and firm and faithful to him, and fervent in serving him; that is a united heart."

2. For the tokens of God's favour to him, v. 16, 17. Three things he here prays for:—(1.) That God would speak peace and comfort to him: "*O turn unto me, as to one thou lovest and hast a kind and tender concern for.* My enemies turn against me, my friends turn from me; Lord, do thou turn to me and have mercy upon me; it will be a comfort to me to know that thou pitiest me." (2.) That God would work deliverance for him, and set him in safety: "*Give me thy strength; put strength into me, that I may help myself, and put forth thy strength for me, that I may be saved out of the hands of those that seek my ruin.*" He pleads relation: "*I am thy servant; I am so by birth, as the son of thy handmaid, born in thy house, and therefore thou art my rightful owner and proprietor, from whom I may expect protection. I am thine; save me.*" The children of godly parents, who were betimes dedicated to the Lord, may plead it with him; if they come under the discipline of his family, they are entitled to the privileges of it. (3.) That God would put a reputation on him: "*Show me a token for good; make it to appear to others as well as to myself that thou art doing me good, and designing further good for me.* Let me have some unquestionable illustrious instances of thy favour to me, *that those who hate me may see it, and be ashamed of their enmity to me, as they will have reason to be when they perceive that thou, Lord, hast helped me and comforted me, and that therefore they have been striving against God, opposing one whom he owns, and that they have been striving in vain to ruin and vex one whom God himself has undertaken to help and comfort.*" The joy of the saints shall be the shame of their persecutors.

PSALM LXXXVII.

The foregoing psalm was very plain and easy, but in this are things dark and hard, to be understood. It is an encomium of

Zion, as a type and figure of the gospel church, to which what is here spoken is very applicable. Zion, for the temple's sake, is here preferred, i. Before the rest of the land of Canaan, as being crowned with special tokens of God's favour, ver. 1—3. ii. Before any other place or country whatsoever, as being replenished with more eminent men and with a greater plenty of divine blessings, ver. 4—7. Some think it was penned to express the joy of God's people when Zion was in a flourishing state; others think it was penned to encourage their faith and hope when Zion was in ruins and was to be rebuilt after the captivity. Though no man cared for her (Jer. xxx. 17, "This is Zion whom no man seeketh after"), yet God had done great things for her, and spoken glorious things of her, which should all have their perfection and accomplishment in the gospel-church; to this therefore we must have an eye in singing this psalm.

A psalm or song for the sons of Korah.

HIS foundation is in the holy mountains. 2 The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. 3 Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah.

Some make the first words of the psalm to be part of the title; it is a psalm or song whose subject is the holy mountains—the temple built in Zion upon Mount Moriah. This is the foundation of the argument, or beginning of the psalm. Or we may suppose the psalmist had now the tabernacle or temple in view and was contemplating the glories of it, and at length he breaks out into this expression, which has reference, though not to what he had written before, yet to what he had thought of; every one knew what he meant when he said thus abruptly, *Its foundation is in the holy mountains.* Three things are here observed, in praise of the temple:—1. That it was founded on the holy mountains, v. 1. The church has a foundation, so that it cannot sink or totter; Christ himself is the foundation of it, which God has laid. The Jerusalem above is a city that has foundations. The foundation is upon the mountains. It is built high; the mountain of the Lord's house is established upon the top of the mountains, Isa. ii. 2. It is built firmly; the mountains are rocky, and on a rock the church is built. The world is founded upon the seas (xxiv. 2), which are continually ebbing and flowing, and are a very weak foundation; Babel was built in a plain, where the ground was rotten. But the church is built upon the everlasting mountains and the perpetual hills; for sooner shall the mountains depart, and the hills be removed, than the covenant of God's peace shall be disannulled, and on that the church is built, Isa. liv. 10. The foundation is upon the holy mountains. Holiness is the strength and stability of the church: it is this that will support it and keep it from sinking; not so much that it is built upon mountains as that it is built upon holy mountains—upon the promise of God, for the confirming of which he has sworn by his holiness, upon the sanctification of the Spirit, which will secure the happiness of all the saints. 2. That God had expressed a particular affection for it (v. 2): *The Lord loveth the gates of Zion, of the temple, of the houses of doctrine* (so the Chaldee), *more than all the dwellings of Jacob, whether in Jeru-*

sale or any where else in the country. God had said concerning Zion, *This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell.* There he met his people, and conversed with them, received their homage, and showed them the tokens of his favour, and therefore we may conclude how well he loves those gates. Note, (1.) God has a love for the dwellings of Jacob, has a gracious regard to religious families and accepts their family-worship. (2.) Yet he loves the gates of Zion better, not only better than any, but better than all, of the dwellings of Jacob. God was worshipped in the dwellings of Jacob, and family-worship is family-duty, which must by no means be neglected; yet, when they come in competition, public worship (*ceteris paribus*—other things being equal) is to be preferred before private. 3. That there was much said concerning it in the word of God (v. 3): *Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God!* We are to judge of things and persons by the figure they make and the estimate put upon them in and by the scripture. Many base things were spoken of the city of God by the enemies of it, to render it mean and odious; but by him whose judgment we are sure is according to truth glorious things are spoken of it. God said of the temple, *My eyes and my heart shall be there perpetually; I have sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever*, 2 Chron. vii. 16. *Beautiful for situation is Mount Zion*, Ps. xlviii. 2. These are glorious things. Yet more glorious things are spoken of the gospel-church. It is the spouse of Christ, the purchase of his blood; it is a *peculiar people, a holy nation, a royal priesthood*, and the *gates of hell shall not prevail against it*. Let us not be ashamed of the church of Christ in its meanest condition, nor of any that belong to it, nor disown our relation to it, though it be turned ever so much to our reproach, since such glorious things are spoken of it, and not one iota or tittle of what is said shall fall to the ground.

4 I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me: behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; *this man was born there*. 5 And of Zion it shall be said, *This and that man was born in her*: and the highest himself shall establish her. 6 The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, *that this man was born there*. Selah. 7 As well the singers as the players on instruments *shall be there*: all my springs are in thee.

Zion is here compared with other places, and preferred before them; the church of Christ is more glorious and excellent than the nations of the earth. 1. It is owned that other places have their glories (v. 4): "*I will make mention of Rahab*" (that is, *Egypt*)

and Babylon, to those that know me and are about me, and with whom I discourse about public affairs; behold Philistia and Tyre, with Ethiopia" (or rather Arabia), "*we will observe that this man was born there*"; here and there one famous man, eminent for knowledge and virtue, may be produced, that was a native of these countries; here and there one that becomes a proselyte and a worshipper of the true God. But some give another sense of it, supposing that it is a prophecy or promise of bringing the Gentiles into the church and of uniting them in one body with the Jews. God says, "*I will reckon Egypt and Babylon with those that know me*. I will reckon them my people as much as Israel when they shall receive the gospel of Christ, and own them as born in Zion, born again there, and admitted to the privileges of Zion as freely as a true-born Israelite." Those that were strangers and foreigners became *fellow-citizens with the saints*, Eph. ii. 19. A Gentile convert shall stand upon a level with a native Jew; compare Isa. xix. 23—25. *The Lord shall say, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance.* 2. It is proved that the glory of Zion outshines them all, upon many accounts; for, (1.) Zion shall produce many great and good men that shall be famous in their generation, v. 5. Of Zion it shall be said by all her neighbours that *this and that man were born in her*, many men of renown for wisdom and piety, and especially for acquaintance with the words of God and the visions of the Almighty—many prophets and kings, who should be greater favourites of heaven, and greater blessings to the earth, than ever were bred in Egypt or Babylon. The worthies of the church far exceed those of heathen nations, and their names will shine brighter than in perpetual records. *A man, a man was born in her*, by which some understand Christ, that man, that son of man, who is fairer than the children of men; he was born at Bethlehem near Zion, and was the glory of his people Israel. The greatest honour that ever was put upon the Jewish nation was, that of them, *as concerning the flesh, Christ came*, Rom. ix. 5. Or this also may be applied to the conversion of the Gentiles. Of Zion it shall be said that the law which went forth out of Zion, the gospel of Christ, shall be an instrument to beget many souls to God, and the Jerusalem that is from above shall be acknowledged the mother of them all. (2.) Zion's interest shall be strengthened and settled by an almighty power. *The Highest himself shall undertake to establish her*, who can do it effectually; the accession of proselytes out of various nations shall be so far from occasioning discord and division that it shall contribute greatly to Zion's strength; for, God himself having founded her upon an everlasting foundation, whatever convulsions and revolutions there are of states and kingdoms, and however heaven

and earth may be shaken, these are things which cannot be shaken, but must remain. (3.) Zion's sons shall be registered with honour (v. 6): "*The Lord shall count, when he writes up the people, and takes a catalogue of his subjects, that this man was born there, and so is a subject by birth, by the first birth, being born in his house—by the second birth, being born again of his Spirit.*" When God comes to reckon with the children of men, that he may render to every man according to his works, he will observe who was born in Zion, and consequently enjoyed the privileges of God's sanctuary, to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the service of God, Rom. ix. 4; iii. 1, 2. For to them much was given, and therefore of them much will be required, and the account will be accordingly; five talents must be improved by those that were entrusted with five. *I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, and where thou wast born. Selah.* Let those that dwell in Zion mark this, and live up to their profession. (4.) Zion's songs shall be sung with joy and triumph: *As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there to praise God, v. 7.* It was much to the honour of Zion, and is to the honour of the gospel-church, that there God is served and worshipped with rejoicing: his work is done, and done cheerfully; see lxxviii. 25. *All my springs are in thee, O Zion!* So God says; he has deposited treasures of grace in his holy ordinances; there are the springs from which those streams take rise *which make glad the city of our God, xlv. 4.* So the psalmist says, reckoning the springs from which his dry soul must be watered to lie in the sanctuary, in the word and ordinances, and in the communion of saints. The springs of the joy of a carnal worldling lie in wealth and pleasure; but the springs of the joy of a gracious soul lie in the word of God and prayer. Christ is the true temple; all our springs are in him, and from him all our streams flow. *It pleased the Father, and all believers are well pleased with it too, that in him should all fullness dwell.*

PSALM LXXXVIII.

This psalm is a lamentation, one of the most melancholy of all the psalms; and it does not conclude, as usually the melancholy psalms do, with the least intimation of comfort or joy, but, from first to last, it is mourning and woe. It is not upon a public account that the psalmist here complains (here is no mention of the afflictions of the church), but only upon a personal account, especially trouble of mind, and the grief impressed upon his spirits both by his outward afflictions and by the remembrance of his sins and the fear of God's wrath. It is reckoned among the penitential psalms, and it is well when our fears are thus turned into the right channel, and we take occasion from our worldly grievances to sorrow after a godly sort. In this psalm we have, I. The great pressure of spirit that the psalmist was under, ver. 3—6. II. The wrath of God, which was the cause of that pressure, ver. 7, 15—17. III. The wickedness of his friends, ver. 8, 18. IV. The application he made to God by prayer, ver. 1, 2, 3, 13. V. His humble expostulations and pleadings with God, ver. 10, 12, 14. Those who are in trouble of mind may sing this psalm feelingly; those that are not ought to sing it thankfully, blessing God that it is not their case.

A song or psalm for the sons of Korah, to the chief musician upon Mahalath Leannoth, Maschil of Heman the Ezrahite.

O LORD God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before thee: 2 Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry; 3 For my soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave. 4 I am counted with them that go down into the pit: I am as a man that hath no strength: 5 Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more: and they are cut off from thy hand. 6 Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. 7 Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves. Selah. 8 Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me; thou hast made me an abomination unto them: I am shut up, and I cannot come forth. 9 Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction: LORD, I have called daily upon thee, I have stretched out my hands unto thee.

It should seem, by the titles of this and the following psalm, that Heman was the penman of the one and Ethan of the other. There were two, of these names, who were sons of Zerah the son of Judah, 1 Chron. ii. 4, 6. There were two others famed for wisdom, 1 Kings iv. 31, where, to magnify Solomon's wisdom, he is said to be *wiser than Heman and Ethan*. Whether the Heman and Ethan who were Levites and preceptors in the songs of Zion were the same we are not sure, nor which of these, nor whether any of these, were the penmen of these psalms. There was a Heman that was one of the chief singers, who is called *the king's seer, or prophet*, in the words of God (1 Chron. xxv. 5); it is probable that this also was a seer, and yet could see no comfort for himself, an instructor and comforter of others, and yet himself putting comfort away from him. The very first words of the psalm are the only words of comfort and support in all the psalm. There is nothing about him but clouds and darkness; but, before he begins his complaint, he calls God *the God of his salvation*, which intimates both that he looked for salvation, bad as things were, and that he looked up to God for the salvation and depended upon him to be the author of it. Now here we have the psalmist,

I. A man of prayer, one that gave himself to prayer at all times, but especially now that he was in affliction; for *is any afflicted? let him pray.* It is his comfort that he had prayed; it is his complaint that, notwithstanding his prayer, he was still in affliction. He was, 1. Very earnest in prayer: "*I have*

cried unto thee (v. 1), and have *stretched out my hands unto thee* (v. 9), as one that would take hold on thee, and even catch at the mercy, with a holy fear of coming short and missing of it." 2. He was very frequent and constant in prayer: *I have called upon thee daily* (v. 9), nay, *day and night*, v. 1. For thus men ought always to pray, and not to faint; God's own elect cry day and night to him, not only morning and evening, beginning every day and every night with prayer, but spending the day and night in prayer. This is indeed praying always; and then we shall speed in prayer, when we continue instant in prayer. 3. He directed his prayer to God, and from him expected and desired an answer (v. 2): "*Let my prayer come before thee*, to be accepted of thee, not before men, to be seen of them, as the Pharisees' prayers." He does not desire that men should hear them, but, "*Lord, incline thy ear unto my cry*, for to that I refer myself; give what answer to it thou pleasest."

II. He was a man of sorrows, and therefore some make him, in this psalm, a type of Christ, whose complaints on the cross, and sometimes before, were much to the same purpose with this psalm. He cries out (v. 3): *My soul is full of troubles*; so Christ said, *Now is my soul troubled*; and, in his agony, *My soul is exceedingly sorrowful even unto death*, like the psalmist's here, for he says, *My life draws nigh unto the grave*. Heman was a very wise man, and a very good man, a man of God, and a singer too, and one may therefore suppose him to have been a man of a cheerful spirit, and yet now a man of a sorrowful spirit, troubled in mind, and upon the brink of despair. Inward trouble is the sorest trouble, and that which, sometimes, the best of God's saints and servants have been severely exercised with. *The spirit of man*, of the greatest of men, will not always sustain his infirmity, but will droop and sink under it; *who then can bear a wounded spirit?*

III. He looked upon himself as a dying man, whose heart was ready to break with sorrow (v. 5): *Free among the dead* (one of that ghastly corporation), *like the slain that lie in the grave*, whose rotting and perishing nobody takes notice of or is concerned for, nay, whom thou rememberest no more, to protect or provide for the dead bodies, but they become an easy prey to corruption and the worms; they are *cut off from thy hand*, which used to be employed in supporting them and reaching out to them; but, now there is no more occasion for this, they are cut off from it and cut off by it" (*for God will not stretch out his hand to the grave*, Job xxx. 24); "*thou hast laid me in the lowest pit*, as low as possible, my condition low, my spirits low, *in darkness, in the deep* (v. 6), sinking, and seeing no way open of escape, brought to the last extremity, and ready to give up all for gone." Thus greatly may good men be afflicted, such dismal apprehensions may they

have concerning their afflictions, and such dark conclusions may they sometimes be ready to make concerning the issue of them, through the power of melancholy and the weakness of faith.

IV. He complained most of God's displeasure against him, which infused the wormwood and the gall into the affliction and the misery (v. 7): *Thy wrath lies hard upon me*. Could he have discerned the favour and love of God in his affliction, it would have lain light upon him; but it lay hard, very hard, upon him, so that he was ready to sink and faint under it. The impressions of this wrath upon his spirits were God's *waves* with which he afflicted him, which rolled upon him, one on the neck of another, so that he scarcely recovered from one dark thought before he was oppressed with another; these waves beat against him with noise and fury; not some, but all, of God's waves were made use of in afflicting him and bearing him down. Even the children of God's love may sometimes apprehend themselves children of wrath, and no outward trouble can lie so hard upon them as that apprehension.

V. It added to his affliction that his friends deserted him and made themselves strange to him. When we are in trouble it is some comfort to have those about us that love us, and sympathize with us; but this good man had none such, which gives him occasion, not to accuse them, or charge them with treachery, ingratitude, and inhumanity, but to complain to God, with an eye to his hand in this part of the affliction (v. 8): *Thou hast put away my acquaintance far from me*. Providence had removed them, or rendered them incapable of being serviceable to him, or alienated their affections from him; for every creature is that to us (and no more) that God makes it to be. If our old acquaintance be shy of us, and those we expect kindness from prove unkind, we must bear that with the same patient submission to the divine will that we do other afflictions, Job xix. 13. Nay, his friends were not only strange to him, but even hated him, because he was poor and in distress: "*Thou hast made me an abomination to them*; they are not only shy of me, but sick of me, and I am looked upon by them, not only with contempt, but with abhorrence." Let none think it strange concerning such a trial as this, when Heman, who was so famed for wisdom, was yet, when the world frowned upon him, neglected, as a vessel in which is no pleasure.

VI. He looked upon his case as helpless and deplorable: "*I am shut up, and I cannot come forth*, a close prisoner, under the arrests of divine wrath, and no way open of escape." He therefore lies down and sinks under his troubles, because he sees not any probability of getting out of them. For thus he bemoans himself (v. 9): *My eye mourneth by reason of affliction*. Sometimes giving vent to grief by weeping gives some ease to a troubled spi-

rit. Yet weeping must not hinder praying; we must sow in tears: *My eye mourns, but I cry unto thee daily.* Let prayers and tears go together, and they shall be accepted together. *I have heard thy prayers, I have seen thy tears.*

10 Wilt thou show wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise and praise thee? Selah. 11 Shall thy loving-kindness be declared in the grave? or thy faithfulness in destruction? 12 Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? 13 But unto thee have I cried, O LORD; and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee. 14 LORD, why castest thou off my soul? *why* hidest thou thy face from me? 15 *I am* afflicted and ready to die from *my* youth up: *while* I suffer thy terrors I am distracted. 16 Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off. 17 They came round about me daily like water; they compassed me about together. 18 Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness.

In these verses,

I. The psalmist expostulates with God concerning the present deplorable condition he was in (v. 10—12): “*Wilt thou do a miraculous work to the dead, and raise them to life again? Shall those that are dead and buried rise up to praise thee? No; they leave it to their children to rise up in their room to praise God; none expects that they should do it; and wherefore should they rise, wherefore should they live, but to praise God? The life we are born to at first, and the life we hope to rise to at last, must thus be spent. But shall thy lovingkindness to thy people be declared in the grave, either by those or to those that lie buried there? And thy faithfulness to thy promise, shall that be told in destruction? shall thy wonders be wrought in the dark, or known there, and thy righteousness in the grave, which is the land of forgetfulness, where men remember nothing, nor are themselves remembered? Departed souls may indeed know God’s wonders and declare his faithfulness, justice, and lovingkindness; but deceased bodies cannot; they can neither receive God’s favours in comfort nor return them in praise.*” Now we will not suppose these expostulations to be the language of despair, as if he thought God could not help him or would not, much less do they imply any disbelief of the resurrection of the dead at the last day; but he thus pleads with God for speedy relief: “Lord, thou art good, thou art faithful, thou art righteous; these attributes of thine will be made known in my

deliverance, but, if it be not hastened, it will come too late; for I shall be dead and past relief, dead and not capable of receiving any comfort, very shortly.” Job often pleaded thus, Job vii. 8; x. 21.

II. He resolves to continue instant in prayer, and the more so because the deliverance was deferred (v. 13): “*Unto thee have I cried many a time, and found comfort in so doing, and therefore I will continue to do so; in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee.*” Note, Though our prayers be not answered immediately, yet we must not therefore give over praying, because *the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak and not lie.* God delays the answer in order that he may try our patience and perseverance in prayer. He resolves to seek God early, in the morning, when his spirits were lively, and before the business of the day began to crowd in—in the morning, after he had been tossed with cares, and sorrowful thoughts in the silence and solitude of the night; but how could he say, *My prayer shall prevent thee?* Not as if he could wake sooner to pray than God to hear and answer; for he neither slumbers nor sleeps; but it intimates that he would be up earlier than ordinary to pray, would *prevent* (that is, go before) his usual hour of prayer. The greater our afflictions are the more solicitous and serious we should be in prayer. “*My prayer shall present itself before thee, and be betimes with thee, and shall not stay for the encouragement of the beginning of mercy, but reach towards it with faith and expectation even before the day dawns.*” God often prevents our prayers and expectations with his mercies; let us prevent his mercies with our prayers and expectations.

III. He sets down what he will say to God in prayer. 1. He will humbly reason with God concerning the abject afflicted condition he was now in (v. 14): “*Lord, why castest thou off my soul? What is it that provokes thee to treat me as one abandoned? Show me wherefore thou contendest with me.*” He speaks it with wonder that God should cast off an old servant, should cast off one that was resolved not to cast him off: “No wonder men cast me off; but, Lord, why dost thou, whose gifts and callings are without repentance? *Why hidest thou thy face, as one angry at me, that either hast no favour for me or wilt not let me know that thou hast?* Nothing grieves a child of God so much as God’s hiding his face from him, nor is there any thing he so much dreads as God’s casting off his soul. If the sun be clouded, that darkens the earth; but if the sun should abandon the earth, and quite cast it off, what a dungeon would it be! 2. He will humbly repeat the same complaints he had before made, until God have mercy on him. Two things he represents to God as his grievances—(1.) That God was a terror to him: *I suffer thy terrors, v. 15.* He had continual

frightful apprehensions of the wrath of God against him for his sins and the consequences of that wrath. It terrified him to think of God, of falling into his hands and appearing before him to receive his doom from him. He perspired and trembled at the apprehension of God's displeasure against him, and the terror of his majesty. Note, Even those that are designed for God's favours may yet, for a time, suffer his terrors. The spirit of adoption is first a spirit of bondage to fear. Poor Job complained of the terrors of God *setting themselves in array against him*, Job vi. 4. The psalmist here explains himself, and tells us what he means by God's terrors, even his *fiere wrath*. Let us see what dreadful impressions those terrors made upon him, and how deeply they wounded him. [1.] They had almost taken away his life: "*I am so afflicted with them that I am ready to die, and*" (as the word is) "*to give up the ghost. Thy terrors have cut me off,*" v. 16. What is hell, that eternal excision, by which damned sinners are for ever cut off from God and all happiness, but God's terrors fastening and preying upon their guilty consciences? [2.] They had almost taken away the use of his reason: *When I suffer thy terrors I am distracted*. This sad effect the terrors of the Lord have had upon many, and upon some good men, who have thereby been put quite out of the possession of their own souls, a most piteous case, and which ought to be looked upon with great compassion. [3.] This had continued long: *From my youth up I suffer thy terrors*. He had been from his childhood afflicted with melancholy, and trained up in sorrow under the discipline of that school. If we begin our days with trouble, and the days of our mourning have been prolonged a great while, let us not think it strange, but let tribulation work patience. It is observable that Heman, who became eminently wise and good, was *afflicted and ready to die*, and suffered God's terrors, *from his youth up*. Thus many have found it was good for them to bear the yoke in their youth, that sorrow has been much better for them than laughter would have been, and that being much afflicted, and often ready to die, when they were young, they have, by the grace of God, got such an habitual seriousness and weanedness from the world as have been of great use to them all their days. Sometimes those whom God designs for eminent services are prepared for them by exercises of this kind. [4.] His affliction was now extreme, and worse than ever. God's terrors now came round about him, so that from all sides he was assaulted with variety of troubles, and he had no comfortable gale from any point of the compass. They broke in upon him together like an inundation of water; and this daily, and all the day; so that he had no rest, no respite, not the least breathing-time, no lucid intervals, nor any gleam of hope. Such was the calamitous state of a

very wise and good man; he was so surrounded with terrors that he could find no place of shelter, nor lie any where under the wind. (2.) That no friend he had in the world was a comfort to him (v. 18): *Lover and friend hast thou put far from me*; some are dead, others at a distance, and perhaps many unkind. Next to the comforts of religion are those of friendship and society; therefore to be friendless is (as to this life) almost to be comfortless; and to those who have had friends, but have lost them, the calamity is the more grievous. With this the psalmist here closes his complaint, as if this were that which completed his woe and gave the finishing stroke to this melancholy piece. If our friends are put far from us by scattering providences, nay, if by death our acquaintance are removed into darkness, we have reason to look upon it as a sore affliction, but must acknowledge and submit to the hand of God in it.

PSALM LXXXIX.

Many psalms that begin with complaint and prayer end with joy and praise, but this begins with joy and praise and ends with sad complaints and petitions; for the psalmist first recounts God's former favours, and then with the consideration of them aggravates the present grievances. It is uncertain when it was penned; only, in general, that it was at a time when the house of David was woefully eclipsed; some think it was at the time of the captivity of Babylon, when king Zedekiah was insulted over, and abused, by Nebuchadnezzar, and then they make the title to signify no more than that the psalm was set to the tune of a song of Ethan the son of Zerah, called Maschil; others suppose it to be penned by Ethan, who is mentioned in the story of Solomon, who, outliving that glorious prince, thus lamented the great disgrace done to the house of David in the next reign by the revolt of the ten tribes. 1. The psalmist, in the joyful pleasant part of the psalm, gives glory to God, and takes comfort to himself and his friends. This he does more briefly, mentioning God's mercy and truth (ver. 1) and his covenant (ver. 2-4), but more largely in the following verses, wherein, 1. He adores the glory and perfection of God, ver. 5-14. 2. He pleases himself in the happiness of those that are admitted into communion with him, ver. 15-18. 3. He builds all his hope upon God's covenant with David, as a type of Christ, ver. 19-37. II. In the melancholy part of the psalm he laments the present calamitous state of the prince and royal family (ver. 38-45), expostulates with God upon it (ver. 46-49), and then concludes with prayer for redress, ver. 50, 51. In singing this psalm we must have high thoughts of God, a lively faith in his covenant with the Redeemer, and a sympathy with the afflicted parts of the church.

Maschil of Ethan the Ezrahite.

I WILL sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations. 2 For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens. 3 I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, 4 Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah.

The psalmist has a very sad complaint to make of the deplorable condition of the family of David at this time, and yet he begins the psalm with songs of praise; for we must, in every thing, in every state, give thanks; thus we must glorify the Lord in the fire. We think, when we are in trouble, that we get ease by complaining; but we do more—we get joy, by praising. Let our complaints therefore be turned into thanksgivings; and in these verses we find that which will be

matter of praise and thanksgiving for us in the worst of times, whether upon a personal or a public account, 1. However it be, the everlasting God is good and true, v. 1. Though we may find it hard to reconcile present dark providences with the goodness and truth of God, yet we must abide by this principle, That God's mercies are inexhaustible and his truths inviolable; and these must be the matter of our joy and praise: "*I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever*, sing a praising song to God's honour, a pleasant song for my own solace, and *Maschil*, an instructive song, for the edification of others." We may be for ever singing God's mercies, and yet the subject will not be drawn dry. We must sing of God's mercies as long as we live, train up others to sing of them when we are gone, and hope to be singing them in heaven world without end; and this is *singing of the mercies of the Lord for ever*. With my mouth, and with my pen (for by that also do we speak), will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations, assuring posterity, from my own observation and experience, that God is true to every word that he has spoken, that they may learn to put their trust in God, lxxviii. 6. 2. However it be, the everlasting covenant is firm and sure, v. 2—4. Here we have, (1.) The psalmist's faith and hope: "Things now look black, and threaten the utter extirpation of the house of David; but *I have said*, and I have warrant from the word of God to say it, that *mercy shall be built up for ever*." As the goodness of God's nature is to be the matter of our song (v. 1), so much more the mercy that is built for us in the covenant; it is still increasing, like a house in the building up, and shall still continue our rest for ever, like a house built up. It shall be built up for ever; for the everlasting habitations we hope for in the new Jerusalem are of this building. If mercy shall be built for ever, then the *tabernacle of David, which has fallen down*, shall be raised out of its ruins, and built up as in the days of old, Amos ix. 11. Therefore mercy shall be built up for ever, because *thy faithfulness shall thou establish in the very heavens*. Though our expectations are in some particular instances disappointed, yet God's promises are not disannulled; they are established in the very heavens (that is, in his eternal counsels); they are above the changes of this lower region and out of the reach of the opposition of hell and earth. The stability of the material heavens is an emblem of the truth of God's word; the heavens may be clouded by vapours arising out of the earth, but they cannot be touched, they cannot be changed. (2.) An abstract of the covenant upon which this faith and hope are built: *I have said it*, says the psalmist, for *God hath sworn it*, that the heirs of promise might be entirely satisfied of the immutability of his counsel. He brings in God speaking (v. 3), owning, to the comfort of his people, "*I have made a cove-*

nant, and therefore will make it good." The covenant is made with David; the covenant of royalty is made with him, as the father of his family, and with his seed through him and for his sake, representing the covenant of grace made with Christ as head of the church and with all believers as his spiritual seed. David is here called *God's chosen* and *his servant*; and, as God is not changeable to recede from his own choice, so he is not unrighteous to cast off one that served him. Two things encourage the psalmist to build his faith on this covenant:—[1.] The ratification of it; it was confirmed with an oath: *The Lord has sworn, and he will not repent*. [2.] The perpetuity of it; the blessings of the covenant were not only secured to David himself, but were entailed on his family; it was promised that his family should continue—*Thy seed will I establish for ever*, so that *David shall not want a son to reign* (Jer. xxxiii. 20, 21); and that it should continue a royal family—*I will build up thy throne to all generations*, to all the generations of time. This has its accomplishment only in Christ, of the seed of David, who lives for ever, to whom God has given the throne of his father David, and of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end. Of this covenant the psalmist will return to speak more largely, v. 19, &c.

5 And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O LORD: thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints. 6 For who in the heaven can be compared unto the LORD? *who* among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD? 7 God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all *them that are* about him. 8 O LORD God of hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee? 9 Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them. 10 Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain; thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm. 11 The heavens *are* thine, the earth also *is* thine: *as for* the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them. 12 The north and the south thou hast created them: Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name. 13 Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand. 14 Justice and judgment *are* the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.

These verses are full of the praises of God. Observe,

I. Where, and by whom, God is to be praised. 1. God is praised by the angels above: *The heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Lord! v. 5*; that is, "the glorious inhabitants of the upper world continually celebrate thy praises." *Bless the Lord, you his angels, ciii. 20*. The works of God are wonders even to those that are best acquainted and most intimately conversant with them; the more God's works are known the more they are admired and praised. This should make us love heaven, and long to be there, that there we shall have nothing else to do but to praise God and his wonders. 2. God is praised by the assemblies of his saints on earth (*praise waits for him in Zion*); and, though their praises fall so far short of the praises of angels, yet God is pleased to take notice of them, and accept of them, and reckon himself honoured by them. "Thy faithfulness and the truth of thy promise, that rock on which the church is built, shall be praised in the congregation of the saints, who owe their all to that faithfulness, and whose constant comfort it is that there is a promise, and that he is faithful who has promised." It is expected from God's saints on earth that they praise him; who should, if they do not? Let every saint praise him, but especially the congregation of saints; when they come together, let them join in praising God. The more the better; it is the more like heaven. Of the honour done to God by the assembly of the saints he speaks again (*v. 7*): *God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints*. Saints should assemble for religious worship, that they may publicly own their relation to God and may stir up one another to give honour to him, and, in keeping up communion with God, may likewise maintain the communion of saints. In religious assemblies God has promised the presence of his grace, but we must also, in them, have an eye to his glorious presence, that the familiarity we are admitted to may not breed the least contempt; for he is terrible in his holy places, and therefore greatly to be feared. A holy awe of God must fall upon us, and fill us, in all our approaches to God, even in secret, to which something may very well be added by the solemnity of public assemblies. God must be had in reverence of all that are about him, that attend him continually as his servants or approach him upon any particular errand. See *Lev. x. 3*. Those only serve God acceptably who serve him with reverence and godly fear, *Heb. xii. 28*.

II. What it is to praise God; it is to acknowledge him to be a being of unparalleled perfection, such a one that there is none like him, nor any to be compared with him, *v. 6*. If there be any beings that can pretend to vie with God, surely they must be found among the angels; but they are all infinitely short of him: *Who in the heaven can*

be compared with the Lord, so as to challenge any share of the reverence and adoration which are due to him only, or to set up in rivalry with him for the homage of the children of men? They are sons of the mighty, but which of them can be likened unto the Lord? Nobles are princes' peers; some parity there is between them. But there is none between God and the angels; they are not his peers. *To whom will you liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One, Isa. xl. 25*. This is insisted on again (*v. 8*): *Who is a strong Lord like unto thee?* No angel, no earthly potentate, whatsoever, is comparable to God, or has an arm like him, or can thunder with a voice like him. Thy faithfulness is round about thee; that is, "thy angels who are round about thee, attending thee with their praises and ready to go on thy errands, are all faithful." Or, rather, "In every thing thou doest, on all sides, thou approvest thyself faithful to thy word, above whatever prince or potentate was." Among men it is too often found that those who are most able to break their word are least careful to keep it; but God is both strong and faithful; he can do every thing, and yet will never do an unjust thing.

III. What we ought, in our praises, to give God the glory of. Several things are here mentioned. 1. The command God has of the most ungovernable creatures (*v. 9*): *Thou rulest the raging of the sea*, than which nothing is more frightful or threatening, nor more out of the power of man to give check to; it can swell no higher, roll no further, beat no harder, continue no longer, nor do any more hurt, than God suffers it. "*When the waves thereof arise thou canst immediately hush them asleep, still them, and make them quiet, and turn the storm into a calm.*" This coming in here as an act of omnipotence, what manner of man then was the Lord Jesus, whom the winds and seas obeyed? 2. The victories God has obtained over the enemies of his church. His ruling the raging of the sea and quelling its billows was an emblem of this (*v. 10*): *Thou hast broken Rahab, many a proud enemy* (so it signifies), Egypt in particular, which is sometimes called *Rahab*, broken it in pieces, as one that is slain and utterly unable to make head again. "The head being broken, thou hast scattered the remainder with the arm of thy strength." God has more ways than one to deal with his and his church's enemies. We think he should slay them immediately, but sometimes he scatters them, that he may send them abroad to be monuments of his justice, *lix. 11*. The remembrance of the breaking of Egypt in pieces is a comfort to the church, in reference to the present power of Babylon; for God is still the same. 3. The incontestable property he has in all the creatures of the upper and lower world (*v. 11, 12*): "Men are honoured for their large possessions; but the heavens are thine, O Lord! the

earth also is thine; therefore we praise thee, therefore we trust in thee, therefore we will not fear what man can do against us. *The world and the fulness thereof*, all the riches contained in it, all the inhabitants of it, both the tenements and the tenants, are all thine; for *thou hast founded them*," and the founder may justly claim to be the owner. He specifies, (1.) The remotest parts of the world, the north and south, the countries that lie under the two poles, which are uninhabited and little known: "*Thou hast created them*, and therefore knowest them, takest care of them, and hast tributes of praise from them." The north is said to be *hung over the empty place*; yet what fulness there is there God is the owner of it. (2.) The highest parts of the world. He mentions the two highest hills in Canaan—"Tabor and Hermon" (one lying to the west, the other to the east); "these shall rejoice in thy name, for they are under the care of thy providence, and they produce offerings for thy altar." The little hills are said to rejoice in their own fruitfulness, lxxv. 12. Tabor is commonly supposed to be that high mountain in Galilee on the top of which Christ was transfigured; and then indeed it might be said to rejoice in that voice which was there heard, *This is my beloved Son*. 4. The power and justice, the mercy and truth, with which he governs the world and rules in the affairs of the children of men, v. 13, 14. (1.) God is able to do every thing; for he is the Lord God Almighty. His arm, his hand, is mighty and strong, both to save his people and to destroy his and their enemies; none can either resist the force or bear the weight of his mighty hand. *High is his right hand*, to reach the highest, even those that *set their nests among the stars* (Amos ix. 2, 3; Obad. 4); *his right hand is exalted* in what he has done, for in thousands of instances he has signalized his power, cxviii. 16. (2.) He never did, nor ever will do, any thing that is either unjust or unwise; for *righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne*. None of all his dictates or decrees ever varied from the rules of equity and wisdom, nor could ever any charge God with unrighteousness or folly. Justice and judgment are the *preparing of his throne* (so some), the *establishment of it*, so others. The preparations for his government in his counsels from eternity, and the establishment of it in its consequences to eternity, are all justice and judgment. (3.) He always does that which is kind to his people and consonant to the word which he has spoken: "*Mercy and truth shall go before thy face*, to prepare thy way, as harbingers to make room for thee—mercy in promising, truth in performing—truth in being as good as thy word, mercy in being better." How praiseworthy are these in great men, much more in the great God, in whom they are in perfection:

15 Blessed is the people that know

the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance. 16 In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted. 17 For thou art the glory of their strength: and in thy favour our horn shall be exalted. 18 For the LORD is our defence; and the Holy One of Israel is our king.

The psalmist, having largely shown the blessedness of the God of Israel, here shows the blessedness of the Israel of God. As *there is none like unto the God of Jeshurun*, so, *happy art thou, O Israel! there is none like unto thee, O people!* especially as a type of the gospel-Israel, consisting of all true believers, whose happiness is here described.

I. Glorious discoveries are made to them, and glad tidings of good brought to them; they hear, *they know, the joyful sound*, v. 15. This may allude, 1. To the shout of a victorious army, the shout of a king, Num. xxiii. 21. Israel have the tokens of God's presence with them in their wars; the sound of the *going in the top of the mulberry-trees* was indeed a joyful sound (2 Sam. v. 24); and they often returned making the earth ring with their songs of triumph; these were joyful sounds. Or, 2. To the sound that was made over the sacrifices and on the solemn feast-day, lxxx. 1—3. This was the happiness of Israel, that they had among them the free and open profession of God's holy religion, and abundance of joy in their sacrifices. Or, 3. To the sound of the jubilee-trumpet; a joyful sound it was to servants and debtors, to whom it proclaimed release. The gospel is indeed a joyful sound, a sound of victory, of liberty, of communion with God, and the *sound of abundance of rain*; blessed are the people that hear it, and know it, and bid it welcome.

II. Special tokens of God's favour are granted them: "*They shall walk, O Lord! in the light of thy countenance*; they shall govern themselves by thy directions, shall be guided by thy eye; and they shall delight themselves in thy consolations. They shall have the favour of God; they shall know that they have it, and it shall be continual matter of joy and rejoicing to them. They shall go through all the exercises of a holy life under the powerful influences of God's loving-kindness, which shall make their duty pleasant to them and make them sincere in it, aiming at this, as their end, to be accepted of the Lord." We then walk in the light of the Lord when we fetch all our comforts from God's favour and are very careful to keep ourselves in his love.

III. They never want matter for joy. Blessed are God's people, for in his name, in all that whereby he has made himself known if it be not their own fault, *they shall rejoice*

all the day. Those that rejoice in Christ Jesus, and make God their exceeding joy, have enough to counterbalance their grievances and silence their griefs; and therefore their joy is full (1 John i. 4) and constant; it is their duty to rejoice evermore.

IV. Their relation to God is their honour and dignity. They are happy, for they are high. Surely in the Lord, in the Lord Christ, they have righteousness and strength, and so are recommended by him to the divine acceptance; and therefore in him shall all the seed of Israel glory, Isa. xlv. 24, 25. So it is here, v. 16, 17. 1. "In thy righteousness shall they be exalted, and not in any righteousness of their own." We are exalted out of danger, and into honour, purely by the righteousness of Christ, which is a clothing both for dignity and for defence. 2. "Thou art the glory of their strength," that is, "thou art their strength, and it is their glory that thou art so, and what they glory in." Thanks be to God who always causes us to triumph. 3.

'In thy favour, which through Christ we hope for, our horn shall be exalted. The horn denotes beauty, plenty, and power; these those have who are made accepted in the beloved. What greater preferment are men capable of in this world than to be God's favourites?

V. Their relation to God is their protection and safety (v. 18): "For our shield is of the Lord" (so the margin) "and our king is from the Holy One of Israel. If God be our ruler, he will be our defender; and who is he then that can harm us?" It was the happiness of Israel that God himself had the erecting of their bulwarks and the nominating of their king (so some take it); or, rather, that he was himself a wall of fire round about them, and, as a Holy One, the author and centre of their holy religion; he was their King, and so their glory in the midst of them. Christ is the Holy One of Israel, that holy thing; and in nothing was that peculiar people more blessed than in this, that he was born King of the Jews. Now this account of the blessedness of God's Israel comes in here as that to which it was hard to reconcile their present calamitous state.

19 Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people. 20 I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him: 21 With whom my hand shall be established: mine arm also shall strengthen him. 22 The enemy shall not exact upon him; nor the son of wickedness afflict him. 23 And I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him. 24 But my faithfulness and my mercy

shall be with him: and in my name shall his horn be exalted. 25 I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers. 26 He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation. 27 Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth. 28 My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. 29 His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. 30 If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; 31 If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; 32 Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. 33 Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. 34 My covenant will I not break; nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. 35 Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. 36 His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. 37 It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven. Selah.

The covenant God made with David and his seed was mentioned before (v. 3, 4); but in these verses it is enlarged upon, and pleaded with God, for favour to the royal family, now almost sunk and ruined; yet certainly it looks at Christ, and has its accomplishment in him much more than in David; nay, some passages here are scarcely applicable at all to David, but must be understood of Christ only (who is therefore called David our king, Hos. iii. 5), and very great and precious promises they are which are here made to the Redeemer, which are strong foundations for the faith and hope of the redeemed to build upon. The comforts of our redemption flow from the covenant of redemption; all our springs are in that, Isa. lv. 3. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David, Acts xiii. 34. Now here we have an account of those sure mercies. Observe,

I. What assurance we have of the truth of the promise, which may encourage us to build upon it. We are here told, 1. How it was spoken (v. 19): Thou didst speak in vision to thy Holy One. God's promise to David, which is especially referred to here, was spoken in vision to Nathan the prophet, 2 Sam. vii. 12—17. Then, when the Holy One of Israel was their king (v. 18), he appointed

David to be his viceroy. But to all the prophets, those holy ones, he *spoke in vision* concerning Christ, and to him himself especially, who had lain in his bosom from eternity, and was made perfectly acquainted with the whole design of redemption, Matt. xi. 27. 2. How it was sworn to and ratified (v. 35): *Once have I sworn by my holiness*, that darling attribute. In swearing by his holiness, he swore by himself; for he will as soon cease to be as be otherwise than holy. His swearing once is enough; he needs not swear again, as David did (1 Sam. xx. 17); for his word and oath are two immutable things. As Christ was made a priest, so he was made a king, *by an oath* (Heb. vii. 21); for his kingdom and priesthood are both unchangeable.

II. The choice made of the person to whom the promise is given, v. 19, 20. David was a king of God's own choosing, so is Christ, and therefore both are called *God's kings*, Ps. ii. 6. David was mighty, a man of courage and fit for business; he was chosen out of the people, not out of the princes, but the shepherds. God found him out, exalted him, laid help upon him, and ordered Samuel to anoint him. But this is especially to be applied to Christ. 1. He is one that is mighty, every way qualified for the great work he was to undertake, *able to save to the uttermost*—mighty in strength, for he is the Son of God—mighty in love, for he is able experimentally to compassionate those that are tempted. He is *the mighty God*, Isa. ix. 6. 2. He is *chosen out of the people*, one of us, bone of our bone, that takes part with us of flesh and blood. Being ordained for men, he is taken from among men, that his terror might not make us afraid. 3. God has found him. He is a Saviour of God's own providing; for the salvation, from first to last, is purely the Lord's doing. *He has found the ransom*, Joh xxxiii. 24. We could never have found a person fit to undertake this great work, Rev. v. 3, 4. 4. God has *laid help upon him*, not only helped him, but treasured up help in him for us, laid it as a charge upon him to help fallen man up again, to help the chosen remnant to heaven. *In me is thy help*, Hos. xiii. 9. 5. He has exalted him, by constituting him the prophet, priest, and king of his church, clothing him with power, raising him from the dead, and setting him at his own right hand. Whom God chooses and uses he will exalt. 6. He has anointed him, has qualified him for his office, and so confirmed him in it, by giving him the Spirit, not by measure, but without measure, infinitely above his fellows. He is called *Messiah*, or *Christ*, the *Anointed*. 7. In all this he designed him to be his own servant, for the accomplishing of his eternal purpose and the advancement of the interests of his kingdom among men.

III. The promises made to this chosen one, to David in the type and the Son of

David in the antitype, in which not only gracious, but glorious things are spoken of him.

1. With reference to himself, as king and God's servant: and what makes for him makes for all his loving subjects. It is here promised, (1.) That God would stand by him and strengthen him in his undertaking (v. 21): *With him my hand not only shall be, but shall be established*, by promise, shall be so established that he shall by it be established and confirmed in all his offices, so that none of them shall be undermined and overthrown, though by the man of sin they shall all be usurped and fought against. Christ had a great deal of hard work to do and hard usage to go through; but he that gave him commission gave him forces sufficient for the execution of his commission: *"My arm also shall strengthen him to break through and bear up under all his difficulties."* No good work can miscarry in the hand of those whom God himself undertakes to strengthen. (2.) That he should be victorious over his enemies, that they should not encroach upon him (v. 22): *The son of wickedness shall not exact upon him, nor afflict him*. He that at first broke the peace would set himself against him that undertook to make peace, and do what he could to blast his design: but he could only reach to bruise his heel; further he could not exact upon him nor afflict him. Christ became a surety for our debt, and thereby Satan and death thought to gain advantage against him; but he satisfied the demands of God's justice, and then they could not exact upon him. *The prince of this world cometh, but he has nothing in me*, John xiv. 30. Nay, they not only shall not prevail against him, but they shall fall before him (v. 23): *I will beat down his foes before his face*; the prince of this world shall be cast out, principalities and powers spoiled, and he shall be the death of death itself, and the destruction of the grave, Hos. xiii. 14. Some apply this to the ruin which God brought upon the Jewish nation, that persecuted Christ and put him to death. But all Christ's enemies, who hate him and will not have him to reign over them, shall be brought forth and slain before him, Luke xix. 27. (3.) That he should be the great trustee of the covenant between God and men, that God would be gracious and true to us (v. 24): *My faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him*. They were with David; God continued merciful to him, and so approved himself faithful. They were with Christ; God made good all his promises to him. But that is not all; God's mercy to us, and his faithfulness to us, are with Christ; he is not only pleased with him, but with us in him; and it is in him that all the promises of God are yea and amen. So that if any poor sinners hope for benefit by the faithfulness and mercy of God, let them know it is with Christ; it is lodged in his hand, and to him they must apply for it (v. 28): *My mercy will I keep for him*, to be disposed of by him,

for evermore; in the channel of Christ's mediation all the streams of divine goodness will for ever run. Therefore it is the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ which we look for unto eternal life, Jude 21; John xvii. 2. And, as the mercy of God flows to us through him, so the promise of God is, through him, firm to us: *My covenant shall stand fast with him, with the covenant of redemption made with him and the covenant of grace made with us in him. The new covenant is therefore always new, and firmly established, because it is lodged in the hands of a Mediator, Heb. viii. 6. The covenant stands fast, because it stands upon this basis. And this redounds to the everlasting honour of the Lord Jesus, that to him the great cause between God and man is entirely referred and the Father has committed all judgment to him, that all men might honour him (John v. 22, 23); therefore it is here said, In my name shall his horn be exalted; this shall be his glory, that God's name is in him (Exod. xxiii. 21), and that he acts in God's name. As the Father gave me commandment, so I do. (4) That his kingdom should be greatly enlarged (v. 25): I will set his hand in the sea (he shall have the dominion of the seas, and the isles of the sea), and his right hand in the rivers, the inland countries that are watered with rivers. David's kingdom extended itself to the Great Sea, and the Red Sea, to the river of Egypt and the river Euphrates. But it is in the kingdom of the Messiah that this has its full accomplishment, and shall have more and more, when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ (Rev. xi. 15), and the isles shall wait for his law. (5.) That he should own God as his Father, and God would own him as his Son, his firstborn, v. 26, 27. This is a comment upon these words in Nathan's message concerning Solomon (for he also was a type of Christ as well as David), *I will be his Father and he shall be my Son* (2 Sam. vii. 14), and the relation shall be owned on both sides. [1.] *He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father.* It is probable that Solomon did so; but we are sure Christ did so, in the days of his flesh, when he offered up strong cries to God, and called him *holy Father, righteous Father*, and taught us to address ourselves to him as *our Father in heaven*. Christ, in his agony, cried unto God, *Thou art my Father* (Matt. xxvi. 39, 42, *O my Father*), and, upon the cross, *Father, forgive them; Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*. He looked upon him likewise as his God, and therefore he perfectly obeyed him, and submitted to his will in his whole undertaking (he is *my God and your God*, John xx. 17), and as the rock of his salvation, who would bear him up and bear him out in his undertaking, and make him more than a conqueror, even a complete Saviour; and therefore with an undaunted resolution he endured the cross, despising the shame, for he knew he should be both jus-*

tified and glorified. [2.] *I will make him my firstborn.* I see not how this can be applied to David; it is Christ's prerogative to be the firstborn of every creature, and, as such, the heir of all things, Col. i. 15; Heb. i. 2, 6. When all power was given to Christ both in heaven and in earth, and all things were delivered unto him by the Father, then God made him his firstborn, and far higher, more great and honourable, than the kings of the earth; for he is the King of kings, angels, authorities, and powers, being made subject to him, 1 Pet. iii. 22.

2. With reference to his seed. God's covenants always took in the seed of the covenanters; this does so (v. 29, 36): *His seed shall endure for ever*, and with it his throne. Now this will be differently understood according as we apply it to Christ or David.

(1.) If we apply it to David, by his seed we are to understand his successors, Solomon and the following kings of Judah, who descended from the loins of David. It is supposed that they might degenerate, and not walk in the spirit and steps of their father David; in such a case they must expect to come under divine rebukes, such as the house of David was at this time under, v. 38. But let this encourage them, that, though they were corrected, they should not be abandoned or disinherited. This refers to that part of Nathan's message (2 Sam. vii. 14, 15), *If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him, but my mercy shall not depart from him*. Thus far David's seed and throne did endure for ever, that, notwithstanding the wickedness of many of his posterity, who were the scandals of his house, yet his family continued, and continued in the imperial dignity, a very long time,—that, as long as Judah continued a kingdom, David's posterity were kings of it, and the royalty of that kingdom was never in any other family, as that of the ten tribes was, in Jeroboam's first, then in Baasha's, &c.,—and that the family of David continued a family of distinction till that Son of David came whose throne should endure for ever; see Luke i. 27, 32; ii. 4, 11. If David's posterity, in after-times, should forsake God and their duty and revolt to the ways of sin, God would bring desolating judgments upon them and ruin the family; and yet he would not take away his lovingkindness from David, nor break his covenant with him; for, in the Messiah, who should come out of his loins, all these promises shall have their accomplishment to the full. Thus, when the Jews were rejected, the apostle shows that God's covenant with Abraham was not broken, because it was fulfilled in his spiritual seed, the heirs of the righteousness of faith, Rom. xi. 7.

(2.) If we apply it to Christ, by his seed we are to understand his subjects, all believers, his spiritual seed, the children which God has given him, Heb. ii. 13. This is that seed which shall be made to endure for ever, and his throne in the midst of them, in the church

in the heart, *as the days of heaven.* To the end Christ shall have a people in the world to serve and honour him. *He shall see his seed; he shall prolong his days.* This holy seed shall endure for ever in a glorified state, when time and days shall be no more; and thus Christ's throne and kingdom shall be perpetuated: the kingdom of his grace shall continue through all the ages of time and the kingdom of his glory to the endless ages of eternity.

[1.] The continuance of Christ's kingdom is here made doubtful by the sins and afflictions of his subjects; their iniquities and calamities threaten the ruin of it. This case is here put, that we may not be offended when it comes to be a case in fact, but that we may reconcile it with the stability of the covenant and be assured of that notwithstanding. *First*, It is here supposed that there will be much amiss in the subjects of Christ's kingdom. His children may *forsake God's law* (v. 30) by omissions, and *break his statutes* (v. 31) by commissions. There are spots which are the spots of God's children, Deut. xxxii. 5. Many corruptions there are in the bowels of the church, as well as in the hearts of those who are the members of it, and these corruptions break out. *Secondly*, They are here told that they must smart for it (v. 32): *I will visit their transgression with a rod*, their transgression sooner than that of others. *You only have I known, and therefore I will punish you*, Amos iii. 2. Their being related to Christ shall not excuse them from being called to an account. But observe what affliction is to God's people. 1. It is but a rod, not an axe, not a sword; it is for correction, not for destruction. This denotes gentleness in the affliction; it is the rod of men, such a rod as men use in correcting their children; and it denotes a design of good in and by the affliction, such a rod as yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness. 2. It is a rod in the hand of God (*I will visit them*), he who is wise, and knows what he does, gracious, and will do what is best. 3. It is a rod which they shall never feel the smart of but when there is great need: *If they break my law, then I will visit their transgression with the rod*, but not else. Then it is requisite that God's honour be vindicated, and that they be humbled and reduced.

[2.] The continuance of Christ's kingdom is made certain by the inviolable promise and oath of God, notwithstanding all this (v. 33): *Nevertheless, my kindness will I not totally and finally take from him.* *First*, "Notwithstanding their provocations, yet my covenant shall not be broken." Note, Afflictions are not only consistent with covenant-love, but to the people of God they flow from it. Though David's seed be chastened, it does not follow that they are disinherited; they may be cast down, but they are not cast off. God's favour is continued to his people, 1. For Christ's sake; in him the mercy is laid

up for us, and God says, *I will not take it from him* (v. 33), *I will not lie unto David*, v. 35. We are unworthy, but he is worthy. 2. For the covenant's sake: *My faithfulness shall not fail, my covenant will I not break.* It was supposed that they had broken God's statutes, *profaned and polluted* them (so the word signifies); "But," says God, "I will not break, I will not profane and pollute, my covenant;" it is the same word. That which is said and sworn is that God will have a church in the world as long as sun and moon endure, v. 36, 37. The sun and moon are faithful witnesses in heaven of the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Creator, and shall continue while time lasts, which they are the measurers of; but the *seed of Christ shall be established for ever, as lights of the world* while the world stands, to shine in it, and, when it is at an end, they shall be established lights shining in the firmament of the Father.

38 But thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth with thine anointed. 39 Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant: thou hast profaned his crown *by casting it to the ground.* 40 Thou hast broken down all his hedges; thou hast brought his strong holds to ruin. 41 All that pass by the way spoil him: he is a reproach to his neighbours. 42 Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries; thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice. 43 Thou hast also turned the edge of his sword, and hast not made him to stand in the battle. 44 Thou hast made his glory to cease, and cast his throne down to the ground. 45 The days of his youth hast thou shortened: thou hast covered him with shame. Selah. 46 How long, LORD? wilt thou hide thyself for ever? shall thy wrath burn like fire? 47 Remember how short my time is: wherefore hast thou made all men in vain? 48 What man is *he that* liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah. 49 Lord, where are thy former lovingkindnesses, *which* thou swarest unto David in thy truth? 50 Remember, Lord, the reproach of thy servants; *how* I do bear in my bosom *the reproach* of all the mighty people; 51 Wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O LORD; wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed. 52 Blessed

be the LORD for evermore. Amen, and Amen.

In these verses we have,

I. A very melancholy complaint of the present deplorable state of David's family, which the psalmist thinks hard to be reconciled to the covenant God made with David. "Thou saidst thou wouldst not take away thy lovingkindness, but thou hast cast off." Sometimes, it is no easy thing to reconcile God's providences with his promises, and yet we are sure they are reconcilable; for God's works fulfil his word and never contradict it. 1. David's house seemed to have lost its interest in God, which was the greatest strength and beauty of it. God had been pleased with his anointed, but now he was wroth with him (v. 38), had entered into covenant with the family, but now, for aught he could perceive, he had made void the covenant, not broken some of the articles of it, but cancelled it, v. 39. We misconstrue the rebukes of Providence if we think they make void the covenant. When the great anointed one, Christ himself, was upon the cross, God seemed to have cast him off, and was wroth with him, and yet did not make void his covenant with him, for that was established forever. 2. The honour of the house of David was lost and laid in the dust: *Thou hast profaned his crown* (which was always looked upon as sacred) *by casting it to the ground*, to be trampled on, v. 39. *Thou hast made his glory to cease* (so uncertain is all earthly glory, and so soon does it wither) *and thou hast cast his throne down to the ground*, not only dethroned the king, but put a period to the kingdom, v. 44. If it was penned in Rehoboam's time, it was true as to the greatest part of the kingdom, five parts of six; if in Zedekiah's time, it was more remarkably true of the poor remainder. Note, Thrones and crowns are tottering things, and are often laid in the dust; but there is a crown of glory reserved for Christ's spiritual seed which fadeth not away. 3. It was exposed and made a prey to all the neighbours, who insulted over that ancient and honourable family (v. 40): *Thou hast broken down all his hedges* (all those things that were a defence to them, and particularly that hedge of protection which they thought God's covenant and promise had made about them) *and thou hast made even his strong-holds a ruin*, so that they were rather a reproach to them than any shelter; and then, *All that pass by the way spoil him* (v. 41) and make an easy prey of him; see lxxx. 12, 13. The enemies talk insolently: *He is a reproach to his neighbours*, who triumph in his fall from so great a degree of honour. Nay, every one helps forward the calamity (v. 42): "*Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries*, not only given them power, but inclined them to turn their power this way." If the enemies of the church lift up their hand against it, we

must see God setting up their hand; for they could have no power unless it were given them from above. But, when God does permit them to do mischief to his church, it pleases them: *Thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice*; and this is for thy glory, that those who hate thee should have the pleasure to see the tears and troubles of those that love thee." 4. It was disabled to help itself (v. 43): "*Thou hast turned the edge of his sword*, and made it blunt, that it cannot do execution as it has done; and (which is worse) thou hast turned the edge of his spirit, and taken off his courage, and hast not made him to stand as he used to do in the battle." The spirit of men is what the Father and former of spirits makes them; nor can we stand with any strength or resolution further than God is pleased to uphold us. If men's hearts fail them, it is God that dispirits them; but it is sad with the church when those cannot stand who should stand up for it. 5. It was upon the brink of an inglorious exit (v. 45): *The days of his youth hast thou shortened*; it is ready to be cut off, like a young man in the flower of his age. This seems to intimate that the psalm was penned in Rehoboam's time, when the house of David was but in the days of its youth, and yet waxed old and began to decay already. Thus it was covered with shame, and it was turned very much to its reproach that a family which, in the first and second reign, looked so great, and made such a figure, should, in the third, dwindle and look so little as the house of David did in Rehoboam's time. But it may be applied to the captivity in Babylon, which, in comparison with what was expected, was but the day of the youth of that kingdom. However, the kings then had remarkably the *days of their youth shortened*, for it was in the days of their youth, when they were about thirty years old, that Jehoiachin and Zedekiah were carried captives to Babylon.

From all this complaint let us learn, 1. What work sin makes with families, noble royal families, with families in which religion has been uppermost; when posterity degenerates, it falls into disgrace, and iniquity stains their glory. 2. How apt we are to place the promised honour and happiness of the church in something external, and to think the promise fails, and the covenant is made void, if we be disappointed of that, a mistake which we now are inexcusable if we fall into, since our Master has so expressly told us that his kingdom is not of this world.

II. A very pathetic expostulation with God upon this. Four things they plead with God for mercy:—

1. The long continuance of the trouble (v. 46): *How long, O Lord! wilt thou hide thyself? For ever?* That which grieved them most was that God himself, as one displeased, did not appear to them by his prophets to comfort them, did not appear for them by his providences to deliver them, and

that he had kept them long in the dark; it seemed an eternal night, when God had withdrawn: *Thou hidest thyself for ever.* Nay, God not only hid himself from them, but seemed to set himself against them: "*Shall thy wrath burn like fire? How long shall it burn? Shall it never be put out? What is hell, but the wrath of God, burning for ever? And is that the lot of thy anointed?*"

2. The shortness of life, and the certainty of death: "Lord, let thy anger cease, and return thou, in mercy to us, remembering how short my time is and how sure the period of my time. Lord, since my life is so transitory, and will, ere long, be at an end, let it not be always so miserable that I should rather choose no being at all than such a being." Job pleads thus, *ch. x. 20, 21.* And probably the psalmist here urges it in the name of the house of David, and the present prince of that house, the *days of whose youth were shortened, v. 45.*

(1.) He pleads the shortness and vanity of life (*v. 47*): *Remember how short my time is, how transitory I am* (say some), therefore unable to bear the power of thy wrath, and therefore a proper object of thy pity. *Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain? or, Unto what vanity hast thou created all the sons of Adam!* Now, this may be understood either, [1.] As declaring a great truth. If the ancient lovingkindnesses spoken of (*v. 49*) be forgotten (those relating to another life), man is indeed made in vain. Considering man as mortal, if there were not a future state on the other side of death, we might be ready to think that man was made in vain, and was in vain endued with the noble powers and faculties of reason and filled with such vast designs and desires; but God would not make man in vain; therefore, Lord, *remember those lovingkindnesses.* Or, [2.] As implying a strong temptation that the psalmist was in. It is certain *God has not made all men, nor any man, in vain, Isa. xlv. 18.* For, *First*, If we think that God has made men in vain because so many have short lives, and long afflictions, in this world, it is true that God has made them so, but it is not true that *therefore* they are made in vain. For those whose days are few and full of trouble may yet glorify God and do some good, may keep their communion with God and get to heaven, and then they are not made in vain. *Secondly*, If we think that God has made men in vain because the most of men neither serve him nor enjoy him, it is true that, as to themselves, they were made in vain, better for them had they not been born than not to be born again; but it was not owing to God that they were made in vain; it was owing to themselves; nor are they made in vain as to him, for he has *made all things for himself, even the wicked for the day of evil*, and those whom he is not glorified by he will be glorified upon.

(2.) He pleads the universality and unavoidable death (*v. 48*): "*What man*"

(what *strong man*, so the word is) "*is he that liveth and shall not see death?*" The king himself, of the house of David, is not exempted from the sentence, from the stroke. Lord, since he is under a fatal necessity of dying, let not his whole life be made thus miserable. *Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?* No, he shall not when his time has come. Let him not therefore be delivered into the hand of the grave by the miseries of a dying life, till his time shall come." We must learn here that death is the end of all men; our eyes must shortly be closed to see death; there is no discharge from that war, nor will any bail be taken to save us from the prison of the grave. It concerns us therefore to make sure a happiness on the other side of death and the grave, that, *when we fail, we may be received into everlasting habitations.*

3. The next plea is taken from the kindness God had for and the covenant he made with his servant David (*v. 49*): "*Lord, where are thy former lovingkindnesses, which thou showedst, nay, which thou swarest, to David in thy truth?* Wilt thou fail of doing what thou hast promised? Wilt thou undo what thou hast done? Art not thou still the same? Why then may not we have the benefit of the former sure mercies of David?" God's unchangeableness and faithfulness assure us that God will not cast off those whom he has chosen and covenanted with.

4. The last plea is taken from the insolence of the enemies and the indignity done to God's anointed (*v. 50, 51*): "*Remember, Lord, the reproach*, and let it be rolled away from us and returned upon our enemies."

(1.) They were God's servants that were reproached, and the abuses done to them reflected upon their master, especially since it was for serving him that they were reproached.

(2.) The reproach cast upon God's servants was a very grievous burden to all that were concerned for the honour of God: "*I bear in my bosom the reproach of all the mighty people*, and am even overwhelmed with it; it is what I lay much to heart and can scarcely keep up my spirits under the weight of."

(3.) "They are thy enemies who do thus reproach us; and wilt thou not appear against them as such? (*) *They have reproached the footsteps of thy anointed.* They reflected upon all the steps which the king had taken in the course of his administration, tracked him in all his motions, that they might make invidious remarks upon every thing he had said and done. Or, if we may apply it to Christ, the Lord's Messiah, they reproached the Jews with his footsteps, the slowness of his coming. They have reproached the delays of the Messiah; so Dr. Hammond. They called him, *He that should come*; but, because he had not yet come, because he did not now come to deliver them out of the hands of their enemies, when they had none to deliver them, they told them he would never come, they must give over looking for him. The

scorners of the latter days do, in like manner, reproach the footsteps of the Messiah when they ask, *Where is the promise of his coming?* 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4. The reproaching of the footsteps of the anointed some refer to the serpent's *bruising the heel of the seed of the woman*, or to the sufferings of Christ's followers, who tread in his footsteps, and are reproached for his name's sake.

III. The psalm concludes with praise, even after this sad complaint (v. 52): *Blessed be the Lord for evermore, Amen, and amen.* Thus he confronts the reproaches of his enemies. The more others blaspheme God the more we should bless him. Thus he corrects his own complaints, chiding himself for quarrelling with God's providences and questioning his promises; let both these sinful passions be silenced with the praises of God. However it be, yet God is good; and we will never think hardly of him; God is true, and we will never distrust him. Though the glory of David's house be stained and sullied, this shall be our comfort, that God is blessed for ever, and his glory cannot be eclipsed. If we would have the comfort of the stability of God's promise, we must give him the praise of it; in blessing God, we encourage ourselves. Here is a double *Amen*, according to the double signification. *Amen—so it is*, God is blessed for ever. *Amen—be it so*, let God be blessed for ever. He began the psalm with thanksgiving, before he made his complaint (v. 1); and now he concludes it with a doxology. Those who give God thanks for what he has done may give him thanks also for what he will do; God will follow those with his mercies who, in a right manner, follow him with their praises.

PSALM XC.

The foregoing psalm is supposed to have been penned as late as the captivity in Babylon; this, it is plain, was penned as early as the deliverance out of Egypt, and yet they are put close together in this collection of divine songs. This psalm was penned by Moses (as appears by the title), the most ancient penman of sacred writ. We have upon record a praising song of his (Exod. xv.), which is alluded to Rev. xv. 3), and an instructing song of his, Dent. xxxii. But this is of a different nature from both, for it is called a prayer. It is supposed that this psalm was penned upon occasion of the sentence passed upon Israel in the wilderness for their unbelief, murmuring, and rebellion, that their carcasses should fall in the wilderness, that they should be wasted away by a series of miseries for thirty-eight years together, and that none of them that were then of age should enter Canaan. This was calculated for their wanderings in the wilderness, as that other song of Moses (Deut. xxxii. 19, 21) was for their settlement in Canaan. We have the story to which this psalm seems to refer, Num. xiv. Probably Moses penned this prayer to be daily used, either by the people in their tents, or, at least, by the priests in the tabernacle-service, during their tedious fatigue in the wilderness. In it, I. Moses comforts himself and his people with the eternity of God and their interest in him, ver. 1, 2. II. He humbles himself and his people with the consideration of the frailty of man, ver. 3—6. III. He submits himself and his people to the righteous sentence of God passed upon them, ver. 7—11. IV. He commits himself and his people to God by prayer for divine mercy and grace, and the return of God's favour, ver. 12—17. Though it seems to have been penned upon this particular occasion, yet it is very applicable to the frailty of human life in general, and, in singing it, we may easily apply it to the years of our passage through the wilderness of this world, and it furnishes us with meditations and prayers very suitable to the solemnity of a funeral.

A prayer of Moses the man of God.

LORD, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. 2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the

earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. 3 Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men. 4 For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. 5 Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. 6 In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth.

This psalm is entitled a *prayer of Moses*. Where, and in what volume, it was preserved from Moses's time till the collection of psalms was begun to be made, is uncertain; but, being divinely inspired, it was under a special protection: perhaps it was written in the book of Jasher, or the book of the wars of the Lord. Moses taught the people of Israel to pray, and put words into their mouths which they might make use of in turning to the Lord. Moses is here called *the man of God*, because he was a prophet, the father of the prophets, and an eminent type of the great prophet. In these verses we are taught,

I. To give God the praise of his care concerning his people at all times, and concerning us in our days (v. 1): *Lord, thou hast been to us a habitation, or dwelling-place, a refuge or help, in all generations.* Now that they had fallen under God's displeasure, and he threatened to abandon them, they plead his former kindnesses to their ancestors. Canaan was a land of pilgrimage to their fathers the patriarchs, who dwelt there in tabernacles; but then God was their habitation, and, wherever they went, they were at home, at rest, in him. Egypt had been a land of bondage to them for many years, but even then God was their refuge; and in him that poor oppressed people lived and were kept in being. Note, True believers are at home in God, and that is their comfort in reference to all the toils and tribulations they meet with in this world. In him we may repose and shelter ourselves as in our dwelling-place.

II. To give God the glory of his eternity (v. 2): *Before the mountains were brought forth, before he made the highest part of the dust of the world* (as it is expressed, Prov. viii. 26), *before the earth fell in travail*, or, as we may read it, *before thou hadst formed the earth and the world* (that is, before the beginning of time) *thou hadst a being; even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God.* An eternal God, whose existence has neither its commencement nor its period with time, nor is measured by the successions and revolutions of it, but who art *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*, without beginning of days, or end of life, or change of time. Note, Against all the grievances that arise from our

own mortality, and the mortality of our friends, we may take comfort from God's immortality. We are dying creatures, and all our comforts in the world are dying comforts, but God is an everliving God, and those shall find him so who have him for theirs.

III. To own God's absolute sovereign dominion over man, and his irresistible uncontrollable power to dispose of him as he pleases (*v. 3*): *Thou turnest man to destruction*, with a word's speaking, when thou plearest, to the destruction of the body, of the earthly house; and thou sayest, *Return, you children of men*. 1. When God is, by sickness or other afflictions, turning men to destruction, he does thereby call men to return unto him, that is, to repent of their sins and live a new life. This God *speaketh once, yea, twice*. "*Return unto me*, from whom you have revolted," Jer. iv. 1. 2. When God is threatening to *turn men to destruction*, to bring them to death, and they have received a sentence of death within themselves, sometimes he wonderfully restores them, and says, as the old translation reads it, *Again thou sayest, Return to life and health again*. For God kills and makes alive again, brings down to the grave and brings up. 3. When God turns men to destruction, it is according to the general sentence passed upon all, which is this, "*Return, you children of men*, one, as well as another, return to your first principles; let the body return to the earth as it was (*dust to dust*, Gen. iii. 19) and let the soul *return to God who gave it*," Eccl. xii. 7. 4. Though God turns all men to destruction, yet he will again say, *Return, you children of men*, at the general resurrection, when, though a man dies, yet he shall live again; and "*then shalt thou call and I will answer* (Job xiv. 14, 15); thou shalt bid me return, and I shall return." The body, the soul, shall both return and unite again.

IV. To acknowledge the infinite disproportion there is between God and men, *v. 4*. Some of the patriarchs lived nearly a thousand years; Moses knew this very well, and had recorded it: but what is their long life to God's eternal life? "A thousand years, to us, are a long period, which we cannot expect to survive; or, if we could, it is what we could not retain the remembrance of; but it is, *in thy sight, as yesterday*, as one day, as that which is freshest in mind; nay, it is but as a *watch of the night*," which was but three hours. 1. A thousand years are nothing to God's eternity; they are less than a day, than an hour, to a thousand years. Betwixt a minute and a million of years there is some proportion, but betwixt time and eternity there is none. The long lives of the patriarchs were nothing to God, not so much as the life of a child (that is born and dies the same day) is to theirs. 2. All the events of a thousand years, whether past or to come, are as present to the Eternal Mind as what was done yesterday, or the last hour, is to

us, and more so. God will say, at the great day, to those whom he has *turned to destruction*, *Return—Arise you dead*. But it might be objected against the doctrine of the resurrection that it is a long time since it was expected and it has not yet come. Let that be no difficulty, for a thousand years, in God's sight, are but as one day. *Nullum tempus occurrit regi—To the king all periods are alike*. To this purport these words are quoted, 2 Pet. iii. 8.

V. To see the frailty of man, and his vanity even at his best estate (*v. 5, 6*); look upon all the children of men, and we shall see, 1. That their life is a dying life: *Thou carriest them away as with a flood*, that is, they are continually gliding down the stream of time into the ocean of eternity. The flood is continually flowing, and they are carried away with it; as soon as we are born we begin to die, and every day of our life carries us so much nearer death; or we are carried away violently and irresistibly, as with a flood of waters, as with an inundation, which sweeps away all before it; or as the old world was carried away with Noah's flood. Though God promised not so to drown the world again, yet death is a constant deluge. 2. That it is a dreaming life. Men are carried away as with a flood and yet *they are as a sleep*; they consider not their own frailty, nor are aware how near they approach to an awful eternity. Like men asleep, they imagine great things to themselves, till death wakes them, and puts an end to the pleasing dream. Time passes unobserved by us, as it does with men asleep; and, when it is over, it is as nothing. 3. That it is a short and transient life, like that of the grass which grows up and flourishes, in the morning looks green and pleasant, but in the evening the mower cuts it down, and it immediately withers, changes its colour, and loses all its beauty. Death will change us shortly, perhaps suddenly; and it is a great change that death will make with us in a little time. Man, in his prime, does but flourish as the grass, which is weak, and low, and tender, and exposed, and which, when the winter of old age comes, will wither of itself: but he may be mown down by disease or disaster, as the grass is, in the midst of summer. *All flesh is as grass*.

7 For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled. 8 Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret *sins* in the light of thy countenance. 9 For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale *that is told*. 10 The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength *they be* fourscore years yet *is* their strength labour and sor-

row; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. 11 Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.

Moses had, in the foregoing verses, lamented the frailty of human life in general; the children of men are as a sleep and as the grass. But here he teaches the people of Israel to confess before God that righteous sentence of death which they were under in a special manner, and which by their sins they had brought upon themselves. Their share in the common lot of mortality was not enough, but they are, and must live and die, under peculiar tokens of God's displeasure. Here they speak of themselves: *We Israelites are consumed and troubled, and our days have passed away.*

I. They are here taught to acknowledge the wrath of God to be the cause of all their miseries. *We are consumed, we are troubled, and it is by thy anger, by thy wrath (v. 7); our days have passed away in thy wrath, v. 9.* The afflictions of the saints often come purely from God's love, as Job's; but the rebukes of sinners, and of good men for their sins, must be seen coming from the anger of God, who takes notice of, and is much displeased with, the sins of Israel. We are too apt to look upon death as no more than a debt owing to nature; whereas it is not so; if the nature of man had continued in its primitive purity and rectitude, there would have been no such debt owing to it. It is a debt to the justice of God, a debt to the law. *Sin entered into the world, and death by sin.* Are we consumed by decays of nature, the infirmities of age, or any chronic disease? We must ascribe it to God's anger. Are we troubled by any sudden or surprising stroke? That also is the fruit of God's wrath, which is thus revealed from heaven against the *ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.*

II. They are taught to confess their sins, which had provoked the wrath of God against them (v. 8): *Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, even our secret sins.* It was not without cause that God was angry with them. He had said, *Provoke me not, and I will do you no hurt*; but they had provoked him, and will own that, in passing this severe sentence upon them, he justly punished them, 1. For their open contempts of him and the daring affronts they had given him: *Thou hast set our iniquities before thee.* God had herein an eye to their unbelief and murmuring, their distrusting his power and their despising the pleasant land: these he set before them when he passed that sentence on them; these kindled the fire of God's wrath against them and kept good things from them. 2. For their more secret departures from him: *"Thou hast set our secret sins (those which go no further than the heart, and which are at the bottom of all the overt acts) in the light of thy countenance; that is, thou hast discovered*

these, and brought these also to the account, and made us to see them, who before overlooked them." Secret sins are known to God and shall be reckoned for. Those who in heart return into Egypt, who set up idols in their heart, shall be dealt with as revolvers or idolaters. See the folly of those who go about to cover their sins, for they cannot cover them.

III. They are taught to look upon themselves as dying and passing away, and not to think either of a long life or of a pleasant one; for the decree gone forth against them was irreversible (v. 9): *All our days are likely to be passed away in thy wrath,* under the tokens of thy displeasure; and, though we are not quite deprived of the residue of our years, yet we are likely to spend them as a tale that is told. The thirty-eight years which, after this, they wore away in the wilderness, were not the subject of the sacred history; for little or nothing is recorded of that which happened to them from the second year to the fortieth. After they came out of Egypt their time was perfectly trifled away, and was not worthy to be the subject of a history, but only of a tale that is told; for it was only to pass away time, like telling stories, that they spent those years in the wilderness; all that while they were in the consuming, and another generation was in the raising. When they came out of Egypt there was not one feeble person among their tribes (cv. 37); but now they were all feeble. Their joyful prospect of a prosperous glorious life in Canaan was turned into the melancholy prospect of a tedious inglorious death in the wilderness; so that their whole life was now as impertinent a thing as ever any winter-tale was. That is applicable to the state of every one of us in the wilderness of this world: *We spend our years, we bring them to an end,* each year, and all at last, *as a tale that is told—as the breath of our mouth in winter* (so some), which soon disappears—*as a thought* (so some), than which nothing more quick—*as a word,* which is soon spoken, and then vanishes into air—or *as a tale that is told.* The spending of our years is like the telling of a tale. A year, when it is past, is like a tale when it is told. Some of our years are as a pleasant story, others as a tragical one, most mixed, but all short and transient: that which was long in the doing may be told in a short time. Our years, when they are gone, can no more be recalled than the word that we have spoken can. The loss and waste of our time, which are our fault and folly, may be thus complained of: we should spend our years like the despatch of business, with care and industry; but, alas! we do spend them like the telling of a tale, idle, and to little purpose, carelessly, and without regard. Every year passed as a tale that is told; but what was the number of them? As they were vain, so they were few (v. 10), seventy or eighty at most, which may be understood

either, 1. Of the lives of the Israelites in the wilderness; all those that were numbered when they came out of Egypt, above twenty years old, were to die within thirty-eight years; they numbered those only that *were able to go forth to war*, most of whom, we may suppose, were between twenty and forty, who therefore must have all died before eighty years old, and many before sixty, and perhaps much sooner, which was far short of the years of the lives of their fathers. And those that lived to seventy or eighty, yet, being under a sentence of consumption and a melancholy despair of ever seeing through this wilderness-state, their strength, their life, was nothing but *labour and sorrow*, which otherwise would have been made a new life by the joys of Canaan. See what work sin made. Or, 2. Of the lives of men in general, ever since the days of Moses. Before the time of Moses it was usual for men to live about 100 years, or nearly 150; but, since, seventy or eighty is the common stint, which few exceed and multitudes never come near. We reckon those to have lived to the age of man, and to have had as large a share of life as they had reason to expect, who live to be seventy years old; and how short a time is that compared with eternity! Moses was the first that committed divine revelation to writing, which, before, had been transmitted by tradition; now also both the world and the church were pretty well peopled, and therefore there were not now the same reasons for men's living long that there had been. If, by reason of a strong constitution, some reach to eighty years, yet their strength then is what they have little joy of; it does but serve to prolong their misery, and make their death the more tedious; for even *their strength then is labour and sorrow*, much more their weakness; for the years have come which they have no pleasure in. Or it may be taken thus: *Our years are seventy, and the years of some, by reason of strength, are eighty; but the breadth of our years* (for so the latter word signifies, rather than strength), *the whole extent of them, from infancy to old age, is but labour and sorrow*. In the sweat of our face we must eat bread; our whole life is toilsome and troublesome; and perhaps, in the midst of the years we count upon, *it is soon cut off, and we fly away*, and do not live out half our days.

IV. They are taught by all this to stand in awe of the wrath of God (v. 11): *Who knows the power of thy anger?* 1. None can perfectly comprehend it. The psalmist speaks as one afraid of God's anger, and amazed at the greatness of the power of it; who knows how far the power of God's anger can reach and how deeply it can wound? The angels that sinned knew experimentally the power of God's anger; damned sinners in hell know it; but which of us can fully comprehend or describe it? 2. Few do seriously consider it as they ought. *Who knows it*, so as to im-

prove the knowledge of it? Those who make a mock at sin, and make light of Christ, surely do not know the power of God's anger. *For, according to thy fear, so is thy wrath*. God's wrath is equal to the apprehensions which the most thoughtful serious people have of it; let men have ever so great a dread upon them of the wrath of God, it is not greater than there is cause for and than the nature of the thing deserves. God has no in his word represented his wrath as more terrible than really it is; nay, what is felt in the other world is infinitely worse than what is feared in this world. *Who among us can dwell with that devouring fire?*

12 So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. 13 Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants. 14 O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. 15 Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil. 16 Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. 17 And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

These are the petitions of this prayer, grounded upon the foregoing meditations and acknowledgments. *Is any afflicted?* Let him learn thus to pray. Four things they are here directed to pray for:—

I. For a sanctified use of the sad dispensation they were now under. Being condemned to have our days shortened, "*Lord, teach us to number our days* (v. 12); Lord, give us grace duly to consider how few they are, and how little a while we have to live in this world." Note, 1. It is an excellent art rightly to number our days, so as not to be out in our calculation, as he was who counted upon many years to come when, that night, his soul was required of him. We must live under a constant apprehension of the shortness and uncertainty of life and the near approach of death and eternity. We must so number our days as to compare our work with them, and mind it accordingly with a double diligence, as those that have no time to trifle. 2. Those that would learn this arithmetic must pray for divine instruction, must go to God, and beg of him to teach them by his Spirit, to put them upon considering and to give them a good understanding. 3. We then number our days to good purpose when thereby our hearts are inclined and engaged to true wisdom, that is, to the practice of serious godliness. To be religious is to be wise; this is a thing to which it is

necessary that we apply our hearts, and the matter requires and deserves a close application, to which frequent thoughts of the uncertainty of our continuance here, and the certainty of our removal hence, will very much contribute.

II. For the turning away of God's anger from them, that though the decree had gone forth, and was past revocation, there was no remedy, but they must die in the wilderness: "*Yet return, O Lord! be thou reconciled to us, and let it repent thee concerning thy servants* (v. 13); send us tidings of peace to comfort us again after these heavy tidings. How long must we look upon ourselves as under thy wrath, and when shall we have some token given us of our restoration to thy favour? *We are thy servants, thy people* (Isa. lxiv. 9); when wilt thou change thy way towards us?" In answer to this prayer, and upon their profession of repentance (Num. xiv. 39, 40), God, in the next chapter, proceeded with the laws concerning sacrifices (Num. xv. 1, &c.), which was a token that it repented him concerning his servants; for, *if the Lord had been pleased to kill them, he would not have shown them such things as these*.

III. For comfort and joy in the returns of God's favour to them, v. 14, 15. They pray for the mercy of God; for they pretend not to plead any merit of their own. *Have mercy upon us, O God!* is a prayer we are all concerned to say *Amen* to. Let us pray for early mercy, the seasonable communications of divine mercy, that God's *tender mercies may speedily prevent us, early in the morning* of our days, when we are young and flourishing, v. 6. Let us pray for the true satisfaction and happiness which are to be had only in the favour and mercy of God, iv. 6, 7. A gracious soul, if it may but be satisfied of God's lovingkindness, will be satisfied with it, abundantly satisfied, will take up with that, and will take up with nothing short of it. Two things are pleaded to enforce this petition for God's mercy:—1. That it would be a full fountain of future joys: "*O satisfy us with thy mercy*, not only that we may be easy and at rest within ourselves, which we can never be while we lie under thy wrath, but that *we may rejoice and be glad*, not only for a time, upon the first indications of thy favour, but *all our days*, though we are to spend them in the wilderness." With respect to those that make God their chief joy, as their joy may be full (1 John i. 4), so it may be constant, even in this vale of tears; it is their own fault if they are not glad all their days, for his mercy will furnish them with joy in tribulation and nothing can separate them from it. 2. That it would be a sufficient balance to their former griefs: "*Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us*; let the days of our joy in thy favour be as many as the days of our pain for thy displeasure have been and as

pleasant as those have been gloomy. *Lord, thou usest to set the one over-against the other* (Eccl. vii. 14); do so in our case. Let it suffice that we have drunk so long of the cup of trembling; now put into our hands the cup of salvation." God's people reckon the returns of God's lovingkindness a sufficient recompence for all their troubles.

IV. For the progress of the work of God among them notwithstanding, v. 16, 17. 1. That he would manifest himself in carrying it on: "*Let thy work appear upon thy servants*; let it appear that thou hast wrought upon us, to bring us home to thyself and to fit us for thyself." God's servants cannot work for him unless he work upon them, and work in them both to will and to do; and then we may hope the operations of God's providence will be apparent for us when the operations of his grace are apparent upon us. "*Let thy work appear, and in it thy glory will appear to us and those that shall come after us*." In praying for God's grace God's glory must be our end; and we must therein have an eye to our children as well as to ourselves, that they also may experience God's glory appearing upon them, so as to change them into the same image, from glory to glory. Perhaps, in this prayer, they distinguish between themselves and their children, for so God distinguished in his late message to them (Num. xiv. 31, *Your carcases shall fall in this wilderness, but your little ones will I bring into Canaan*): "Lord," say they, "*let thy work appear upon us*, to reform us, and bring us to a better temper, and then *let thy glory appear to our children*, in performing the promise to them which we have forfeited the benefit of." 2. That he would countenance and strengthen them in carrying it on, in doing their part towards it. (1.) That he would smile upon them in it: *Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us*; let it appear that God favours us. Let us have God's ordinances kept up among us and the tokens of God's presence with his ordinances; so some. We may apply this petition both to our sanctification and to our consolation. Holiness is the beauty of the Lord our God; let that be upon us in all we say and do; let the grace of God in us, and the light of our good works, make our faces to shine (that is the comeliness God puts upon us, and those are comely indeed who are so beautified), and then let divine consolations put gladness into our hearts, and a lustre upon our countenances, and that also will be the beauty of the Lord upon us, as our God. (2.) That he would prosper them in it: *Establish thou the work of our hands upon us*. God's working upon us (v. 16) does not discharge us from using our utmost endeavours in serving him and working out our salvation. But, when we have done all, we must wait upon God for the success, and beg of him to *prosper our handy works*, to give us to compass what we aim at for his

glory. We are so unworthy of divine assistance, and yet so utterly insufficient to bring any thing to pass without it, that we have need to be earnest for it and to repeat the request: *Yea, the work of our hands, establish thou it, and, in order to that, establish us in it.*

PSALM XCI.

Some of the ancients were of opinion that Moses was the penman, not only of the foregoing psalm, which is expressly said to be his, but also of the eight that next follow it; but that cannot be, for Ps. xcv. is expressly said to be penned by David, and loaz after Moses, Heb. iv. 7. It is probable that this psalm also was penned by David; it is a writ of protection for all true believers, not in the name of king David, or under his broad seal; he needed it himself, especially if the psalm was penned, as some conjecture it was, at the time of the pestilence which was sent for his numbering the people; but in the name of the King of Kings, and under the broad seal of Heaven. Observe, 1. The psalmist's own resolution to take God for his keeper (ver. 2), from which he gives both direction and encouragement to others, ver. 9. 11. The promises which are here made, in God's name, to all those that do so in sincerity. 1. They shall be taken under the peculiar care of Heaven, ver. 1, 4. 2. They shall be delivered from the malice of the powers of darkness (ver. 3, 5, 6), and that by a distinguishing preservation, ver. 7, 8. 3. They shall be the charge of the holy angels, ver. 10—12. 4. They shall triumph over their enemies, ver. 13. 5. They shall be the special favourites of God himself, ver. 14—16. In singing this we must shelter ourselves under, and then solace ourselves in, the divine protection. Many think that to Christ, as Mediator, these promises do primarily belong (1st. xlix. 2), not because to him the devil applied one of these promises (Matt. iv. 6), but because to him they are very applicable, and, coming through him, they are more sweet and sure to all believers.

HE that dwelleth in the secret place of the most high shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. 2 I will say of the LORD, *He is* my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. 3 Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. 4 He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth *shall be thy* shield and buckler. 5 Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; *nor* for the arrow *that* flieth by day; 6 *Nor* for the pestilence *that* walketh in darkness; *nor* for the destruction *that* wasteth at noonday. 7 A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; *but* it shall not come nigh thee. 8 Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.

In these verses we have,

I. A great truth laid down in general, That all those who live a life of communion with God are constantly safe under his protection, and may therefore preserve a holy serenity and security of mind at all times (v. 1): *He that dwells, that sits down, in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty*; he that by faith chooses God for his guardian shall find all that in him which he needs or can desire. Note, 1. It is the character of a true believer that he *dwells in the secret place of the Most High*; he is at home in God, returns to God, and reposes in him as his rest; he acquaints himself with inward religion, and makes heart-

work of the service of God, worships within the veil, and loves to be alone with God, to converse with him in solitude. 2. It is the privilege and comfort of those that do so that they *abide under the shadow of the Almighty*; he shelters them, and comes between them and every thing that would annoy them, whether storm or sunshine. They shall not only have an admittance, but a residence under God's protection; he will be their refuge and refuge for ever.

II. The psalmist's comfortable application of this to himself (v. 2): *I will say of the LORD, whatever others say of him, "He is my refuge; I choose him as such, and confide in him. Others make idols their refuge, but I will say of Jehovah, the true and living God, He is my refuge: any other is a refuge of lies. He is a refuge that will not fail me; for he is my fortress and strong-hold."* Idolaters called their idols *Mahuzzim*, their most strong-hold (Dan. xi. 39), but therein they deceived themselves; those only secure themselves that make the Lord their God, their fortress. There being no reason to question his sufficiency, fitly does it follow, *In him will I trust*. If Jehovah be our God, our refuge, and our fortress, what can we desire which we may not be sure to find in him? He is neither fickle nor false, neither weak nor mortal; he is God and not man, and therefore there is no danger of being disappointed in him. *We know whom we have trusted.*

III. The great encouragement he gives to others to do likewise, not only from his own experience of the comfort of it (for in that there might possibly be a fallacy), but from the truth of God's promise, in which there neither is nor can be any deceit (v. 3, 4, &c.): *Surely he shall deliver thee.* Those who have themselves found the comfort of making God their refuge cannot but desire that others may do so. Now here it is promised,

1. That believers shall be kept from those mischiefs which they are in imminent danger of, and which would be fatal to them (v. 3), *from the snare of the fowler*, which is laid unseen and catches the unwary prey on a sudden, and *from the noisome pestilence*, which seizes men unawares and against which there is no guard. This promise protects, (1.) The natural life, and is often fulfilled in our preservation from those dangers which are very threatening and very near, while yet we ourselves are not apprehensive of them, any more than the bird is of the snare of the fowler. We owe it, more than we are sensible, to the care of the divine Providence that we have been kept from infectious diseases and out of the hands of the wicked and unreasonable. (2.) The spiritual life, which is protected by divine grace from the temptations of Satan, which are as the snares of the fowler, and from the contagion of sin, which is the noisome pestilence. He that has given grace to be the glory of the soul will create a defence upon all that glory

2. That God himself will be their protector; those must needs be safe who have him for their keeper, and successful for whom he undertakes (v. 4): *He shall cover thee, shall keep thee secret* (xxxii. 20), and so keep thee safe, xxvii. 5. God protects believers, (1.) With the greatest tenderness and affection, which is intimated in that, *He shall cover thee with his feathers, under his wings*, which alludes to the hen gathering her chickens under her wings, Matt. xxiii. 37. By natural instinct she not only protects them, but calls them under that protection when she sees them in danger, not only keeps them safe, but cherishes them and keeps them warm. To this the great God is pleased to compare his care of his people, who are helpless as the chickens, and easily made a prey of, but are invited to trust under the shadow of the wings of the divine promise and providence, which is the periphrasis of a proselyte to the true religion, that he has come to *trust under the wings of the God of Israel*, Ruth ii. 12. (2.) With the greatest power and efficacy. Wings and feathers, though spread with the greatest tenderness, are yet weak, and easily broken through, and therefore it is added, *His truth shall be thy shield and buckler*, a strong defence. God is as willing to guard his people as the hen is to guard the chickens, and as able as a man of war in armour.

3. That he will not only keep them from evil, but from the fear of evil, v. 5, 6. Here is, (1.) Great danger supposed; the mention of it is enough to frighten us; night and day we lie exposed, and those that are apt to be timorous will in neither period think themselves safe. When we are retired into our chambers, our beds, and have made all as safe as we can about us, yet there is terror by night, from thieves and robbers, winds and storms, besides those things that are the creatures of fancy and imagination, which are often most frightful of all. We read of *fear in the night*, Cant. iii. 8. There is also a *pestilence that walketh in darkness*, as that was which slew the first-born of the Egyptians, and the army of the Assyrians. No locks nor bars can shut out diseases, while we carry about with us in our bodies the seeds of them. But surely in the day-time, when we can look about us, we are not so much in danger; yes, there is an *arrow that flieth by day too*, and yet flies unseen; there is a destruction that wasteth at high-noon, when we are awake and have all our friends about us; even then we cannot secure ourselves, nor can they secure us. It was in the day-time that that pestilence wasted which was sent to chastise David for numbering the people, on occasion of which some think this psalm was penned. But, (2.) Here is great security promised to believers in the midst of this danger: *"Thou shalt not be afraid"*. God by his grace will keep thee from disquieting distrustful fear (that fear which hath torment) in the midst of the

greatest dangers. Wisdom shall keep thee from being causelessly afraid, and faith shall keep thee from being inordinately afraid. Thou shalt not be afraid of the arrow, as knowing that though it may hit thee it cannot hurt thee; if it take away the natural life, yet it shall be so far from doing any prejudice to the spiritual life that it shall be its perfection." A believer needs not fear, and therefore should not fear, any arrow, because the point is off, the poison is out. *O death! where is thy sting?* It is also under divine direction, and will hit where God appoints and not otherwise. Every bullet has its commission. Whatever is done our heavenly Father's will is done; and we have no reason to be afraid of that.

4. That they shall be preserved in common calamities, in a distinguishing way (v. 7): "When death rides in triumph, and diseases rage, so that *thousands and ten thousands* fall, fall by sickness, or fall by the sword in battle, *fall at thy side, at thy right hand*, and the sight of their fall is enough to frighten thee, and if they fall by the pestilence their falling so near thee may be likely to infect thee, *yet it shall not come nigh thee*, the death shall not, the fear of death shall not." Those that preserve their purity in times of general corruption may trust God with their safety in times of general desolation. When multitudes die round about us, though thereby we must be awakened to prepare for our own death, yet we must not be *afraid with any amazement*, nor make ourselves subject to bondage, as many do all their life-time, *through fear of death*, Heb. ii. 15. The sprinkling of blood secured the first-born of Israel when thousands fell. Nay, it is promised to God's people that they shall have the satisfaction of seeing, not only God's promises fulfilled to them, but his threatenings fulfilled upon those that hate them (v. 8): *Only with thy eyes shalt thou behold and see the just reward of the wicked*, which perhaps refers to the destruction of the first-born of Egypt by the pestilence, which was both the punishment of the oppressors and the enlargement of the oppressed; this Israel saw when they saw themselves unhurt, untouched. As it will aggravate the damnation of sinners that with their eyes they shall behold and see the reward of the righteous (Luke xiii. 28), so it will magnify the salvation of the saints that with their eyes they shall behold and see the destruction of the wicked, Isa. lxvi. 24; Ps lviii. 10.

9 Because thou hast made the LORD which is my refuge, even the most high, thy habitation; 10 There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. 11 For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. 12 They shall bear thee up in their

hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. 13 Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet. 14 Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. 15 He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I *will be* with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. 16 With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation.

Here are more promises to the same purport with those in the foregoing verses, and they are exceedingly great and precious, and sure to all the seed.

I. The psalmist assures believers of divine protection, from his own experience; and that which he says is the word of God, and what we may rely upon. Observe, 1. The character of those who shall have the benefit and comfort of these promises; it is much the same with that, v. 1. They are such as make the *Most High their habitation* (v. 9), as are continually with God and rest in him, as make his name both their temple and their strong tower, as dwell in love and so dwell in God. It is our duty to be at home in God, to make our choice of him, and then to live our life in him as our habitation, to converse with him, and delight in him, and depend upon him; and then it shall be our privilege to be at home in God; we shall be welcome to him as a man to his own habitation, without any let, hindrance, or molestation, from the arrests of the law or the clamours of conscience; then too we shall be safe in him, shall be kept in *perfect peace*, Isa. xxvi. 3. To encourage us to make the Lord our habitation, and to hope for safety and satisfaction in him, the psalmist intimates the comfort he had had in doing so: "He whom thou makest thy *habitation* is my *refuge*; and I have found him firm and faithful, and in him there is room enough, and shelter enough, both for thee and me." In my *father's house* there are many mansions, one needs not crowd another, much less crowd out another. 2. The promises that are sure to all those who have thus made the *Most High their habitation*. (1.) That, whatever happens to them, nothing shall hurt them (v. 10): "There shall no evil befall thee; though trouble or affliction befall thee, yet there shall be no real evil in it, for it shall come from the love of God and shall be sanctified; it shall come, not for thy hurt, but for thy good; and though, for the present, it be not joyous but grievous, yet, in the end, it shall yield so well that thou thyself shalt own no evil befall thee. It is not an evil, an only evil, but there is a mixture of good in it and a product of good by it. Nay, not

thy person only, but thy dwelling, shall be taken under the divine protection: *There shall no plague come nigh* that, nothing to do thee or thine any damage." *Nihil accidere bono viro mali potest*—No evil can befall a good man. Seneca *De Providentiâ*. (2.) That the angels of light shall be serviceable to them, v. 11, 12. This is a precious promise, and speaks a great deal both of honour and comfort to the saints, nor is it ever the worse for being quoted and abused by the devil in tempting Christ, Matt. iv. 6. Observe, [1.] The charge given to the angels concerning the saints. He who is the Lord of the angels, who gave them their being and gives laws to them, whose they are and whom they were made to serve, *he shall give his angels a charge over thee*, not only over the church in general, but over every particular believer. The angels *keep the charge of the Lord their God*; and this is the charge they receive from him. It denotes the great care God takes of the saints, in that the angels themselves shall be charged with them, and employed for them. The charge is *to keep thee in all thy ways*; here is a limitation of the promise: *They shall keep thee in thy ways*, that is, "as long as thou keepest in the way of thy duty;" those that go out of that way put themselves out of God's protection. This word the devil left out when he quoted the promise to enforce a temptation, knowing how much it made against him. But observe the extent of the promise; it is *to keep thee in all thy ways*: even where there is no apparent danger yet we need it, and where there is the most imminent danger we shall have it. Wherever the saints go the angels are charged with them, as the servants are with the children. [2.] The care which the angels take of the saints, pursuant to this charge: *They shall bear thee up in their hands*, which denotes both their great ability and their great affection. They are able to bear up the saints out of the reach of danger, and they do it with all the tenderness and affection where, with the nurse carries the little child about in her arms; it speaks us helpless and them helpful. They are condescending in their ministrations; they keep the feet of the saints, lest they dash them against a stone, lest they stumble and fall into sin and into trouble. [3.] That the powers of darkness shall be triumphed over by them (v. 13): *Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder*. The devil is called a *roaring lion*, the *old serpent*, the *red dragon*; so that to this promise the apostle seems to refer in that (Rom. xvi. 20), *The God of peace shall tread Satan under your feet*. Christ has broken the serpent's head, spoiled our spiritual enemies (Col. ii. 15), and through him we are more than conquerors; for Christ calls us, as Joshua called the captains of Israel, to come and set our feet on the necks of vanquished enemies. Somethink that this promise had its full accomplishment in Christ, and the miraculous power

which he had over the whole creation, healing the sick, casting out devils, and particularly putting it into his disciples' commission that they should *take up serpents*, Mark xvi. 18. It may be applied to that care of the divine Providence by which we are preserved from ravenous noxious creatures (*the wild beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee*, Job v. 23); nay, and have ways and means of taming them, Jam. iii. 7.

II. He brings in God himself speaking words of comfort to the saints, and declaring the mercy he had in store for them, v. 14—16. Some make this to be spoken to the angels as the reason of the charge given them concerning the saints, as if he had said, "Take care of them, for they are dear to me, and I have a tender concern for them." And now, as before, we must observe,

1. To whom these promises do belong; they are described by three characters:—(1.) They are such as know God's name. His nature we cannot fully know; but by his name he has made himself known, and with that we must acquaint ourselves. (2.) They are such as have set their love upon him; and those who rightly know him will love him, will place their love upon him as the only adequate object of it, will let out their love towards him with pleasure and enlargement, and will fix their love upon him with a resolution never to remove it to any rival. (3.) They are such as call upon him, as by prayer keep up a constant correspondence with him, and in every difficult case refer themselves to him.

2. What the promises are which God makes to the saints. (1.) That he will, in due time, deliver them out of trouble: *I will deliver him* (v. 14 and again v. 15), denoting a double deliverance, living and dying, a deliverance in trouble and a deliverance out of trouble. If God proportions the degree and continuance of our troubles to our strength, if he keeps us from offending him in our troubles, and makes our death our discharge, at length, from all our troubles, then this promise is fulfilled. See xxxiv. 19; 2 Tim. iii. 11; iv. 18. (2.) That he will, in the mean time, *be with them in trouble*, v. 15. If he does not immediately put a period to their afflictions, yet they shall have his gracious presence with them in their troubles; he will take notice of their sorrows, and *know their souls in adversity*, will visit them graciously by his word and Spirit, and converse with them, will take their part, will support and comfort them, and sanctify their afflictions to them, which will be the surest token of his presence with them in their troubles. (3.) That herein he will answer their prayers: *He shall call upon me; I will pour upon him the spirit of prayer, and then I will answer*, answer by promises (lxxxv. 8), answer by providences, bringing in seasonable relief, and answer by graces, *strengthening them with strength in their souls* (cxxxviii. 3); thus he

answered Paul with *grace sufficient*, 2 Cor. xii. 9. (4.) That he will exalt and dignify them: *I will set him on high*, out of the reach of trouble, above the stormy region, on a rock *above the waves*, Isa. xxxiii. 16. They shall be enabled, by the grace of God, to look down upon the things of this world with a holy contempt and indifference, to look up to the things of the other world with a holy ambition and concern; and then they are set on high. *I will honour him*; those are truly honourable whom God puts honour upon by taking them into covenant and communion with himself and designing them for his kingdom and glory, John xii. 26. (5.) That they shall have a sufficiency of life in this world (v. 16): *With length of days will I satisfy him*; that is, [1.] They shall live long enough: they shall be continued in this world till they have done the work they were sent into this world for and are ready for heaven, and that is long enough. Who would wish to live a day longer than God has some work to do, either by him or upon him? [2.] They shall think it long enough; for God by his grace shall wean them from the world and make them willing to leave it. A man may die young, and yet die full of days, *satur diernum—satisfied with living*. A wicked worldly man is not satisfied, no, not with long life; he still cries, *Give, give*. But he that has his treasure and heart in another world has soon enough of this; he would not live always. (6.) That they shall have an eternal life in the other world. This crowns the blessedness: *I will show him my salvation*, show him *the Messiah* (so some); good old Simeon was then satisfied with long life when he could say, *My eyes have seen thy salvation*, nor was there any greater joy to the Old-Testament saints than to see Christ's day, though at a distance. It is more probable that the word refers to the better country, that is, the heavenly, which the patriarchs desired and sought: *he will show him* that, bring him to that blessed state, the felicity of which consists so much in seeing that face to face which we here see through a glass darkly; and, in the mean time, he will give him a prospect of it. All these promises, some think, point primarily at Christ, and had their accomplishment in his resurrection and exaltation.

PSALM XCII.

It is a groundless opinion of some of the Jewish writers (who are usually free of their conjectures) that this psalm was penned and sung by Adam in innocency, on the first sabbath. It is inconsistent with the psalm itself, which speaks of the workers of iniquity, when as yet sin had not entered. It is probable that it was penned by David, and, being calculated for the sabbath day, I. Praise, the business of the sabbath, is here recommended, ver. 1—3. II. God's works, which gave occasion for the sabbath, are here celebrated as great and unsearchable in general, ver. 4—6. In particular, with reference to the works both of providence and redemption, the psalmist sings unto God both of mercy and judgment, the ruin of sinners and the joy of saints, three times counterchanged. 1. *The wicked shall perish* (ver. 7), but God is eternal, ver. 8. 2. God's enemies shall be cut off, but David shall be exalted, ver. 9, 10. 3. David's enemies shall be confounded (ver. 11), but all the righteous shall be fruitful and flourishing, ver. 12—15. In singing this psalm we must take pleasure in giving to God the glory due to his name, and triumph in his works.

A psalm or song for the sabbath day.

IT is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most high: 2 To show forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night, 3 Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound. 4 For thou, LORD, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands. 5 O LORD, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep. 6 A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this.

This psalm was appointed to be sung, at least it usually was sung, in the house of the sanctuary on the sabbath day, that day of rest, which was an instituted memorial of the work of creation, of God's rest from that work, and the continuance of it in his providence; for the *Father worketh hitherto*. Note, 1. The sabbath day must be a day, not only of holy rest, but of holy work, and the rest is in order to the work. 2. The proper work of the sabbath is praising God; every sabbath day must be a thanksgiving-day; and the other services of the day must be in order to this, and therefore must by no means thrust this into a corner. One of the Jewish writers refers it to the kingdom of the Messiah, and calls it, *A psalm or song for the age to come*, which shall be all sabbath. Believers, through Christ, enjoy that *sabbatism which remains for the people of God* (Heb. iv. 9), the beginning of the everlasting sabbath. In these verses,

I. We are called upon and encouraged to praise God (v. 1—3): *It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord*. Praising God is good work: it is good in itself and good for us. It is our duty, the rent, the tribute, we are to pay to our great Lord; we are unjust if we withhold it. It is our privilege that we are admitted to praise God, and have hope to be accepted in it. It is good, for it is pleasant and profitable, work that is its own wages; it is the work of angels, the work of heaven. It is good to give thanks for the mercies we have received, for that is the way of fetching in further mercy: it is fit to sing to his name who is Most High, exalted above all blessing and praise. Now observe here, 1. How we must praise God. We must do it by *showing forth his lovingkindness and his faithfulness*. Being convinced of his glorious attributes and perfections, we must show them forth, as those that are greatly affected with them ourselves and desire to affect others with them likewise. We must show forth, not only his greatness and majesty, his holiness and justice, which magnify him and

strike an awe upon us, but his lovingkindness and his faithfulness; for his goodness is his glory (Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19), and by these he proclaims his name. His mercy and truth are the great supports of our faith and hope, and the great encouragements of our love and obedience; these therefore we must show forth as our pleas in prayer and the matter of our joy. This was then done, not only by singing, but by music joined with it, *upon an instrument of ten strings* (v. 3); but then it was to be with a solemn sound, not that which was gay, and apt to dissipate the spirits, but that which was grave, and apt to fix them. 2. When we must praise God—in the morning and every night, not only on sabbath days, but every day; it is that which the duty of every day requires. We must praise God, not only in public assemblies, but in secret, and in our families, showing forth, to ourselves and those about us, his lovingkindness and faithfulness. We must begin and end every day with praising God, must give him thanks every morning, when we are fresh and before the business of the day comes in upon us, and every night, when we are again composed and retired; and are recollecting ourselves; we must give him thanks every morning for the mercies of the night and every night for the mercies of the day; going out and coming in we must bless God.

II. We have an example set before us in the psalmist himself, both to move us to and to direct us in this work (v. 4): *Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work*. Note, 1. Those can best recommend to others the duty of praise who have themselves experienced the pleasantness of it. "God's works are to be praised, for they have many a time rejoiced my heart; and therefore, whatever others may think of them, I must think well and speak well of them." 2. If God has given us the joy of his works, there is all the reason in the world why we should give him the honour of them. Has he made our hearts glad? Let us then make his praises glorious. Has God made us glad through the works of his providence for us, and of his grace in us, and both through the great work of redemption? (1.) Let us thence fetch encouragement for our faith and hope; so the psalmist does: *I will triumph in the works of thy hands*. From a joyful remembrance of what God has done for us we may raise a joyful prospect of what he will do, and triumph in the assurance of it, triumph over all opposition, 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14. (2.) Let us thence fetch matter for holy adorings and admirings of God (v. 5): *O Lord! how great are thy works*—great beyond conception, beyond expression, the products of great power and wisdom, of great consequence and importance! men's works are nothing to them. We cannot comprehend the greatness of God's works, and therefore must reverently and awfully wonder at them, and even stand amazed at the magnificence of them. "Men's

works are little and trifling, for their thoughts are shallow; but, Lord, *thy works are great* and such as cannot be measured; for *thy thoughts are very deep* and such as cannot be fathomed." God's counsels as much exceed the contrivances of our wisdom as his works do the efforts of our power. *His thoughts are above our thoughts, as his ways are above our ways*, Isa. lv. 9. *O the depth of God's designs!* Rom. xi. 33. The greatness of God's works should lead us to consider the depth of his thoughts, that counsel of his own will according to which he does all things—what a compass his thoughts fetch and to what a length they reach!

III. We are admonished not to neglect the works of God, by the character of those who do so, v. 6. Those are fools, they are brutish, who do not know, who do not understand, how great God's works are, who will not acquaint themselves with them, nor give him the glory of them; *they regard not the work of the Lord nor consider the operation of his hands* (xxviii. 5); particularly, they understand not the meaning of their own prosperity (which is spoken of v. 7); they take it as a pledge of their happiness, whereas it is a preparative for their ruin. If there are so many who know not the designs of Providence, nor care to know them, those who through grace are acquainted with them, and love to be so, have the more reason to be thankful.

7 When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; *it is that they shall be destroyed for ever*: 8 But thou, LORD, art most high for evermore. 9 For, lo, thine enemies, O LORD, for, lo, thine enemies shall perish; all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered. 10 But my horn shalt thou exalt like *the horn of a unicorn*: I shall be anointed with fresh oil. 11 Mine eye also shall see *my desire* on mine enemies, and mine ears shall hear *my desire* of the wicked that rise up against me. 12 The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. 13 Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. 14 They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; 15 To show that the LORD is upright: *he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him*.

The psalmist had said (v. 4) that from the works of God he would take occasion to triumph; and here he does so.

I. He triumphs over God's enemies (v. 7,

9, 11), triumphs in the foresight of their destruction, not as it would be the misery of his fellow-creatures, but as it would redound to the honour of God's justice and holiness. He is confident of the ruin of sinners, 1. Though they are flourishing (v. 7): *When the wicked spring as the grass in spring* (so numerous, so thickly sown, so green, and growing so fast), *and all the workers of iniquity do flourish in pomp, and power, and all the instances of outward prosperity, are easy and many, and succeed in their enterprises, one would think that all this was in order to their being happy, that it was a certain evidence of God's favour and an earnest of something as good or better in reserve: but it is quite otherwise; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever*. The very prosperity of fools shall slay them, Prov. i. 32. The sheep that are designed for the slaughter are put into the fattest pasture. 2. Though they are daring, v. 9. They are thy enemies, and impudently avow themselves to be so. They are contrary to God, and they fight against God. They are in rebellion against his crown and dignity, and therefore it is easy to foresee that they shall perish; *for who ever hardened his heart against God and prospered?* Note, All the impenitent workers of iniquity shall be deemed and taken as God's enemies, and as such they shall perish and be scattered. Christ reckons those his enemies that will not have him to reign over them; and they shall be brought forth and slain before him. The workers of iniquity are now associated, and closely linked together, in a combination against God and religion; but they shall be scattered, and disabled to help one another against the just judgment of God. *In the world to come they shall be separated from the congregation of the righteous*; so the Chaldee, Ps. i. 5. 3. Though they had a particular malice against the psalmist, and, upon that account, he might be tempted to fear them, yet he triumphs over them (v. 11): *"My eye shall see my desire on my enemies that rise up against me; I shall see them not only disabled from doing me any further mischief, but reckoned with for the mischief they have done me, and brought either to repentance or ruin"* and this was his desire concerning them. In the Hebrew it is no more than thus, *My eye shall look on my enemies, and my ear shall hear of the wicked*. He does not say what he shall see or what he shall hear, but he shall see and hear that in which God will be glorified and in which he will therefore be satisfied. This perhaps has reference to Christ, to his victory over Satan, death, and hell, the destruction of those that persecuted and crucified him, and opposed his gospel, and to the final ruin of the impenitent at the last day. Those that rise up against Christ will fall before him and be made his footstool.

II. He triumphs in God, and his glory and grace. 1. In the glory of God (v. 8) *"But thou, O Lord! art most high for ever-*

more. The workers of iniquity who fight against us may be high for a time, and think to carry all before them with a high hand, but *thou art high, most high, for evermore*. Their height will be humbled and brought down, but thine is everlasting." Let us not therefore fear the pride and power of evil men, nor be discouraged by their impotent menaces, for the moth shall eat them up as a garment, but *God's righteousness shall be for ever*, Isa. li. 7, 8. 2. In the grace of God, his favour and the fruits of it, (1.) To himself (v. 10): "Thou, O Lord! that art thyself most high, *shalt exalt my horn*." The great God is the fountain of honour, and he, being *high for evermore*, himself will exalt his people for ever, for *he is the praise of all his saints*, cxlviii. 14. The wicked are forbidden to *lift up the horn* (lxxv. 4, 5), but those that serve God and the interest of his kingdom with their honour or power, and commit it to him to keep it, to raise it, to use it, and to dispose of it, as he pleases, may hope that he will *exalt their horn as the horn of a unicorn*, to the greatest height, either in this world or the other: *My horn shalt thou exalt*, when *thy enemies perish*; for *then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun*, when the wicked shall be doomed to *shame and everlasting contempt*. He adds, *I shall be anointed with fresh oil*, which denotes a fresh confirmation in his office to which he had been anointed, or abundance of plenty, so that he should have fresh oil as often as he pleased, or renewed comforts to revive him when his spirits drooped. Grace is the anointing of the Spirit; when this is given to help in the time of need, and is received, as there is occasion, from the fulness that is in Christ Jesus, we are then anointed with fresh oil. Some read it, *When I grow old thou shalt anoint me with fresh oil*. *My old age shalt thou exalt with rich mercy*; so the LXX. Compare v. 14, *They shall bring forth fruit in old age*. The comforts of God's Spirit, and the joys of his salvation, shall be a refreshing oil to the *hoary heads that are found in the way of righteousness*. (2.) To all the saints. They are here represented as *trees of righteousness*, Isa. lxi. 3; Ps. i. 3. Observe, [1.] The good place they are fixed in; they are *planted in the house of the Lord*, v. 13. The trees of righteousness do not grow of themselves; they are *planted*, not in common soil, but in paradise, *in the house of the Lord*. Trees are not usually planted in a house; but God's trees are said to be planted in his house because it is from his grace, by his word and Spirit, that they receive all the sap and virtue that keep them alive and make them fruitful. They fix themselves to holy ordinances, take root in them, abide by them, put themselves under the divine protection, and bring forth all their fruits to God's honour and glory. [2.] The good plight they shall be kept in. It is here promised, *First*, That they shall grow, v. 12. Where God

gives true grace he will give more grace. God's trees shall grow higher, like the cedars the tall cedars in Lebanon; they shall grow nearer heaven, and with a holy ambition shall aspire towards the upper world; they shall grow stronger, like the cedars, and fitter for use. *He that has clean hands shall be strong, and stronger*. Secondly, That they shall flourish, both in the credit of their profession and the comfort and joy of their own souls. They shall be cheerful themselves and respected by all about them. *They shall flourish like the palm-tree*, which has a stately body (Cant. vii. 7), and large boughs, Lev. xxiii. 40; Judg. iv. 5. Dates, the fruit of it, are very pleasant, but it is especially alluded to here as being evergreen. The wicked flourish as the grass (v. 7), which is soon withered, but the righteous as the palm-tree, which is long-lived and which the winter does not change. It has been said of the palm-tree, *Sub pondere crescit*—*The more it is pressed down the more it grows*; so the righteous flourish under their burdens; the more they are afflicted the more they multiply. Being planted in *the house of the Lord* (there their root is), they flourish in the courts of our God—there their branches spread. *Their life is hid with Christ in God*. But their light also shines before men. It is desirable that those who have a place should have a name in God's house and within his walls, Isa. lvi. 5. Let good Christians aim to excel, that they may be eminent and may flourish, and so may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, as flourishing trees adorn the courts of a house. And let those who flourish in God's courts give him the glory of it; it is by virtue of this promise, *They shall be fat and flourishing*. Their flourishing without is from a fatness within, from the *root and fatness of the good olive*, Rom. xi. 17. Without a living principle of grace in the heart the profession will not be long flourishing; but where that is, *the leaf also shall not wither*, Ps. i. 3. *The trees of the Lord are full of sap*, civ. 16. See Hos. xiv. 5, 6. Thirdly, That they shall be fruitful. Were there nothing but leaves upon them, they would not be trees of any value, but *they shall still bring forth fruit*. The products of sanctification, all the instances of a lively devotion and a useful conversation, good works, by which God is glorified and others are edified, these are the fruits of righteousness, in which it is the privilege, as well as the duty, of the righteous to abound, and their abounding in them is the matter of a promise as well as of a command. It is promised that they shall bring forth fruit in old age. Other trees, when they are old, leave off bearing, but in God's trees the strength of grace does not fail with the strength of nature. The last days of the saints are sometime their best days, and their last work is their best work. This indeed shows that they are upright; perseverance is the surest evidence of sincerity. But it is here said to show that the

Lord is upright (v. 15), that he is true to his promises and faithful to every word that he has spoken, and that he is constant to the work which he has begun. As it is by the promises that believers first partake of a divine nature, so it is by the promises that that divine nature is preserved and kept up; and therefore the power it exerts is an evidence that the *Lord is upright*, and so he will show himself *with an upright man*, xvii. 25. This the psalmist triumphs in: "*He is my rock and there is no unrighteousness in him*. I have chosen him for my rock on which to build, in the clefts of which to take shelter, on the top of which to set my feet. I have found him a rock, strong and steadfast, and his word as firm as a rock. I have found" (and let every one speak as he finds) "that there is no unrighteousness in him." He is as able, and will be as kind, as his word makes him to be. All that ever trusted in God found him faithful and all-sufficient, and none were ever made ashamed of their hope in him.

PSALM XCIII.

This short psalm sets forth the honour of the kingdom of God among men, to his glory, the terror of his enemies, and the comfort of all his loving subjects. It relates both to the kingdom of his providence, by which he upholds and governs the world, and especially to the kingdom of his grace, by which he secures the church, sanctifies and preserves it. The administration of both these kingdoms is put into the hands of the Messiah, and to him, doubtless, the prophet here bears witness, and to his kingdom, speaking of it as present, because sure; and because, as the eternal Word, even before his incarnation he was Lord of all. Concerning God's kingdom glorious things are here spoken. 1. Have other kings their royal robes? So has he, ver. 1. 2. Have they their thrones? So has he, ver. 2. 3. Have they their enemies whom they subdue and triumph over? So has he, ver. 3, 4. 4. Is it their honour to be faithful and holy? So is it his, ver. 5. In singing this psalm we forget ourselves if we forget Christ, to whom the Father has given all power both in heaven and in earth.

THE LORD reigneth, he is clothed with majesty; the LORD is clothed with strength, *wherewith he hath girded himself*: the world also is stablished, that it cannot be moved. 2 Thy throne is established of old: thou art from everlasting. 3 The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. 4 The LORD on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, *yea, than the mighty waves of the sea*. 5 Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh thine house, O LORD, for ever.

Next to the being of God there is nothing that we are more concerned to believe and consider than God's dominion, that Jehovah is God, and that this God reigns (v. 1), not only that he is King of right, and is the owner and proprietor of all persons and things, but that he is King in fact, and does direct and dispose of all the creatures and all their actions according to the counsel of his own will. This is celebrated here, and in many other psalms: *The Lord reigns*. It is the song of the gospel church, of the glorified church (Rev. xix 6), *Hallelujah; the Lord*

God omnipotent reigns. Here we are told how he reigns.

I. The Lord reigns gloriously: *He is clothed with majesty*. The majesty of earthly princes, compared with God's terrible majesty, is but like the glimmerings of a glow-worm compared with the brightness of the sun when he goes forth in his strength. Are the enemies of God's kingdom great and formidable? Yet let us not fear them, for God's majesty will eclipse theirs.

II. He reigns powerfully. He is not only clothed with majesty, as a prince in his court, but he is *clothed with strength*, as a general in the camp. He has wherewithal to support his greatness and to make it truly formidable. See him not only clad in robes, but clad in armour. Both *strength and honour are his clothing*. He can do every thing, and with him nothing is impossible. 1. With this power *he has girded himself*; it is not derived from any other, nor does the executing of it depend upon any other, but he has it of himself and with it does whatsoever he pleases. Let us not fear the power of man, which is borrowed and bounded, but fear him who has power to kill and cast into hell. 2. To this power it is owing that the world stands to this day. The world also is established; it was so at first, by the creating power of God, when he founded it upon the seas; it is so still, by that providence which upholds all things and is a continued creation; it is so established that though he has *hanged the earth upon nothing* (Job xxvi. 7) yet it cannot be moved; all things continue to this day, according to his ordinance. Note, The preserving of the powers of nature and the course of nature is what the God of nature must have the glory of; and we who have the benefit thereof daily are very careless and ungrateful if we give him not the glory of it. Though God clothes himself with majesty, yet he condescends to take care of this lower world and to settle its affairs; and, if he established the world, much more will he establish his church, that it cannot be moved.

III. He reigns eternally (v. 2): *Thy throne is established of old*. 1. God's right to rule the world is founded in his making it; he that gave being to it, no doubt, may give law to it, and so his title to the government is incontestable: *Thy throne is established*; it is a title without a flaw in it. And it is ancient: it is *established of old*, from the beginning of time, before any other rule, principality, or power was erected, as it will continue when all other rule, principality, and power shall be put down, 1 Cor. xv. 24. 2. The whole administration of his government was settled in his eternal counsels before all worlds; for he does all according to the purpose which he purposed in himself. The chariots of Providence came down from between the mountains of brass, from those decrees which are fixed as the everlasting

mountains (Zech. vi. 1): *Thou art from everlasting, and therefore thy throne is established of old*; because God himself was from everlasting, his throne and all the determinations of it were so too; for in an eternal mind there could not but be eternal thoughts.

IV. He reigns triumphantly, *v. 3, 4*. We have here, 1. A threatening storm supposed: *The floods have lifted up, O Lord!* (to God himself the remonstrance is made) *the floods have lifted up their voice*, which speaks terror; nay, they have *lifted up their waves*, which speaks real danger. It alludes to a tempestuous sea, such as the wicked are compared to, Isa. lvii. 20. *The heathen rage* (Ps. ii. 1) and think to ruin the church, to overwhelm it like a deluge, to sink it like a ship at sea. The church is said to be *tossed with tempests* (Isa. liv. 11), and the *floods of ungodly men* make the saints *afraid*, Ps. xviii. 4. We may apply it to the tumults that are sometimes in our own bosoms, through prevailing passions and frights, which put the soul into disorder, and are ready to overthrow its graces and comforts; but, if the Lord reign there, even the winds and seas shall obey him. 2. An immovable anchor cast in this storm (*v. 4*): *The Lord himself is mightier*. Let this keep our minds fixed, (1.) That God is on high, above them, which denotes his safety (they cannot reach him, xxix. 10) and his sovereignty; they are ruled by him, they are overruled, and, wherein they rebel, overcome, Exod. xviii. 11. (2.) That he is *mightier*, does more wondrous things than the noise of many waters; they cannot disturb his rest or rule; they cannot defeat his designs and purposes. Observe, The power of the church's enemies is but as the noise of many waters; there is more of sound than substance in it. *Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise*, Jer. xli. 17. The church's friends are commonly more frightened than hurt. God is mightier than this noise; he is mighty to preserve his people's interests from being ruined by these many waters and his people's spirits from being terrified by the noise of them. He can, when he pleases, command peace to the church (Isa. xlv. 7), peace in the soul, Isa. xxvi. 3. Note, The unlimited sovereignty and irresistible power of the great Jehovah are very encouraging to the people of God, in reference to all the noises and hurries they meet with in this world, Ps. xlv. 1, 2.

V. He reigns in truth and holiness, *v. 5*. 1. All his promises are inviolably faithful: *Thy testimonies are very sure*. As God is able to protect his church, so he is true to the promises he has made of its safety and victory. His word is passed, and all the saints may rely upon it. Whatever was foretold concerning the kingdom of the Messiah would certainly have its accomplishment in due time. Those testimonies upon which the faith and hope of the Old-Testament saints were built were very sure, and would

not fail them. 2. All his people ought to be conscientiously pure: *Holiness becomes thy house, O Lord! for ever*. God's church is his house; it is a holy house, cleansed from sin, consecrated by God, and employed in his service. The holiness of it is its beauty (nothing better becomes the saints than conformity to God's image and an entire devotedness to his honour), and it is its strength and safety; it is the holiness of God's house that secures it against the many waters and their noise. Where there is purity there shall be peace. Fashions change, and that which is becoming at one time is not so at another; but holiness always becomes God's house and family, and those who belong to it; it is perpetually decent; and nothing so ill becomes the worshippers of the holy God as unholiness.

PSALM XCIV.

This psalm was penned when the church of God was under hatches, oppressed and persecuted; and it is an appeal to God, as the Judge of heaven and earth, and an address to him, to appear for his people against his and their enemies. Two things this psalm speaks:—1. Conviction and terror to the persecutors (*ver. 1–11*), showing them their danger and folly, and arguing with them. 11. Comfort and peace to the persecuted (*ver. 12–23*), assuring them, both from God's promise and from the psalmist's own experience, that their troubles would end well, and God would, in due time, appear to their joy and the confusion of those who set themselves against them. In singing this psalm we must look abroad upon the pride of oppressors with a holy indignation, and the tears of the oppressed with a holy compassion; but, at the same time, look upwards to the righteous Judge with an entire satisfaction, and look forward, to the end of all these things, with a pleasing hope.

O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, show thyself. 2 Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud. 3 LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph? 4 How long shall they utter and speak hard things? and all the workers of iniquity boast themselves? 5 They break in pieces thy people, O LORD, and afflict thine heritage. 6 They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. 7 Yet they say, The LORD shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it. 8 Understand, ye brutish among the people: and ye fools, when will ye be wise? 9 Hath planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see? 10 He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? he that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know? 11 The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.

In these verses we have,

I. A solemn appeal to God against the cruel oppressors of his people, *v. 1, 2*. This speaks terror enough to them, that they have the prayers of God's people against them, who cry day and night to him to avenge them

of their adversaries; and shall he not avenge them speedily? Luke xviii. 3, 7. Observe here,

1. The titles they give to God for the encouraging of their faith in this appeal: *O God! to whom vengeance belongeth*; and *thou Judge of the earth*. We may with boldness appeal to him; for, (1.) He is judge, supreme judge, judge alone, from whom every man's judgment proceeds. He that gives law gives sentence upon every man according to his works, by the rule of that law. He has prepared his throne for judgment. He has indeed appointed magistrates to be avengers under him (Rom. xiii. 4), but he is the avenger in chief, to whom even magistrates themselves are accountable; his throne is the last refuge (the *dernier ressort*, as the law speaks) of oppressed innocency. He is universal judge, not of this city or country only, but *judge of the earth*, of the whole earth: none are exempt from his jurisdiction; nor can it be alleged against an appeal to him in any court that it is *coram non judice*—before a person not judicially qualified. (2.) He is just. As he has authority to avenge wrong, so it is his nature, and property, and honour. This also is implied in the title here given to him and repeated with such an emphasis, *O God! to whom vengeance belongs*, who wilt not suffer might always to prevail against right. This is a good reason why we must not avenge ourselves, because God has said, *Vengeance is mine*; and it is daring presumption to usurp his prerogative and step into his throne, Rom. xii. 19. Let this alarm those who do wrong, whether with a close hand, so as not to be discovered, or with a high hand, so as not to be controlled. There is a God to whom vengeance belongs, who will certainly call them to an account; and let it encourage those who suffer wrong to bear it with silence, committing themselves to him who judges righteously.

2. What it is they ask of God. (1.) That he would *glorify himself*, and get honour to his own name. Wicked persecutors thought God had withdrawn and had forsaken the earth. "Lord," say they, "show thyself; make them know that thou art and that thou art ready to *show thyself strong on the behalf of those whose hearts are upright with thee*." The enemies thought God was conquered because his people were. "Lord," say they, "*lift up thyself, be thou exalted in thy own strength*. Lift up thyself, to be seen, to be feared; and suffer not thy name to be trampled upon and run down." (2.) That he would mortify the oppressors: *Render a reward to the proud*; that is, "Reckon with them for all their insolence, and the injuries they have done to thy people." These prayers are prophecies, which speak terror to all the sons of violence. The righteous God will deal with them according to their merits.

III. A humble complaint to God of the pride and cruelty of the oppressors, and an

expostulation with him concerning it, v. 3—6. Here observe,

1. The character of the enemies they complain against. They are wicked; they are *workers of iniquity*; they are bad, very bad, themselves, and therefore they hate and persecute those whose goodness shames and condemns them. Those are wicked indeed, and *workers of the worst iniquity*, lost to all honour and virtue, who are cruel to the innocent and hate the righteous.

2. Their haughty barbarous carriage which they complain of. (1.) They are insolent, and take a pleasure in magnifying themselves. They talk high and talk big; they triumph; they speak loud things; they boast themselves, as if their tongues were their own and their hands too, and they were accountable to none for what they say or do, and as if the day were their own, and they doubted not but to carry the cause against God and religion. Those that speak highly of themselves, that triumph and boast, are apt to speak hardly of others; but there will come a day of reckoning for all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against God, his truths, and ways, and people, Jude 15. (2.) They are impious, and take a pleasure in running down God's people because they are his (v. 5): "*They break in pieces thy people, O Lord! break their assemblies, their estates, their families, their persons, in pieces, and do all they can to afflict thy heritage, to grieve them, to crush them, to run them down, to root them out*." God's people are his heritage; there are those that, for his sake, hate them, and seek their ruin. This is a very good plea with God, in our intercessions for the church: "Lord, it is thine; thou hast a property in it. It is thy heritage; thou hast a pleasure in it, and out of it the rent of thy glory in this world issues. And wilt thou suffer these wicked men to trample upon it thus?" (3.) They are inhuman, and take a pleasure in wronging those that are least able to help themselves (v. 6); they not only oppress and impoverish, but *they slay the widow and the stranger*; not only neglect the fatherless, and make a prey of them, but murder them, because they are weak and exposed, and sometimes lie at their mercy. Those whom they should protect from injury they are most injurious to, perhaps because God has taken them into his particular care. Who would think it possible that any of the children of men should be thus barbarous?

3. A modest pleading with God concerning the continuance of the persecution: "Lord, *how long shall they do thus*?" And again, *How long?* When shall this wickedness of the wicked come to an end?

III. A charge of atheism exhibited against the persecutors, and an expostulation with them upon that charge.

1. Their atheistical thoughts are here discovered (v. 7): *Yet they say, The Lord shall not see*. Though the cry of their wickedness

is very great and loud, though they rebel against the light of nature and the dictates of their own consciences, yet they have the confidence to say, "*The Lord shall not see*; he will not only wink at small faults, but shut his eyes at great ones too." Or they think they have managed it so artfully, under colour of justice and religion perhaps, that it will not be adjudged murder. "*The God of Jacob*, though his people pretend to have such an interest in him, does not regard it either as against justice or as against his own people; he will never call us to an account for it." Thus they deny God's government of the world, banter his covenant with his people, and set the judgment to come at defiance.

2. They are here convicted of folly and absurdity. He that says either that Jehovah the living God shall not see or that the God of Jacob shall not regard the injuries done to his people, *Nabal* is his name and folly is with him; and yet here he is fairly reasoned with, for his conviction and conversion, to prevent his confusion (v. 8): "*Understand, you brutish among the people*, and let reason guide you." Note, The atheistical, though they set up for wits, and philosophers, and politicians, yet are really the *brutish among the people*; if they would but understand, they would believe. God, by the prophet, speaks as if he thought the time long till men would be men, and show themselves so by understanding and considering: "*You fools, when will you be wise*, so wise as to know that God sees and regards all you say and do, and to speak and act accordingly, as those that must give account?" Note, None are so bad but means are to be used for the reclaiming and reforming of them, none so brutish, so foolish, but it should be tried whether they may not yet be made wise; while there is life there is hope. To prove the folly of those that question God's omniscience and justice the psalmist argues,

(1.) From the works of creation (v. 9), the formation of human bodies, which, as it proves that there is a God, proves also that God has infinitely and transcendently in himself all those perfections that are in any creature. *He that planted the ear* (and it is planted in the head, as a tree in the ground) *shall he not hear*? No doubt he shall, more and better than we can. *He that formed the eye* (and how curiously it is formed above any part of the body anatomists know and let us know by their dissections) *shall he not see*? Could he give, would he give, that perfection to a creature which he has not in himself? Note, [1.] The powers of nature are all derived from the God of nature. See Exod. iv. 11. [2.] By the knowledge of ourselves we may be led a great way towards the knowledge of God—if by the knowledge of our own bodies, and the organs of sense, so as to conclude that if we can see and hear much more can God, then certainly by the knowledge of our own souls and their noble faculties. The gods of the heathen had eyes and saw not, ears and

heard not; our God has no eyes nor ears, as we have, and yet we must conclude he both sees and hears, because we have our sight and hearing from him, and are accountable to him for our use of them.

(2.) From the works of providence (v. 10): *He that chastises the heathen* for their polytheism and idolatry, *shall not he much more correct his own people* for their atheism and profaneness? He that chastises the children of men for oppressing and wronging one another, shall not he correct those that profess to be his own children, and call themselves so, and yet persecute those that are really so? Shall not we be under his correction, under whose government the whole world is? Does he regard as King of nations, and shall he not much more regard as the God of Jacob? Dr. Hammond gives another very probable sense of this: "*He that instructs the nations* (that is, gives them his law), *shall not he correct*, that is, shall not he judge them according to that law, and call them to an account for their violations of it? In vain was the law given if there will not be a judgment upon it." And it is true that the same word signifies to chastise and to instruct, because chastisement is intended for instruction and instruction should go along with chastisement.

(3.) From the works of grace: *He that teaches man knowledge, shall he not know*? He not only, as the God of nature, has given the light of reason, but, as the God of grace, has given the light of revelation, has shown man what is true wisdom and understanding; and he that does this, shall he not know? Job xxviii. 23, 28. The flowing of the streams is a certain sign of the fulness of the fountain. If all knowledge is from God, no doubt all knowledge is in God. From this general doctrine of God's omniscience, the psalmist not only confutes the atheists, who said, "*The Lord shall not see* (v. 7), he will not take cognizance of what we do;" but awakens us all to consider that God will take cognizance even of what we think (v. 11): *The Lord knows the thoughts of man, that they are vanity*. [1.] He knows those thoughts, in particular, concerning God's conniving at the wickedness of the wicked, and knows them to be vain, and laughs at the folly of those who by such fond conceits buoy themselves up in sin. [2.] He knows all the thoughts of the children of men, and knows them to be, for the most part, vain, that the imaginations of the thoughts of men's hearts are evil, only evil, and that continually. Even in good thoughts there is a fickleness and inconstancy which may well be called *vanity*. It concerns us to keep a strict guard upon our thoughts, because God takes particular notice of them. Thoughts are words to God, and vain thoughts are provocations.

12 Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law; 13 That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adver-

sity, until the pit be digged for the wicked. 14 For the LORD will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance. 15 But judgment shall return unto righteousness: and all the upright in heart shall follow it. 16 Who will rise up for me against the evildoers? or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity? 17 Unless the LORD *had been* my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence. 18 When I said, My foot slip-peth; thy mercy, O LORD, held me up. 19 In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul. 20 Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law? 21 They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood. 22 But the LORD is my defence; and my God is the rock of my refuge. 23 And he shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness; *yea*, the LORD our God shall cut them off.

The psalmist, having denounced tribulation to those that trouble God's people, here assures those that are troubled of rest. See 2 Thess. i. 6, 7. He speaks comfort to suffering saints from God's promises and his own experience.

I. From God's promises, which are such as not only save them from being miserable, but secure a happiness to them (v. 12): *Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest*. Here he looks above the instruments of trouble, and eyes the hand of God, which gives it another name and puts quite another colour upon it. The enemies break in pieces God's people (v. 5); they aim at no less; but the truth of the matter is that God by them chastens his people, as the father the son in whom he delights, and the persecutors are only the rod he makes use of. *Howbeit they mean not so, neither doth their heart think so*, Isa. x. 5—7. Now it is here promised,

1. That God's people shall get good by their sufferings. When he chastens them he will teach them, and blessed is the man who is thus taken under a divine discipline, for *none teaches like God*. Note, (1.) The afflictions of the saints are fatherly chastenings, designed for their instruction, reformation, and improvement. (2.) When the teachings of the word and Spirit go along with the rebukes of Providence they then both manifest men to be blessed and help to make them so; for then they are marks of adoption and means of sanctification. When we are chastened we

must pray to be taught, and look into the law as the best expositor of Providence. It is not the chastening itself that does good, but the teaching that goes along with it and is the exposition of it

2. That they shall see through their sufferings (v. 13): *That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity*. Note, (1.) There is a rest remaining for the people of God after the days of their adversity, which, though they may be many and long, shall be numbered and finished in due time, and shall not last always. He that sends the trouble will send the rest, that he may comfort them according to the time that he has afflicted them. (2.) God *therefore* teaches his people by their troubles, that he may prepare them for deliverance, and so give them rest from their troubles, that, being reformed, they may be relieved, and that the affliction, having done its work, may be removed.

3. That they shall see the ruin of those that are the instruments of their sufferings, which is the matter of a promise, not as gratifying any passion of theirs, but as redounding to the glory of God: *Until the pit is digged* (or rather while the pit is digging) *for the wicked*, God is ordering peace for them at the same time that he is ordaining his arrows against the persecutors.

4. That, though they may be cast down, yet certainly they shall not be cast off, v. 14. Let God's suffering people assure themselves of this, that, whatever their friends do, God will not cast them off, nor throw them out of his covenant or out of his care; he will not forsake them, because they are his inheritance, which he will not quit his title to nor suffer himself to be disseised of. St. Paul comforted himself with this, Rom. xi. 1.

5. That, bad as things are, they shall mend, and, though they are now out of course, yet they shall return to their due and ancient channel (v. 15): *Judgment shall return unto righteousness*; the seeming disorders of Providence (for real ones there never were) shall be rectified. God's judgment, that is, his government, looks sometimes as if it were at a distance from righteousness, while the wicked prosper, and the best men meet with the worst usage; but it shall return to righteousness again, either in this world or at the furthest in the judgment of the great day, which will set all to-rights. Then *all the upright in heart shall be after it*; they shall follow it with their praises, and with entire satisfaction; they shall return to a prosperous and flourishing condition, and shine forth out of obscurity; they shall accommodate themselves to the dispensations of divine Providence, and with suitable affections attend all its motions. *They shall walk after the Lord*, Hos. xi. 10. Dr. Hammond thinks this was most eminently fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem first, and afterwards of heathen Rome, the crucifiers of Christ and persecutors of Christians, and the rest which the churches

had thereby. Then judgment returned even to righteousness, to mercy and goodness, and favour to God's people, who then were as much countenanced as before they had been trampled on.

II. From his own experiences and observations.

1. He and his friends had been oppressed by cruel and imperious men, that had power in their hands and abused it by abusing all good people with it. They were themselves *evil-doers and workers of iniquity* (v. 16); they abandoned themselves to all manner of impiety and immorality, and then their throne was a *throne of iniquity*, v. 20. Their dignity served to put a reputation upon sin, and their authority was employed to support it, and to bring about their wicked designs. It is a pity that ever a throne, which should be a terror to evil-doers and a protection and praise to those that do well, should be the seat and shelter of iniquity. That is a throne of iniquity which by the policy of its council frames mischief, and by its sovereignty enacts it and turns it into a law. Iniquity is daring enough even when human laws are against it, which often prove too weak to give an effectual check to it; but how insolent, how mischievous, is it when it is backed by a law! Iniquity is not the better, but much the worse, for being enacted by law; nor will it excuse those that practise it to say that they did but do as they were bidden. These workers of iniquity, having framed mischief by a law, take care to see the law executed; for they gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, who dare not keep the statutes of Omri nor the law of the house of Ahab; and they condemn the innocent blood for violating their decrees. See an instance in Daniel's enemies; they framed mischief by a law when they obtained an impious edict against prayer (Dan. vi. 7), and, when Daniel would not obey it, they assembled together against him (v. 11) and condemned his innocent blood to the lions. The best benefactors of mankind have often been thus treated, under colour of law and justice, as the worst of malefactors.

2. The oppression they were under bore very hard upon them, and oppressed their spirits too. Let not suffering saints despair, though, when they are persecuted, they find themselves perplexed and cast down; it was so with the psalmist here: His soul had almost dwelt in silence (v. 17); he was at his wits' end, and knew not what to say or do; he was, in his own apprehension, at his life's end, ready to drop into the grave, that land of silence. St. Paul, in a like case, received a sentence of death within himself, 2 Cor. i. 8, 9. He said, "*My foot slippeth* (v. 18); I am going irretrievably; there is no remedy; I must fall. I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul. My hope fails me; I do not find such firm footing for my faith as I have sometimes found." See Ps. lxxiii. 2. He had a multitude of perplexed entangled thoughts

within him concerning the case he was in and the construction to be made of it, and concerning the course he should take and what was likely to be the issue of it.

3. In this distress they sought for help, and succour; and some relief. (1.) They looked about for it and were disappointed (v. 16): "*Who will rise up for me against the evil-doers?* Have I any friend who, in love to me, will appear for me? Has justice any friend who, in a pious indignation at unrighteousness, will plead my injured cause?" He looked, but there was none to save, there was none to uphold. Note, When on the side of the oppressors there is power it is no marvel if the oppressed have no comforter, none that dare own them, or speak a good word for them, Eccl. iv. 1. When St. Paul was brought before Nero's throne of iniquity no man stood by him, 2 Tim. iv. 16. (2.) They looked up for it, v. 20. They humbly expostulate with God: "*Lord, shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee?* Wilt thou countenance and support these tyrants in their wickedness? We know thou wilt not." A throne has fellowship with God when it is a throne of justice and answers the end of the erecting of it; for by him kings reign, and when they reign for him their judgments are his, and he owns them as his ministers, and whoever resist them, or rise up against them, shall receive to themselves damnation; but, when it becomes a *throne of iniquity*, it has no longer fellowship with God. Far be it from the just and holy God that he should be the patron of unrighteousness, even in princes and those that sit in thrones, yea, though they be the *thrones of the house of David*.

4. They found succour and relief in God, and in him only. When other friends failed, in him they had a faithful and powerful friend; and it is recommended to all God's suffering saints to trust in him. (1.) God helps at a dead lift (v. 17): "*When I had almost dwelt in silence, then the Lord was my help, kept me alive, kept me in heart; and unless I had made him my help, by putting my trust in him and expecting relief from him, I could never have kept possession of my own soul; but living by faith in him has kept my head above water, has given me breath, and something to say.*" (2.) God's goodness is the great support of sinking spirits (v. 18): "*When I said, My foot slips into sin, into ruin, into despair, then thy mercy, O Lord! held me up, kept me from falling, and defeated the design of those who consulted to cast me down from my excellency,*" lxii. 4. We are beholden not only to God's power, but to his pity, for spiritual supports: *Thy mercy, the gifts of thy mercy and my hope in thy mercy, held me up.* God's right hand sustains his people when they look on their right hand and on their left and there is none to uphold; and we are then prepared for his gracious supports when

we are sensible of our own weakness and inability to stand by our own strength, and come to God, to acknowledge it, and to tell him how *our foot slips*. (3.) Divine consolations are the effectual relief of troubled spirits (v. 19): "*In the multitude of my thoughts within me, which are noisy like a multitude, crowding and jostling one another like a multitude, and very unruly and ungovernable, in the multitude of my sorrowful, solicitous, timorous thoughts, thy comforts delight my soul; and they are never more delightful than when they come in so seasonably to silence my unquiet thoughts and keep my mind easy.*" The world's comforts give but little delight to the soul when it is hurried with melancholy thoughts; they are songs to a heavy heart. But God's comforts will reach the soul, and not the fancy only, and will bring with them that peace and that pleasure which the smiles of the world cannot give and which the frowns of the world cannot take away.

5. God is, and will be, as a righteous Judge, the patron and protector of right and the punisher and avenger of wrong; this the psalmist had both the assurance of and the experience of. (1.) He will give redress to the injured (v. 22): "When none else will, nor can, nor dare, shelter me, *the Lord is my defence*, to preserve me from the evil of my troubles, from sinking under them and being ruined by them; and he is *the rock of my refuge*, in the clefts of which I may take shelter, and on the top of which I may set my feet, to be out of the reach of danger." God is his people's refuge, to whom they may flee, in whom they are safe and may be secure; he is the rock of their refuge, so strong, so firm, impregnable, immovable, as a rock: natural fastnesses sometimes exceed artificial fortifications. (2.) He will reckon with the injurious (v. 23): *He shall render to them their own iniquity*; he shall deal with them according to their deserts, and that very mischief which they did and designed against God's people shall be brought upon themselves: it follows, *He shall cut them off in their wickedness*. A man cannot be more miserable than his own wickedness will make him if God visit it upon him: it will cut him in the remembrance of it; it will cut him off in the recompence of it. This the psalm concludes with the triumphant assurance of: *Yea, the Lord our God, who takes our part and owns us for his, shall cut them off from any fellowship with him, and so shall make them completely miserable and their pomp and power shall stand them in no stead.*

PSALM XCV.

For the expounding of this psalm we may borrow a great deal of light from the apostle's discourse, Heb. iii. and iv., where it appears both to have been penned by David and to have been calculated for the days of the Messiah; for it is there said expressly (Heb. iv. 7) that the day here spoken of (ver. 7) is to be understood of the gospel day, in which God speaks to us by his Son in a voice which we are concerned to hear, and proposes to us a rest besides that of Canaan. In singing psalms it is intended, 1. That we should make melody unto the Lord; this we are here excited to do, and assisted in doing, being called upon to praise God (ver. 1,

2) as a great God (ver. 3-5) and as our gracious benefactor, ver. 6, 7. 11. That we should teach and admonish ourselves and one another; and we are here taught and warned to hear God's voice (ver. 7), and not to harden our hearts, as the Israelites in the wilderness did (ver. 8, 9), lest we fall under God's wrath and fall short of his rest, as they did, ver. 10, 11. This psalm must be sung with a holy reverence of God's majesty and a dread of his justice, with a desire to please him and a fear to offend him.

O COME, let us sing unto the **LORD**: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. 2 Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. 3 For the **LORD** is a great God, and a great King above all gods. 4 In his hand *are* the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills *is* his also. 5 The sea *is* his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry *land*. 6 O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the **LORD** our maker. 7 For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

The psalmist here, as often elsewhere, stirs up himself and others to praise God; for it is a duty which ought to be performed with the most lively affections, and which we have great need to be excited to, being very often backward to it and cold in it. Observe,

I. How God is to be praised. 1. With holy joy and delight in him. The praising song must be a *joyful noise*, v. 1 and again v. 2. Spiritual joy is the heart and soul of thankful praise. It is the will of God (such is the condescension of his grace) that when we give glory to him as a being infinitely perfect and blessed we should, at the same time, *rejoice in him* as our Father and King, and a God in covenant with us. 2. With humble reverence, and a holy awe of him (v. 6): "*Let us worship, and bow down, and kneel before him*, as becomes those who know what an infinite distance there is between us and God, how much we are in danger of his wrath and in need of his mercy." Though *bodily exercise*, alone, *profits little*, yet certainly it is our duty to glorify God with our bodies by the outward expressions of reverence, seriousness, and humility, in the duties of religious worship. 3. We must praise God with our voice; we must speak forth, sing forth, his praises out of the abundance of a heart filled with love, and joy, and thankfulness—*Sing to the Lord; make a noise, a joyful noise to him, with psalms*—as those who are ourselves much affected with his greatness and goodness, are forward to own ourselves so, are desirous to be more and more affected therewith, and would willingly be instrumental to kindle and inflame the same pious and devout affection in others also. 4. We must praise God in concert, in the solemn assemblies: "*Come, let us sing*; let us join in singing to the Lord; not others with-

out me, nor I alone, but others with me. *Let us come together before his presence*, in the courts of his house, where his people are wont to attend him and to expect his manifestations of himself." Whenever we come into God's presence we must come with thanksgiving that we are admitted to such a favour; and, whenever we have thanks to give, we must *come before God's presence*, set ourselves before him, and present ourselves to him in the ordinances which he has appointed.

II. Why God is to be praised and what must be the matter of our praise. We do not want matter; it were well if we did not want a heart. We must praise God,

1. Because he is a *great God*, and sovereign Lord of all, v. 3. He is great, and therefore *greatly to be praised*. He is infinite and immense, and has all perfection in himself. (1.) He has great power: *He is a great King above all gods*, above all deputed deities, all magistrates, to whom he said, *You are gods* (he manages them all, and serves his own purposes by them, and to him they are all accountable), above all counterfeit deities, all pretenders, all usurpers; he can do that which none of them can do; he can, and will, furnish and vanquish them all. (2.) He has great possessions. This lower world is here particularly specified. We reckon those great men who have large territories, which they call their own against all the world, which yet are a very inconsiderable part of the universe: how great then is that God whose *the whole earth is, and the fulness thereof*, not only under whose feet it is, as he has an incontestable dominion over all the creatures and a propriety in them, but in whose hand it is, as he has the actual directing and disposing of all (v. 4); even *the deep places of the earth*, which are out of our sight, subterranean springs and mines, are *in his hand*; and *the height of the hills* which are out of our reach, whatever grows or feeds upon them, *is his also*. This may be taken figuratively: the meanest of the children of men, who are as the low places of the earth, are not beneath his cognizance; and the greatest, who are as the strength of the hills, are not above his control. Whatever strength is in any creature it is derived from God and employed for him (v. 5): *The sea is his*, and all that is in it (the waves fulfil his word); it is his, for *he made it*, gathered its waters and fixed its shores; *the dry land*, though given to the children of men, is his too, for he still reserved the property to himself; it is his, for *his hands formed it*, when his word made *the dry land* appear. His being the Creator of all makes him, without dispute, the owner of all. This being a gospel psalm, we may very well suppose that it is the Lord Jesus whom we are here taught to praise. He is a *great God*; the mighty God is one of his titles, and *God over all, blessed for evermore*. As Mediator, he is a *great King above all*

gods; by him kings reign; and angels, principalities, and powers, are subject to him; *by him*, as the eternal Word, *all things were made* (John i. 3), and it was fit he should be the restorer and reconciler of all who was the Creator of all, Col. i. 16, 20. To him all power is given both in heaven and in earth, and into his hand all things are delivered. It is he that sets one foot on the sea and the other on the earth, as sovereign Lord of both (Rev. x. 2), and therefore to him we must sing our songs of praise, and before him we must *worship and bow down*.

2. Because he is our God, not only has a dominion over us, as he has over all the creatures, but stands in special relation to us (v. 7): *He is our God*, and therefore it is expected we should praise him; who will, if we do not? What else did he make us for but that we should *be to him for a name and a praise*? (1.) He is our Creator, and the author of our being; we must *kneel before the Lord our Maker*, v. 6. Idolaters kneel before gods which they themselves made; we kneel before a God who made us and all the world and who is therefore our rightful proprietor; for his we are, and not our own. (2.) He is our Saviour, and the author of our blessedness. He is here called *the rock of our salvation* (v. 1), not only the founder, but the very foundation, of that work of wonder, on whom it is built. *That rock is Christ*; to him therefore we must sing our songs of praises, *to him that sits upon the throne and to the Lamb*. (3.) We are therefore his, under all possible obligations: *We are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand*. All the children of men are so; they are fed and led by his Providence, which cares for them, and conducts them, as the shepherd the sheep. We must praise him, not only because he made us, but because he preserves and maintains us, and our breath and ways are in his hand. All the church's children are in a special manner so; *Israel are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand*; and therefore he demands their homage in a special manner. The gospel church is his flock. Christ is the great and good Shepherd of it. We, as Christians, are led by his hand into the green pastures, by him we are protected and well provided for, to his honour and service we are entirely devoted as a peculiar people, and therefore to him must *be glory in the churches* (whether it be in the world or no) *throughout all ages*, Eph. iii. 21.

7—To day if ye will hear his voice,
8 Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, *and as in* the day of temptation in the wilderness: 9 When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work. 10 Forty years long was I grieved with *this* generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known

my ways: 11 Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.

The latter part of this psalm, which begins in the middle of a verse, is an exhortation to those who sing gospel psalms to live gospel lives, and to hear the voice of God's word; otherwise, how can they expect that he should hear the voice of their prayers and praises? Observe,

I. The duty required of all those that are the people of Christ's pasture and the sheep of his hand. He expects that they hear his voice, for he has said, *My sheep hear my voice*, John x. 27. *We are his people*, say they. Are you so? Then *hear his voice*. If you call him *Master*, or *Lord*, then do the things which he says, and be his willing obedient people. Hear the voice of his doctrine, of his law, and, in both, of his Spirit; hear and heed; hear and yield. *Hear his voice*, and not the voice of a stranger. *If you will hear his voice*; some take it as a wish, *O that you would hear his voice!* that you would be so wise, and do so well for yourselves; like that, *If thou hadst known* (Luke xix. 42), that is, *O that thou hadst known!* Christ's voice must be heard to-day; this the apostle lays much stress upon, applying it to the gospel day. While he is speaking to you see that you attend to him, for this day of your opportunities will not last always; improve it, therefore, *while it is called to-day*, Heb. iii. 13, 15. Hearing the voice of Christ is the same with believing. *To-day*, if by faith you accept the gospel offer, well and good, but to-morrow it may be too late. In a matter of such vast importance nothing is more dangerous than delay.

II. The sin they are warned against, as inconsistent with the believing obedient ear required, and that is hardness of heart. *If you will hear his voice*, and profit by what you hear, then do not harden your hearts; for the seed sown on the rock never brought any fruit to perfection. The Jews therefore believed not the gospel of Christ because their hearts were hardened; they were not convinced of the evil of sin, and of their danger by reason of sin, and therefore they regarded not the offer of salvation; they would not bend to the yoke of Christ, nor yield to his demands; and, if the sinner's heart be hardened, it is his own act and deed (he hardening it himself) and he alone shall bear the blame for ever.

III. The example they are warned by, which is that of the Israelites in the wilderness.

1. "Take heed of sinning as they did, lest you be shut out of the everlasting rest as they were out of Canaan." *Be not, as your fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation*, lxxviii.

2. Thus here, *Harden not your heart as you did* (that is, your ancestors) *in the provocation*, or in *Meribah*, the place where they

quarrelled with God and Moses (Exod. xvii. 2—7), and in the day of temptation in the wilderness, v. 8. So often did they provoke God by their distrusts and murmurings that the whole time of their continuance in the wilderness might be called a *day of temptation*, or *Massah*, the other name given to that place (Exod. xvii. 7), because they tempted the Lord, saying, *Is the Lord among us or is he not?* This was in the wilderness, where they could not help themselves, but lay at God's mercy, and where God wonderfully helped them and gave them such sensible proofs of his power and tokens of his favour as never any people had before or since. Note, (1.) Days of temptation are days of provocation. Nothing is more offensive to God than disbelief of his promise and despair of the performance of it because of some difficulties that seem to lie in the way. (2.) The more experience we have had of the power and goodness of God the greater is our sin if we distrust him. What, to tempt him in the wilderness, where we live upon him! This is as ungrateful as it is absurd and unreasonable. (3.) Hardness of heart is at the bottom of all our distrusts of God and quarrels with him. That is a hard heart which receives not the impressions of divine discoveries and conforms not to the intentions of the divine will, which will not melt, which will not bend. (4.) The sins of others ought to be warnings to us not to tread in their steps. The murmurings of Israel were written for our admonition, 1 Cor. x. 11.

2. Now here observe,

(1.) The charge drawn up, in God's name, against the unbelieving Israelites, v. 9, 10. God here, many ages after, complains of their ill conduct towards him, with the expressions of high resentment. [1.] Their sin was unbelief: they tempted God and proved him; they questioned whether they might take his word, and insisted upon further security before they would go forward to Canaan, by sending spies; and, when those discouraged them, they protested against the sufficiency of the divine power and promise, and would make a captain and return into Egypt, Num. xiv. 3, 4. This is called *rebellion*, Deut. i. 26, 32. [2.] The aggravation of this sin was that they saw God's work; they saw what he had done for them in bringing them out of Egypt, nay, what he was now doing for them every day, this day, in the bread he rained from heaven for them and the water out of the rock that followed them, than which they could not have more unquestionable evidences of God's presence with them. With them even seeing was not believing, because they hardened their hearts, though they had seen what Pharaoh got by hardening his heart. [3.] The causes of their sin. See what God imputed it to: *It is a people that do err in their hearts, and they have not known my ways*. Men's unbelief and distrust of God, their murmurings and quarrels with

him, are the effect of their ignorance and mistake. *First*, Of their ignorance: *They have not known my ways.* They saw his work (v. 9) and he *made known his acts to them* (ciii. 7); and yet they *did not know his ways*, the ways of his providence, in which he walked towards them, or the ways of his commandments, in which he would have them to walk towards him: they did not know, they did not rightly understand and therefore did not approve of these. Note, The reason why people slight and forsake the ways of God is because they do not know them. *Secondly*, Of their mistake: *They do err in their heart*; they wander out of the way; in heart they turn back. Note, Sins are errors, practical errors, errors in heart; such there are, and as fatal as errors in the head. When the corrupt affections pervert the judgment, and so lead the soul out of the ways of duty and obedience, there is an error of the heart. [4.] God's resentment of their sin: *Forty years long was I grieved with this generation.* Note, The sins of God's professing people do not only anger him, but grieve him, especially their distrust of him; and God keeps an account how often (Num. xiv. 22) and how long they grieve him. See the patience of God towards provoking sinners; he was grieved with them forty years, and yet those years ended in a triumphant entrance into Canaan made by the next generation. If our sins have grieved God, surely they should grieve us, and nothing in sin should grieve us so much as that.

(2.) The sentence passed upon them for their sin (v. 11): *"Unto whom I swore in my wrath, If they shall enter into my rest, then say I am changeable and untrue:"* see the sentence at large, Num. xiv. 21, &c. Observe, [1.] Whence this sentence came—from the wrath of God. He *swore solemnly in his wrath*, his just and holy wrath; but let not men therefore swear profanely in their wrath, their sinful brutish wrath. God is not subject to such passions as we are; but he is said to be angry, very angry, at sin and sinners, to show the malignity of sin and the justice of God's government. That is certainly an evil thing which deserves such a recompence of revenge as may be expected from a provoked Deity. [2.] What it was: *That they should not enter into his rest*, the rest which he had prepared and designed for them, a settlement for them and theirs, that none of those who were enrolled when they came out of Egypt should be found written in the roll of the living at their entering into Canaan, but Caleb and Joshua. [3.] How it was ratified: *I swore it.* It was not only a purpose, but a decree; the oath showed the immutability of his counsel; the Lord *swore, and will not repent.* It cut off the thought of any reserve of mercy. God's threatenings are as sure as his promises.

Now this case of Israel may be applied to those of their posterity that lived in David's

time, when this psalm was penned; let them hear God's voice, and not harden their hearts as their fathers did, lest, if they were stiff-necked like them, God should be provoked to forbid them the privileges of his temple at Jerusalem, of which he had said, *This is my rest.* But it must be applied to us Christians, because so the apostle applies it. There is a spiritual and eternal rest set before us, and promised to us, of which Canaan was a type; we are all (in profession, at least) bound for this rest; yet many that seem to be so come short and shall never enter into it. And what is it that puts a bar in their door? It is sin; it is unbelief, that sin against the remedy, against our appeal. Those that, like Israel, distrust God, and his power and goodness, and prefer the garlick and onions of Egypt before the milk and honey of Canaan, will justly be shut out from his rest: so shall their doom be; they themselves have decided it. *Let us therefore fear,* Heb. iv. 1.

PSALM XCVI.

This psalm is part of that which was delivered into the hand of Asaph and his brethren (1 Chron. xvi. 7), by which it appears both that David was the penman of it and that it has reference to the bringing up of the ark to the city of David; whether that long psalm was made first, and this afterwards taken out of it, or this made first and afterwards borrowed to make up that, is not certain. But this is certain, that, though it was sung at the translation of the ark, it looks further, to the kingdom of Christ, and is designed to celebrate the glories of that kingdom, especially the accession of the Gentiles to it. Here is, I. A call given to all people to praise God, to worship him, and give glory to him, as a great and glorious God, ver. 1-9. II. Notice given to all people of God's universal government and judgment, which ought to be the matter of universal joy, ver. 10-13. In singing this psalm we ought to have our hearts filled with great and high thoughts of the glory of God and the grace of the gospel, and with an entire satisfaction in Christ's sovereign dominion and in the expectation of the judgment to come.

O SING unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD, all the earth. 2 Sing unto the LORD, bless his name; show forth his salvation from day to day. 3 Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people. 4 For the LORD is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods. 5 For all the gods of the nations are idols but the LORD made the heavens. 6 Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. 7 Give unto the LORD, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength. 8 Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts. 9 O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth.

These verses will be best expounded by pious and devout affections working in our souls towards God, with a high veneration for his majesty and transcendent excellency. The call here given us to praise God is very lively, the expressions are raised and repeat-

ed, to all which the echo of a thankful heart should make agreeable returns.

1. We are here required to honour God,

1. With songs, *v. 1*. 2. Three times we are here called to *sing unto the Lord*: sing to the Father, to the Son, to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, when the morning stars sang together, is now, in the church militant, and ever shall be, in the church triumphant. We have reason to do it often, and we have need to be often reminded of it, and stirred up to it. *Sing unto the Lord*, that is, "Bless his name, speak well of him, that you may bring others to think well of him." (1.) *Sing a new song*, an excellent song, the product of new affections, clothed with new expressions. We speak of nothing more despicable than "an old song," but the newness of a song recommends it; for there we expect something surprising. A new song is a song for new favours, for those compassions which are new every morning. A new song is a New-Testament song, a song of praise for the new covenant and the precious privileges of that covenant. A new song is a song that shall be ever new, and shall never wax old nor vanish away; it is an everlasting song, that shall never be antiquated or out of date. (2.) Let all the earth sing this song, not the Jews only, to whom hitherto the service of God had been appropriated, who could not sing the Lord's song in (would not sing it to) a strange land; but let all the earth, all that are redeemed from the earth, learn and sing this new song, *Rev. xiv. 3*. This is a prophecy of the calling of the Gentiles; all the earth shall have this new song put into their mouths, shall have both cause and call to sing it. (3.) Let the subject-matter of this song be his salvation, the great salvation which was to be wrought out by the Lord Jesus; that must be shown forth as the cause of this joy and praise. (4.) Let this song be sung constantly, not only in the times appointed for the solemn feasts, but from day to day; it is a subject that can never be exhausted. Let day unto day utter this speech, that, under the influence of gospel devotions, we may daily exemplify a gospel conversation.

2. With sermons (*v. 3*): *Declare his glory among the heathen, even his wonders among all people*. (1.) Salvation by Christ is here spoken of as a work of wonder, and that in which the glory of God shines very brightly; in showing forth that salvation we declare God's glory as it shines in the face of Christ. (2.) This salvation was, in the Old-Testament times, as heaven's happiness is now, a glory to be revealed; but in the fulness of time it was declared, and a full discovery made of it, even to babes, which prophets and kings desired and wished to see and might not. (3.) What was then discovered was declared only among the Jews, but it is now declared among the heathen, among all people; the nations which long sat in darkness now see his great light. The apostles' commission to

preach the gospel to every creature is copied from this: *Declare his glory among the heathen*.

3. With religious services, *v. 7—9*. Hitherto, though in every nation those that feared God and wrought righteousness were accepted of him, yet instituted ordinances were the peculiarities of the Jewish religion; but, in gospel-times, the kindreds of the people shall be invited and admitted into the service of God and be as welcome as ever the Jews were. The court of the Gentiles shall no longer be an outward court, but shall be laid in common with the court of Israel. All the earth is here summoned to fear before the Lord, to worship him according to his appointment. *In every place incense shall be offered to his name*, *Mal. i. 11*; *Zech. xiv. 17*; *Isa. lxi. 23*. This indeed spoke mortification to the Jews, but, withal, it gave a prospect of that which would redound very much to the glory of God and to the happiness of mankind. Now observe how the acts of devotion to God are here described. (1.) We must give unto the Lord; not as if God needed any thing, or could receive any thing, from us or any creature, which was not his own before, much less be benefited by it; but we must in our best affections, adorations, and services, return to him what we have received from him, and do it freely, as what we give; for *God loves a cheerful giver*. It is debt, it is rent, it is tribute, it is what must be paid, and, if not, will be recovered, and yet, if it come from holy love, God is pleased to accept it as a gift. (2.) We must acknowledge God to be the sovereign Lord and pay homage to him accordingly (*v. 7*): *Give unto the Lord glory and strength, glory and empire, or dominion*, so some. As a king, he is clothed with robes of glory and girt with the girdle of power, and we must subscribe to both. *Thine is the kingdom, and therefore thine is the power and the glory*. "Give the glory to God; do not take it to yourselves, nor give it to any creature." (3.) We must give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name, that is, to the discovery he has been pleased to make of himself to the children of men. In all the acts of religious worship this is that which we must aim at, to honour God, to pay him some of that reverence which we owe him as the best of beings and the fountain of our being. (4.) We must bring an offering into his courts. We must bring ourselves, in the first place, the offering up of the Gentiles, *Rom. xv. 16*. We must offer up the sacrifices of praise continually (*Heb. xiii. 15*), must often appear before God in public worship and never appear before him empty. (5.) We must worship him in the beauty of holiness, in the solemn assembly where divine institutions are religiously observed, the beauty of which is their holiness, that is, their conformity to the rule. We must worship him with holy hearts, sanctified by the grace of God, devoted to the glory of God,

and purified from the pollutions of sin. (6.) We must *fear before him*; all the acts of worship must be performed from a principle of the fear of God and with a holy awe and reverence.

II. In the midst of these calls to praise God and give glory to him glorious things are here said of him, both as motives to praise and matter of praise: *The Lord is great, and therefore greatly to be praised* (v. 4) and *to be feared*, great and honourable to his attendants, great and terrible to his adversaries. Even the new song proclaims God great as well as good; for his goodness is his glory; and, when the everlasting gospel is preached, it is this, *Fear God, and give glory to him*, Rev. xiv. 6, 7. 1. He is great in his sovereignty over all that pretend to be deities; none dare vie with him: *He is to be feared above all gods*—all princes, who were often deified after their deaths, and even while they lived were adored as petty gods—or rather all idols, *the gods of the nations*, v. 5. All the earth being called to sing the new song, they must be convinced that the Lord Jehovah, to whose honour they must sing it, is the one only living and true God, infinitely above all rivals and pretenders; he is great, and they are little; he is all, and they are *nothing*; so the word used for idols signifies, for we know that *an idol is nothing in the world*, 1 Cor. viii. 4. 2. He is great in his right, even to the noblest part of the creation; for it is his own work and derives its being from him: *The Lord made the heavens and all their hosts; they are the work of his fingers* (viii. 3), so nicely, so curiously, are they made. The gods of the nations were all made-gods, the creatures of men's fancies; but our God is the Creator of the sun, moon, and stars, those lights of heaven, which they imagined to be gods and worshipped as such. 3. He is great in the manifestation of his glory both in the upper and lower world, among his angels in heaven and his saints on earth (v. 6): *Splendour and majesty are before him*, in his immediate presence above, where the angels cover their faces, as unable to bear the dazzling lustre of his glory. *Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary*, both that above and this below. In God there is every thing that is awful and yet every thing that is amiable. If we attend him in his sanctuary, we shall behold his beauty, for *God is love*, and experience his strength, for *he is our rock*. Let us therefore go forth in his strength, enamoured with his beauty.

10 Say among the heathen *that the LORD reigneth*: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously. 11 Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. 12 Let the field be joyful, and all that is there-

in: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice. 13 Before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.

We have here instructions given to those who were to preach the gospel to the nations: what to preach, or to those who had themselves received the gospel what account to give of it to their neighbours, what to say *among the heathen*; and it is an illustrious prophecy of the setting up of the kingdom of Christ upon the ruins of the devil's kingdom, which began immediately after his ascension and will continue in the doing till the mystery of God be finished.

I. Let it be told that *the Lord reigns*, that Lord Christ reigns, that King whom God determined to set upon his holy hill of Zion. See how this was first said *among the heathen* by Peter, Acts x: 42. Some of the ancient fathers added a gloss to this, which by degrees crept into the text, *The Lord reigneth from the tree* (so Justin Martyr, Austin, and others, quote it), meaning the cross, when he had this title written over him, *The King of the Jews*. It was because he became obedient to death, even to the death of the cross, that God exalted him and gave him a name above every name, a throne above every throne. Some of the heathen came betimes to enquire after him that was born *King of the Jews*, Matt. ii. 2. Now let them know that he has come and his kingdom is set up.

II. Let it be told that Christ's government will be the world's happy settlement. *The world also shall be established, that it shall not be moved*. The natural world shall be established. The standing of the world and its stability, are owing to the mediation of Christ. Sin had given it a shock, and still threatens it; but Christ, as Redeemer, upholds all things, and preserves the course of nature. The world of mankind shall be established, shall be preserved, till all things belong to the election of grace are called in, though a guilty provoking world. The Christian religion, as far as it is embraced, shall establish states and kingdoms, and preserve good order among men. The church in the world shall be established (so some), that it *cannot be moved*; for it is *built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall never prevail against it*; it is a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

III. Let them be told that Christ's government will be incontestably just and righteous: *He shall judge the people righteously* (v. 10), *judge the world with righteousness, and with his truth*, v. 13. Judging is here put for ruling; and though this may be extended to the general judgment of the world at the last day, which will be *in righteousness* (Acts xvii. 31), yet it refers more immediately to Christ's first coming, and the setting up

of his kingdom in the world by the gospel. He says himself, *For judgment have I come into this world* (John ix. 39, xii. 31), and declares that *all judgment was committed to him*, John v. 22, 27. His ruling and judging with righteousness and truth signify, 1. That all the laws and ordinances of his kingdom shall be consonant to the rules and principles of eternal truth and equity, that is, to the rectitude and purity of the divine nature and will. 2. That all his administrations of government shall be just and faithful, and according to what he has said. 3. That he shall rule in the hearts and consciences of men by the commanding power of truth and the Spirit of righteousness and sanctification. When Pilate asked our Saviour, *Art thou a king?* he answered, *For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth* (John xviii. 37); for he rules by truth, commands men's wills by informing their judgments aright.

IV. Let them be told that his coming draws nigh, that this King, this Judge, *standeth before the door; for he cometh, for he cometh*. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, said so. *Behold, the Lord cometh*, Jude 14. Between this and his first coming the revolutions of many ages intervened, and yet he came at the set time, and so sure will his second coming be; though it is now long since it was said, *Behold, he comes in the clouds* (Rev. i. 7) and he has not yet come. See 2 Pet. iii. 4, &c.

V. Let them be called upon to rejoice in this honour that is put upon the Messiah, and this great trust that is to be lodged in his hand (v. 11, 12): *Let heaven and earth rejoice, the sea, the field, and all the trees of the wood*. The dialect here is poetical; the meaning is, 1. That the days of the Messiah will be joyful days, and, as far as his grace and government are submitted to, will bring joy along with them. We have reason to give that place, that soul, joy into which Christ is admitted. See an instance of both, Acts viii. When Samaria received the gospel *there was great joy in that city* (v. 8), and, when the eunuch was baptized, *he went on his way rejoicing*, v. 39. 2. That it is the duty of every one of us to bid Christ and his kingdom welcome; for, though he comes conquering and to conquer, yet he comes peaceably. *Hosanna, Blessed is he that cometh*; and again, *Hosanna, Blessed be the kingdom of our father David* (Mark xi. 9, 10); not only *let the daughter of Zion rejoice that her King comes* (Zech. ix. 9), but let all rejoice. 3. That the whole creation will have reason to rejoice in the setting up of Christ's kingdom, even *the sea and the field*; for, as by the sin of the first Adam the whole creation was made *subject to vanity*, so by the grace of the second Adam it shall, some way or other, first or last, be *delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God*, Rom. viii. 20, 21. 4.

That there will, in the first place, be *joy in heaven, joy in the presence of the angels of God*; for, when the First-begotten was brought into the world, they sang their anthems to his praise, Luke ii. 14. 5. That God will graciously accept the holy joy and praises of all the hearty well-wishers to the kingdom of Christ, be their capacity ever so mean. *The sea can but roar, and how the trees of the wood can show that they rejoice* I know not; but *he that searches the heart knows what is the mind of the Spirit*, and understands the language, the broken language, of the weakest.

PSALM XCIV.

This psalm dwells upon the same subject, and is set to the same tune, with the foregoing psalm. Christ is the Alpha and the Omega of both; they are both penned, and are both to be sung to his honour; and we make nothing of them if we do not, in them, make melody with our hearts to the Lord Jesus. He it is that reigns, to the joy of all mankind (ver. 1); and his government speaks, 1. Terror to his enemies; for he is a prince of invincible justice and irresistible power, ver. 2-7. 11. Comfort to his friends and loyal subjects, arising from his sovereign dominion, the care he takes of his people, and the provision he makes for them, ver. 8-12. In singing this psalm we must be affected with the glory of the exalted Redeemer, must dread the lot of his enemies, and think ourselves happy if we are of those that "kiss the son."

THE LORD reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad *thereof*. 2 Clouds and darkness *are* round about him: righteousness and judgment *are* the habitation of his throne. 3 A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about. 4 His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw, and trembled. 5 The hills melted like wax at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. 6 The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory. 7 Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship him, all *ye* gods.

What was to be said among the heathen in the foregoing psalm (v. 10) is here said again (v. 1) and is made the subject of this psalm, and of psalm xcix. *The Lord reigns*; that is the great truth here laid down. The Lord Jehovah reigns; he that made the world governs it; he that gave being gives motion and power, gives law and commission, gives success and event. Every man's judgment proceeds from the Lord, from his counsel and providence, and in all affairs, both public and private, he performs the thing which he himself has appointed. The Lord Jesus reigns; the providential kingdom is twisted in with the mediatorial and the administration of both is in the hand of Christ, who therefore is both *the head of the church and head over all things to the church*. The kingdom of Christ is so constituted that,

I. It may be matter of joy to all; and it will be so if it be not their own fault. *Let the earth rejoice*, for hereby it is established

(xcvi. 10); it is honoured and enriched, and, in part, rescued from the vanity which by sin it is made subject to. Not only let the people of Israel rejoice in him as King of the Jews, and the daughter of Zion as her King, but let all the earth rejoice in his elevation; for the kingdoms of the world shall, more or less, sooner or later, become his kingdoms: *Let the multitude of isles, the many or great isles, be glad thereof.* This is applicable to our country, which is a great isle, and has many belonging to it; at least, it speaks comfort in general to the Gentiles, whose countries are called *the isles of the Gentiles*, Gen. x. 5. There is enough in Christ for the multitude of the isles to rejoice in; for, though many have been made happy in him, yet still there is room. All have reason to rejoice in Christ's government. 1. In the equity of it. There is an incontestable justice in all the acts of his government, both legislative and judicial. Sometimes indeed *clouds and darkness are round about him*; his dispensations are altogether unaccountable; *his way is in the sea and his path in the great waters.* We are not aware of what he designs, what he drives at; nor is it fit that we should be let into the secrets of his government. There is a depth in his counsels, which we must not pretend to fathom. But still *righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne*; a golden thread of justice runs through the whole web of his administration. In this he resides, for it is his habitation. In this he rules, for it is *the habitation of his throne.* *His commandments are, and will be, all righteous. Righteousness and judgment are the basis of his throne* (so Dr. Hammond); *for therefore his throne is for ever and ever, because his sceptre is a right sceptre*, xlv. 6. *The throne is established in righteousness.* Even *the heavens declare his righteousness* (v. 6); it is as conspicuous and as illustrious as the heavens themselves. The angels of heaven will declare it, who are employed as messengers in the administration of his government and therefore know more of it than any of his creatures. His righteousness is incontestable; for who can contradict or dispute what *the heavens declare*? l. 6. 2. In the extent of it in the upper and lower world. (1.) All the men on earth are under his government; either he is served by them or he serves himself by them. *All the people see his glory*, or may see it. The glory of God, in the face of Christ, was made to shine in distant countries, among many people, more or less among all people; the gospel was preached, for aught we know, in all languages, Acts ii. 5, 11. Miracles were wrought in all nations, and so *all the people saw his glory.* *Have they not heard?* Rom. x. 18. (2.) All the angels in heaven are so. Perhaps we should not have found this truth in those words (v. 7), *Worship him, all you gods*, if we had not been directed to it by the inspired apostle, who, from the Septuagint ver-

sion of those words, makes the Messiah to be introduced into the upper world at the ascension with this charge (Heb. i. 6), *Let all the angels of God worship him*, which helps us to a key to this whole psalm, and shows us that it must be applied to the exalted Redeemer, who has gone into heaven, and is *on the right hand of God*, which intimates that all power is given him both in heaven and earth, *angels, authorities, and powers, being made subject unto him*, 1 Pet. iii. 22. This speaks the honour of Christ, that he has such worshippers, and the honour of all good Christians, that they have such fellow-worshippers.

II. Christ's government, though it may be matter of joy to all, will yet be matter of terror to some, and it is their own fault that it is so, v. 3—5, 7. Observe,

1. When the kingdom of Christ was to be set up in the world, after his ascension, it would meet with many enemies, and much opposition would be given to it. He that reigns, to the joy of the whole earth, yet, as he has his subjects, so he has his enemies (v. 3), that not only will not have him to reign over them, but would not have him to reign at all, that not only will not enter into the kingdom of heaven themselves, but do all they can to hinder those that are entering, Matt. xxiii. 13. This was fulfilled in the enmity of the unbelieving Jews to the gospel of Christ, and the violent persecution which in all places they stirred up against the preachers and professors of it. These enemies are here called *hills* (v. 5), for their height, and strength, and immovable obstinacy. It was the *princes of this world that crucified the Lord of glory*, 1 Cor. ii. 8; Ps. ii. 2.

2. The opposition which the Jews gave to the setting up of Christ's kingdom turned to their own ruin. Their persecuting the apostles, and *forbidding them to speak to the Gentiles*, filled up their sin, and brought *wrath upon them to the uttermost*, 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16. That wrath is here compared, (1.) To consuming fire, which *goes before him, and burns up his enemies*, that have made themselves like chaff and stubble, and have *been the briers and thorns before him in battle*, Isa. xxvii. 4. This fire of divine wrath will not only burn the rubbish upon the hills, but will even *melt the hills themselves like wax*, v. 5. When our God appears as a consuming fire even rocks will be wax before him. The most resolute and daring opposition will be baffled at the presence of the Lord. His very presence is enough to shame and sink it, for he is *the Lord of the whole earth*, by whom all the children of men are manageable and to whom they are accountable. Men hate and persecute God's people, because they think him absent, that the Lord has *forsaken the earth*; but, when he manifests his presence, they melt. (2.) To amazing lightnings (v. 4), which strike a terror upon many. The judgments God brought upon the enemies of Christ's kingdom were such

as all the world took notice of with terror: *The earth saw and trembled*, and the ears of all that heard were made to tingle. This was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation by the Romans, about forty years after Christ's resurrection, which, like fire, wholly destroyed that people, and, like lightning, astonished all their neighbours (Deut. xxix. 24); but the heavens declare God's righteousness in it, and all the people, to this day, see his glory, in those lasting monuments of his justice, the scattered Jews.

3. Idolaters, also would be put to confusion by the setting up of Christ's kingdom (v. 7): *Confounded be all those who serve graven images*, the Gentile world, who did service to those that by nature are no gods (Gal. iv. 8), who boasted themselves of idols as their protectors and benefactors. Did those that served idols boast of them, and shall the servants of the living God distrust him, or be ashamed of him? *Let those be ashamed that serve graven images.* (1.) This is a prayer for the conversion of the Gentiles, that those who have been so long serving dumb idols may be convinced of their error, ashamed of their folly, and may, by the power of Christ's gospel, be brought to serve the only living and true God, and may be as much ashamed of their idols as ever they were proud of them. See Isa. ii. 20, 21. (2.) This is a prophecy of the ruin of those that would not be reformed and reclaimed from their idolatry; they shall be confounded by the destruction of Paganism in the Roman empire, which was fulfilled about 300 years after Christ, so much to the terror of idolaters that some think it was the revolution under Constantine that made even the mighty men say to the rocks, *Fall on us and hide us*, Rev. vi. 15, 16. This prayer and prophecy are still in force against antichristian idolaters, who may here read their doom: *Confounded be all those that worship graven images*, v. 7. See Jer. xlviii. 13.

8 Zion heard, and was glad; and the daughters of Judah rejoiced because of thy judgments, O LORD. 9 For thou, LORD, art high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all gods. 10 Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his saints; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked. 11 Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. 12 Rejoice in the LORD, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

The kingdom of the Messiah, like the pillar of cloud and fire, as it has a dark side towards the Egyptians, so it has a bright side towards the Israel of God. It is set up in

spite of opposition; and then *the earth saw and trembled* (v. 4), but Zion heard and was glad, very glad, to hear of the conversion of some and of the confusion of others, that is, the conquest of all that stood it out against Christ. *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! for behold thy king comes unto thee*, Zech. ix. 9. And not Zion only, where the temple was, but even *the daughters of Judah, rejoiced*; the common people, the inhabitants of the villages, they shall triumph in Christ's victories. The command (v. 1) is, *Let the earth rejoice*; but it is only the sons of Zion and the daughters of Judah that do rejoice. All should bid the kingdom of the Messiah welcome, but few do. Now here observe,

I. The reasons that are given for Zion's joy in the government of the Redeemer. The faithful servants of God may well rejoice and be glad, 1. Because God is glorified, and whatever redounds to his honour is very much his people's pleasure. They rejoice because of thy judgments, O Lord! which may take in both the judgments of his mouth and the judgments of his hand, the word of his gospel and his works wrought for the propagating of it, miracles and marvellous providences; for in these we must own, "*Thou, Lord, art high above all the earth*" (v. 9); thou hast manifested thy sovereignty in the kingdom of nature, and thy command of all its powers, and thy dominion over all nations, over all hearts; thou art exalted far above all gods"—all deputed gods, that is, princes—all counterfeit gods, that is, idols. The exaltation of Christ, and the advancement of God's glory among men thereby, are the rejoicing of all the saints. 2. Because care is taken for their safety. Those that pay allegiance to Christ as a King shall be sure of his protection. Princes are the shields of the earth; Christ is so to his subjects; they may put their trust under his shadow and rejoice in it, for (v. 10) *He preserves the souls of the saints*; he preserves their lives as long as he has any work for them to do, and wonderfully delivers them many a time out of the hand of the wicked, their persecutors that thirst after their blood; for *precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints*. But something more is meant than their lives; for those that will be his disciples must be willing to lay down their lives, and not indent for the securing of them. It is the immortal soul that Christ preserves, the inward man, which may be renewed more and more when the outward man decays. He will preserve the souls of his saints from sin, from apostasy, and despair, under their greatest trials; he will deliver them out of the hands of the wicked one that seeks to devour them; he will preserve them safely to his heavenly kingdom, 2 Tim. iv. 18. They have therefore reason to be glad, being thus safe. 3. Because provision is made for their comfort. Those that rejoice in Christ Jesus, and in his exaltation, have fountains of joy treasured

up for them, which will be opened sooner or later (v. 11): *Light is sown for the righteous, that is, gladness for the upright in heart.* The subjects of Christ's kingdom are told to expect tribulation in the world. They must suffer by its malice, and must not share in its mirth; yet let them know, to their comfort, that *light is sown for them; it is designed and prepared for them.* What is sown will come up again in due time; though, like a winter seedness, it may lie long under the clouds, and seem to be lost and buried, yet it will return in a rich and plentiful increase. God's goodness shall be sure of a *harvest in the appointed weeks.* *Those that sow in tears shall, without fail, reap in joy,* cxvi. 5, 6. Christ told his disciples, at parting (John xvi. 20), *You shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.* Gladness is sure to the *upright in heart*, to those only that are sincere in religion. *The joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment.* There is no serenity without a lasting sincerity.

II. The rules that are given for Zion's joy.

1. Let it be a pure and holy joy. "You that love the Lord Jesus, that *love his appearing* and kingdom, that love his word and his exaltation, see that you hate evil, the evil of sin, every thing that is offensive to him and will throw you out of his favour." Note, A true love to God will show itself in a real hatred of all sin, as that abominable thing which he hates. The joy of the saints should likewise confirm their antipathy to sin and divine comforts should put their mouths out of taste for sensual pleasures. 2. Let the joy terminate in God (v. 12): *Rejoice in the Lord, you righteous.* Let all the streams of comfort, which flow to us in the channel of Christ's kingdom, lead us to the fountain, and oblige us to *rejoice in the Lord.* All the lines of joy must meet in him as in the centre. See Phil. iii. 3; iv. 4. 3. Let it express itself in praise and thanksgiving: *Give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.* Whatever is the matter of our rejoicing ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving, and particularly the holiness of God. Those that hate sin themselves are glad that God does so, in hopes that therefore he will not suffer it to have dominion over them. Note, (1.) We ought to be much in the remembrance of God's holiness, the infinite purity, rectitude, and perfection of the divine nature. We must be ever mindful of his holy covenant, which he has confirmed with an oath by his holiness. (2.) We ought to give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness, not only give him the glory of it as it is an honour to him, but give him thanks for it as it is a favour to us; and an unspeakable favour it will be if, through grace, we are *partakers of his holiness.* It is God's holiness which, above all his attributes, the angels celebrate. Isa. vi. 3, *Holy, holy, holy.* Sinners tremble, but saints rejoice, *at the remembrance of God's holiness,* Ps. xxx. 4.

PSALM XCVIII.

This psalm is to the same purport with the two foregoing psalms; it is a prophecy of the kingdom of the Messiah, the setting of it up in the world, and the bringing of the Gentiles into it. The Chaldee entitles it a prophetic psalm. It sets forth, 1. The glory of the Redeemer, ver. 1—3. 11. The joy of the redeemed, ver. 4—9. If we in a right manner give to Christ his glory, and upon right grounds take to ourselves this joy, in singing this psalm, we sing it with understanding. If those who saw Christ's day at a distance, and in the promise only, most rejoice and triumph thus, much more reason have we to do so who see these things accomplished and share in the better things provided for us, Heb. xi. 40.

A psalm.

O SING unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory. 2 The LORD hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly showed in the sight of the heathen. 3 He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

We are here called upon again to *sing unto the Lord a new song*, as before, xcvi. 1. "Sing a most excellent song, the best song you have." Let the song of Christ's love be like Solomon's on that subject, a *song of songs.* A song of praise for redeeming love is a *new song*, such a song as had not been sung before; for this is a mystery which was hidden from ages and generations. Converts sing a *new song*, very different from what they had sung; they change their wonder and change their joy, and therefore change their note. If the grace of God put a new heart into our breasts, it will therewith put a new song into our mouths. In the new Jerusalem there will be new songs sung, that will be new to eternity, and never wax old. Let this new song be sung to the praise of God, in consideration of these four things:—

I. The wonders he has wrought: *He has done marvellous things, v. 1.* Note, The work of our salvation by Christ is a work of wonder. If we take a view of all the steps of it from the contrivance of it, and the counsels of God concerning it before all time, to the consummation of it, and its everlasting consequences when time shall be no more, we shall say, God has in it *done marvellous things*; it is all his doing and it is *marvellous in our eyes.* The more it is known the more it will be admired.

II. The conquests he has won: *His right hand and his holy arm have gotten him the victory.* Our Redeemer has surmounted all the difficulties that lay in the way of our redemption, has broken through them all, and was not discouraged by the services or sufferings appointed him. He has subdued all the enemies that opposed it, has gotten the victory over Satan, disarmed him, and cast him out of his strong-holds, has *spoiled principalities and powers* (Col. ii. 15), has *taken the prey from the mighty* (Isa. xlix. 24), and given death his death's wound. He has gotten

a clear and complete victory, not only for himself, but for us also, for we through him are more than conquerors. He got this victory by his own power; there was *none to help, none to uphold*, none that durst venture into the service; but his *right hand and his holy arm*, which are always stretched out with good success, because they are never stretched out but in a good cause, these have *gotten him the victory*, have *brought him relief or deliverance*. God's power and faithfulness, called here *his right hand and his holy arm*, brought relief to the Lord Jesus, in raising him from the dead, and exalting him personally to the right hand of God; so Dr. Hammond.

III. The discoveries he has made to the world of the work of redemption. What he has wrought for us he has revealed to us, and both by his Son; the gospel-revelation is that on which the gospel-kingdom is founded—the word which God sent, Acts x. 36. The opening of the sealed book is that which is to be celebrated with songs of praise (Rev. v. 8), because by it was brought to light the mystery which had long been hid in God. Observe, 1. The subject of this discovery—his salvation and his righteousness, v. 3. Righteousness and salvation are often put together; as Isa. lxi. 10; xlvii. 13; li. 5, 6, 8. Salvation denotes the redemption itself, and righteousness the way in which it was wrought, by the righteousness of Christ. Or the salvation includes all our gospel-privileges and the righteousness all our gospel-duties; both are made known, for God has joined them together, and we must not separate them. Or righteousness is here put for the way of our justification by Christ, which is revealed in the gospel to be by faith, Rom. i. 17. 2. The plainness of this discovery. He has openly shown it, not in types and figures as under the law, but it is written as with a sun-beam, that he that runs may read it. Ministers are appointed to preach it with all plainness of speech. 3. The extent of this discovery. It is made in the sight of the heathen, and not of the Jews only: *All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God*; for to the Gentiles was the word of salvation sent.

IV. The accomplishment of the prophecies and promises of the Old Testament, in this (v. 3): *He has remembered his mercy and his truth towards the house of Israel*. God had mercy in store for the seed of Abraham, and had given them many and great assurances of the kindness he designed them in the latter days; and it was in pursuance of all those that he raised up his Son Jesus to be not only a light to lighten the Gentiles, but the glory of his people Israel; for he sent him, in the first place, to bless them. God is said, in sending Christ, to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember the holy covenant, Luke i. 72. It was in consideration of that, and not of their merit.

LORD, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise. 5 Sing unto the LORD with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm. 6 With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the LORD, the King. 7 Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. 8 Let the floods clap *their* hands: let the hills be joyful together. 9 Before the LORD; for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.

The setting up of the kingdom of Christ is here represented as a matter of joy and praise.

I. Let all the children of men rejoice in it, for they all have, or may have, benefit by it. Again and again we are here called upon by all ways and means possible to express our joy in it and give God praise for it: *Make a joyful noise*, as before, xcv. 1, 2. *Make a loud noise*, as those that are affected with those glad tidings and are desirous to affect others with them. *Rejoice and sing praise*, sing *Hosannas* (Matt. xxi. 9), sing *Hallelujahs*, Rev. xix. 6. Let him be welcomed to the throne, as new kings are, with acclamations of joy and loud shouts, till the earth ring again, as when Solomon was proclaimed, 1 Kings i. 40. And let the shouts of the crowd be accompanied with the *singers and players on instruments* (Ps. lxxxvii. 7, lxxviii. 25), as is usual in such solemnities. 1. Let sacred songs attend the new King: "*Sing praise, sing with the voice of a psalm*. Express your joy; thus proclaim it, thus excite it yet more, and thus propagate it among others." 2. Let these be assisted with sacred music, not only with the soft and gentle melody of the harp, but since it is a victorious King whose glory is to be celebrated, who goes forth conquering and to conquer, let him be proclaimed with the martial sound of the trumpet and cornet, v. 6. Let all this joy be directed to God, and expressed in a solemn religious manner: *Make a joyful noise to the Lord*, v. 4. *Sing to the Lord* (v. 5); do it *before the Lord*, the King, v. 6. Carnal mirth is an enemy to this holy joy. When David danced before the ark he pleaded that *it was before the Lord*; and the piety and devotion of the intention not only vindicated what he did, but commended it. We must rejoice *before the Lord* whenever we draw near to him (Deut. xii. 12), before the Lord Jesus, and before him, not only as the Saviour, but as the King, the King of kings, the church's King, and our King.

II. Let the inferior creatures rejoice in it, v. 7—9. This is to the same purport with what we had before (xcvi. 11—13): *Let the sea roar*, and let that be called, not as it used

to be, a *dreadful noise*, but a *joyful noise*; for the coming of Christ, and the salvation wrought out by him, have quite altered the property of the troubles and terrors of this world, so that when the floods *lift up their voice*, *lift up their waves*, we must not construe that to be the sea roaring against us, but rather rejoicing with us. Let the floods express their joy, as men do when they *clap their hands*; and let the hills, that trembled for fear before God when he came down to give the law at Mount Sinai, dance for joy before him when his gospel is preached and that word of the Lord goes forth from Zion in a still small voice: *Let the hills be joyful together before the Lord*. This intimates that the kingdom of Christ would be a blessing to the whole creation; but that, as the inferior creatures declare the glory of the Creator (xix. 1), so they declare the glory of the Redeemer, for by him all things not only subsist in their being, but consist in their order. It intimates likewise that the children of men would be wanting in paying their due respects to the Redeemer, and therefore that he must look for his honour from the sea and the floods, which would shame the stupidity and ingratitude of mankind. And perhaps respect is here had to the *new heavens* and the *new earth*, which we yet, according to his promise, look for (2 Pet. iii. 13), and this second mention of his coming (after the like, Ps. xevi.) may principally refer to his second coming, when all these things shall be so dissolved as to be refined; then shall he come to *judge the world with righteousness*. In the prospect of that day all that are sanctified do rejoice, and even the sea, and the floods, and the hills, would rejoice if they could. One would think that Virgil had these psalms in his eye, as well as the oracles of the Cumean Sibyl, in his fourth eclogue, where he either ignorantly or basely applies to Asinius Pollio the ancient prophecies, which at that time were expected to be fulfilled; for he lived in the reign of Augustus Cæsar, a little before our Saviour's birth. He owns they looked for the birth of a child from heaven that should be a great blessing to the world, and restore the golden age:—

Jam nova progenies cœlo demittitur alto—

A new race descends from the lofty sky;

and that should take away sin:—

*Te duce, si qua manent sceleris vestigia nostri,
Irrita perpetuâ solvent formidine terras—*

Thy influence shall efface every stain of corruption,
And free the world from alarm.

Many other things he says of this long-looked-for child, which Ludovicus Vives, in his notes on that eclogue, thinks applicable to Christ; and he concludes, as the psalmist here, with a prospect of the rejoicing of the whole creation herein:—

Aspicite, venturo lætentur ut omnia sæculo—

See how this promise'd age makes all rejoice.

And, if all rejoice, why should not we?

PSALM XCIX.

Still we are celebrating the glories of the kingdom of God among men, and are called upon to praise him, as in the foregoing

psalms; but these psalms looked forward to the times of the gospel, and prophesied of the grace and comforts of those times; this psalm seems to dwell more upon the Old-Testament dispensation and the manifestation of God's glory and grace in that. The Jews were not, in expectation of the Messiah's kingdom and the evangelical worship, to neglect the divine regimen they were then under, and the ordinances that were then given them, but in them to see God reigning, and to worship before him according to the law of Moses. Prophecies of good things to come must not lessen our esteem of good things present. To Israel indeed pertained the promises, which they were bound to believe; but to them pertained also the giving of the law, and the service of God, which they were also bound dutifully and conscientiously to attend to. Rom. ix. 4. And this they are called to do in this psalm, where yet there is much of Christ for the government of the church was in the hands of the eternal Word before he was incarnate; and, besides, the ceremonial services were types and figures of evangelical worship. The people of Israel are here required to praise and exalt God, and to worship before him, in consideration of these two things:—
1. The happy constitution of the government they were under, both in sacred and civil things, ver. 1—5. 2. Some instances of the happy administration of it, ver. 6—9. In singing this psalm we must set ourselves to exalt the name of God, as it is made known to us in the gospel, which we have much more reason to do than those had who lived under the law.

THE LORD reigneth; let the people tremble: *he sitteth between the cherubims*; let the earth be moved. 2 The LORD is great in Zion; and he is high above all the people. 3 Let them praise thy great and terrible name; *for it is holy*. 4 The king's strength also loveth judgment; thou dost establish equity, thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob. 5 Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at his footstool; *for he is holy*.

The foundation of all religion is laid in this truth, That *the Lord reigns*. God governs the world by his providence, governs the church by his grace, and both by his Son. We are to believe not only that *the Lord lives*, but that *the Lord reigns*. This is the triumph of the Christian church, and here it was the triumph of the Jewish church, that Jehovah was their King; and hence it is inferred, *Let the people tremble*, that is, 1. Let even the subjects of this kingdom tremble for the Old-Testament dispensation had much of terror in it. At Mount Sinai Israel, and even Moses himself, did *exceedingly fear and quake*; and then God was *terrible in his holy places*. Even when he appeared in his people's behalf, he did terrible things. But we are not now come to that *mount that burned with fire*, Heb. xii. 18. Now that *the Lord reigns let the earth rejoice*. Then he ruled more by the power of holy fear; now he rules by the power of holy love. 2. Much more let the enemies of this kingdom tremble; for he will either bring them into obedience to his golden sceptre or crush them with his iron rod. *The Lord reigns, though the people be stirred with indignation at it*; though they fret away all their spirits, their rage is all in vain. He will set his King upon his holy hill of Zion in spite of them (ii. 1—6); first, or last, he will make them *tremble*, Rev. vi. 15, &c. *The Lord reigns, let the earth be moved*. Those that submit to him shall be established, and not moved (xcvi. 10); but those that oppose him will be moved. Heaven

and earth shall be shaken, and all nations; but the kingdom of Christ is what cannot be moved; *the things which cannot be shaken shall remain*, Heb. xii. 27. *In these is continuance*, Isa. lxiv. 5.

God's kingdom, set up in Israel, is here made the subject of the psalmist's praise.

I. Two things the psalmist affirms:—1. God presided in the affairs of religion: *He sitteth between the cherubim* (v. 1), as on his throne, to give law by the oracles thence delivered—as on the mercy-seat, to receive petitions. This was the honour of Israel, that they had among them the Shechinah, or special presence of God, attended by the holy angels; the temple was the royal palace, and the Holy of holies was the presence-chamber. *The Lord is great in Zion* (v. 2); there he is known and praised (lxxvi. 1, 2); there he is served as great, more than any where else. *He is high there above all people*; as that which is high is exposed to view, and looked up to, so in Zion the perfections of the divine nature appear more conspicuous and more illustrious than any where else. Therefore let those that dwell in Zion, and worship there, *praise thy great and terrible name*, and give thee the glory due unto it, *for it is holy*. The holiness of God's name makes it truly great to his friends and terrible to his enemies, v. 3. This is that which those above adore—*Holy, holy, holy*. 2. He was all in all in their civil government, v. 4. As in Jerusalem was the testimony of Israel, whither the tribes went up, *so there were set thrones of judgment*, cxxii. 4, 5. Their government was a theocracy. God raised up David to rule over them (and some think this psalm was penned upon occasion of his quiet and happy settlement in the throne) and he is *the king whose strength loves judgment*. He is strong; all his strength he has from God; and his strength is not abused for the support of any wrong, as the power of great princes often is, but it *loves judgment*. He does justice with his power, and does it with delight; and herein he was a type of Christ, to whom God would give *the throne of his father David, to do judgment and justice*. He has power to crush, but his *strength loves judgment*; he does not rule with rigour, but with moderation, with wisdom, and with tenderness. The people of Israel had a good king; but they are here taught to look up to God as he by whom their king reigns: *Thou dost establish equity* (that is, God gave them those excellent laws by which they were governed), and *thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob*; he not only by his immediate providences often executed and enforced his own laws, but took care for the administration of justice among them by civil magistrates, who reigned by him and by him did decree justice. Their judges judged for God, and their judgment was his, 2 Chron. xix. 6.

II. Putting these two things together, we see what was the happiness of Israel above

any other people, as Moses had described it (Deut. iv. 7, 8), that they had *God so nigh unto them*, sitting between the cherubim, and that they had *statutes and judgments so righteous*, by which equity was established, and God himself ruled in Jacob, from which he infers this command to that happy people (v. 5): *“Exalt you the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool; give him the glory of the good government you are under, as it is now established, both in church and state.”*

Note, 1. The greater the public mercies are which we have a share in the more we are obliged to bear a part in the public homage paid to God: the setting up of the kingdom of Christ, especially, ought to be the matter of our praise. 2. When we draw nigh to God, to worship him, our hearts must be filled with high thoughts of him, and he must be exalted in our souls. 3. The more we abase ourselves, and the more prostrate we are before God, the more we exalt him. We must *worship at his footstool*, at his ark, which was as the footstool to the mercy-seat between the cherubim; or we must cast ourselves down upon the pavement of his courts; and good reason we have to be thus reverent, *for he is holy*, and his holiness should strike an awe upon us, as it does on the angels themselves, Isa. vi. 2, 3.

6 Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name; they called upon the LORD, and he answered them. 7 He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar: they kept his testimonies, and the ordinance that he gave them. 8 Thou answeredst them, O LORD our God: thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions. 9 Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy hill; for the LORD our God is holy.

The happiness of Israel in God's government is here further made out by some particular instances of his administration, especially with reference to those that were, in their day, the prime leaders and most active useful governors of that people—Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, in the two former or whom the theocracy or divine government began (for they were employed to form Israel into a people) and in the last of whom that form of government, in a great measure, ended; for when the people rejected Samuel, and urged him to resign, they are said to reject God himself, that he should not be so immediately their king as he had been (1 Sam. viii. 7), for now they would have a king, like all the nations. Moses, as well as Aaron, is said to be *among his priests*, for he executed the priest's office till Aaron was settled in it and he consecrated Aaron and his sons;

therefore the Jews call him the *priest of the priests*. Now concerning these three chief rulers observe,

I. The intimate communion they had with God, and the wonderful favour to which he admitted them. None of all the nations of the earth could produce three such men as these, that had such an intercourse with Heaven, and whom God *knew by name*, Exod. xxxiii. 17. Here is, 1. Their gracious observance of God. No kingdom had men that honoured God as these three men of the kingdom of Israel did. They honoured him, (1.) By their prayers. Samuel, though not among his priests, yet was *among those that called on his name*; and for *this* they were all famous, *They called upon the Lord*; they relied not on their own wisdom or virtue, but in every emergency had recourse to God, towards him was their desire, and on him their dependence. (2.) By their obedience: *They kept his testimonies, and the ordinances that he gave them*; they made conscience of their duty, and in every thing made God's word and law their rule, as knowing that unless they did so they could not expect their prayers should be answered, Prov. xxviii. 9. Moses did all according to the pattern shown him; it is often repeated, *According to all that God commanded Moses, so did he*. Aaron and Samuel did likewise. Those were the greatest men and most honourable that were most eminent for keeping God's testimonies and conforming to the rule of his word. 2. God's gracious acceptance of them: *He answered them*, and granted them the things which they called upon him for. They all wonderfully prevailed with God in prayer; miracles were wrought at their special instance and request; nay, he not only condescended to do that for them which they desired, as a prince for a petitioner, but he communed with them as one friend familiarly converses with another (v. 7): *He spoke unto them in the cloudy pillar*. He often spoke to Samuel; from his childhood the word of the Lord came to him, and, probably, sometimes he spoke to him by a bright cloud overshadowing him: however, to Moses and Aaron he often spoke out of the famous *cloudy pillar*, Exod. xvi. 10; Num. xii. 5. Israel are now reminded of this, for the confirming of their faith, that though they had not every day such sensible tokens of God's presence as the cloudy pillar was, yet to those that were their first founders, and to him that was their great reformer, God was pleased thus to manifest himself.

II. The good offices they did to Israel. They interceded for the people, and for them also they obtained many an answer of peace. *Moses stood in the gap, and Aaron between the living and the dead*; and, when Israel was in distress, Samuel cried unto the Lord for them, 1 Sam. vii. 9. This is here referred to (v. 8): "*Thou answeredst them, O Lord our God!* and, at their prayer, *thou wast a God*

that forgavest the people they prayed for and, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions, yet thou didst not cut them off from being a people, as their sin deserved." "*Thou wast a God that wast propitious for them*" (saith Dr. Hammond), for their sakes, and spareds the people at their request, even when thou wast about to take vengeance of their inventions, that is, when thy wrath was so highly provoked against them that it was just ready to break in upon them, to their utter overthrow." These were some of the many remarkable instances of God's dominion in Israel, more than in any other nation, for which the people are again called upon to praise God (v. 9): "*Exalt the Lord our God*, on account of what he has done for us formerly, as well as of late, *and worship at his holy hill of Zion*, on which he has now set his temple and will shortly set his King (ii. 6), the former type of the latter; there, as the centre of unity, let all God's Israel meet, with their adorations, *for the Lord our God is holy*, and appears so, not only in his holy law, but in his holy gospel."

PSALM C.

It is with good reason that many sing this psalm very frequently in their religious assemblies, for it is very proper both to express and to excite pious and devout affections towards God in our approach to him in holy ordinances; and, if our hearts go along with the words, we shall make melody in it to the Lord. The Jews say it was penned to be sung with their thank-offerings; perhaps it was; but we say that as there is nothing in it peculiar to their economy so its beginning with a call to all lands to praise God plainly extends it to the gospel-church. Here, 1. We are called upon to praise God and rejoice in him, ver. 1, 2, 4. II. We are furnished with matter for praise; we must praise him, considering his being and relation to us (ver. 3) and his mercy and truth, ver. 5. These are plain and common things, and therefore the more fit to be the matter of devotion.

A psalm of praise.

MAKE a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands. 2 Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing. 3 Know ye that the LORD he is God: *it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture*. 4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. 5 For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.

Here, I. The exhortations to praise are very important. The psalm does indeed answer to the title, *A psalm of praise*: it begins with that call which of late we have several times met with (v. 1), *Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands, or all the earth*, all the inhabitants of the earth. When all nations shall be discipled, and the gospel preached to every creature, then this summons will be fully answered to. But, if we take the foregoing psalm to be (as we have opened it) a call to the Jewish church to rejoice in the administration of God's kingdom, which they were under (as the four psalms

before it were calculated for the days of the Messiah), this psalm, perhaps, was intended for proselytes, that came over out of all lands to the Jews' religion. However, we have here, 1. A strong invitation to worship God; not that God needs us, or any thing we have or can do, but it is his will that we should serve the Lord, should devote ourselves to his service and employ ourselves in it; and that we should not only serve him in all instances of obedience to his law, but that we should come before his presence in the ordinances which he has appointed and in which he has promised to manifest himself (v. 2), that we should enter into his gates and into his courts (v. 4), that we should attend upon him among his servants, and keep there where he keeps court. In all acts of religious worship, whether in secret or in our families, we come into God's presence, and serve him; but it is in public worship especially that we enter into his gates and into his courts. The people were not permitted to enter into the holy place; there the priests only went in to minister. But let the people be thankful for their place in the courts of God's house, to which they were admitted and where they gave their attendance. 2. Great encouragement given us, in worshipping God, to do it cheerfully (v. 2): *Serve the Lord with gladness*. This intimates a prediction that in gospel-times there should be special occasion for joy; and it prescribes this as a rule of worship: Let God be served with gladness. By holy joy we do really serve God; it is an honour to him to rejoice in him; and we ought to serve him with holy joy. Gospel-worshippers should be joyful worshippers; if we serve God in uprightness, let us serve him with gladness. We must be willing and forward to it, glad when we are called to go up to the house of the Lord (cxxxii. 1), looking upon it as the comfort of our lives to have communion with God; and we must be pleasant and cheerful in it, must say, *It is good to be here*, approaching to God, in every duty, as to God our exceeding Joy, xliiii. 4. We must come before his presence with singing, not only songs of joy, but songs of praise. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, v. 4. We must not only comfort ourselves, but glorify God, with our joy, and let him have the praise of that which we have the pleasure of. Be thankful to him and bless his name; that is, (1.) We must take it as a favour to be admitted into his service, and give him thanks that we have liberty of access to him, that we have ordinances instituted and opportunity continued of waiting upon God in those ordinances. (2.) We must intermix praise and thanksgiving with all our services. This golden thread must run through every duty (Heb. ciii. 15), for it is the work of angels. In every thing give thanks, in every ordinance, as well as in every providence.

II. The matter of praise, and motives to

it, are very important, v. 3, 5. Know you what God is in himself and what he is to you. Note, Knowledge is the mother of devotion and of all obedience: blind sacrifices will never please a seeing God. "Know it; consider and apply it, and then you will be more close and constant, more inward and serious, in the worship of him." Let us know then these seven things concerning the Lord Jehovah, with whom we have to do in all the acts of religious worship:—1. *That the Lord he is God*, the only living and true God—that he is a Being infinitely perfect, self-existent, and self-sufficient, and the fountain of all being; he is God, and not a man as we are. He is an eternal Spirit, incomprehensible and independent, the first cause and last end. The heathen worshipped the creature of their own fancy; the workmen made it, therefore it is not God. We worship him that made us and all the world; he is God, and all other pretended deities are vanity and a lie, and such as he has triumphed over. 2. *That he is our Creator: It is he that has made us, and not we ourselves*. I find that I am, but cannot say, *I am that I am*, and therefore must ask, Whence am I? Who made me? *Where is God my Maker?* And it is the Lord Jehovah. He gave us being, he gave us this being; he is both the former of our bodies and the Father of our spirits. We did not, we could not, make ourselves. It is God's prerogative to be his own cause; our being is derived and depending. 3. *That therefore he is our rightful owner*. The Masorites, by altering one letter in the Hebrew, read it, *He made us, and his we are, or to him we belong*. Put both the readings together, and we learn that because God made us, and not we ourselves, therefore we are not our own, but his. He has an incontestable right to, and property in, us and all things. His we are, to be actuated by his power, disposed of by his will, and devoted to his honour and glory. 4. *That he is our sovereign ruler: We are his people or subjects, and he is our prince, our rector or governor, that gives law to us as moral agents, and will call us to an account for what we do*. The Lord is our judge; the Lord is our lawgiver. We are not at liberty to do what we will, but must always make conscience of doing as we are bidden. 5. *That he is our bountiful benefactor*. We are not only his sheep, whom he is entitled to, but the sheep of his pasture, whom he takes care of; the flock of his feeding (so it may be read); therefore the sheep of his hand; at his disposal because the sheep of his pasture, xcvi. 7. He that made us maintains us, and gives us all good things richly to enjoy. 6. *That he is a God of infinite mercy and goodness (v. 5): The Lord is good, and therefore does good; his mercy is everlasting*; it is a fountain that can never be drawn dry. The saints, who are now the sanctified vessels of mercy, will be, to eternity, the glorified monuments of mercy. 7.

That he is a God of inviolable truth and faithfulness: *His truth endures to all generations*, and no word of his shall fall to the ground as antiquated or revoked. The promise is sure to all the seed, from age to age.

PSALM CI.

David was certainly the penman of this psalm, and it has in it the genuine spirit of the man after God's own heart; it is a solemn vow which he made to God when he took upon him the charge of a family and of the kingdom. Whether it was penned when he entered upon the government, immediately after the death of Saul (as some think), or when he began to reign over all Israel, and brought up the ark to the city of David (as others think), is not material; it is an excellent plan or model for the good government of a court, or the keeping up of virtue and piety, and, by that means, good order, in it: but it is applicable to private families; it is the householder's psalm. It instructs all that are in any sphere of power, whether larger or narrower, to use their power so as to make it a terror to evil-doers, but a praise to those that do well. Here is, 1. The general scope of David's vow, ver. 1, 2. 11. The particulars of it, that he would detest and discountenance all manner of wickedness (ver. 3-6, 7, 8) and that he would favour and encourage such as were virtuous, ver. 6. Some think this may fitly be accommodated to Christ, the Son of David, who governs his church, the city of the Lord, by these rules, and who loves righteousness and hates wickedness. In singing this psalm families, both governors and governed, should teach, and admonish, and engage themselves and one another to walk by the rule of it, that peace may be upon them and God's presence with them.

A psalm of David.

I WILL sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O LORD, will I sing. 2 I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. 3 I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; *it* shall not cleave to me. 4 A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person. 5 Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath a high look and a proud heart will not I suffer. 6 Mine eyes *shall be* upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. 7 He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight. 8 I will early destroy all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the LORD.

David here cuts out to himself and others a pattern both of a good magistrate and a good master of a family; and, if these were careful to discharge the duty of their place, it would contribute very much to a universal reformation. Observe,

I. The chosen subject of the psalm (v. 1): *I will sing of mercy and judgment*, that is,

1. Of God's mercy and judgment, and then it looks back upon the dispensations of Providence concerning David since he was first anointed to be king, during which time he had met with many a rebuke and much hardship on the one hand, and yet, on the other hand, had had many wonderful deliverances

wrought for him and favours bestowed upon him; of these he will sing unto God. Note, (1.) God's providences concerning his people are commonly mixed—*mercy and judgment*; God has set the one over-against the other, and appointed them April-days, showers and sunshine. It was so with David and his family; when there was mercy in the return of the ark there was judgment in the death of Uzza. (2.) When God in his providence exercises us with a mixture of mercy and judgment it is our duty to sing, and sing unto him, both of the one and of the other; we must be suitably affected with both, and make suitable acknowledgments to God for both. The Chaldee-paraphrase of this is observable: *If thou bestowest mercy upon me, or, If thou bring any judgment upon me, before thee, O Lord! will I sing my hymns for all*. Whatever our outward condition is, whether joyful or sorrowful, still we must give glory to God, and sing praises to him; neither the laughter of a prosperous condition nor the tears of an afflicted condition must put us out of tune for sacred songs. Or,

2. It may be understood of David's mercy and judgment; he would, in this psalm, promise to be merciful, and just, or wise, for judgment is often put for discretion. To do justly and love mercy is the sum of our duty; these he would covenant to make conscience of in that place and relation to which God had called him and this in consideration of the various providences of God that had occurred to him. Family-mercies and family-afflictions are both of them calls to family-religion. David put his vow into a song or psalm, that he might the better keep it in his own mind and frequently repeat it, and that it might the better be communicated to others and preserved in his family, for a pattern to his sons and successors.

II. The general resolution David took up to conduct himself carefully and conscientiously in his court, v. 2. We have here,

1. A good purpose concerning his conversation—concerning his conversation in general (how he would behave himself in every thing; he would live by rule, and not at large, not walk at all adventures; he would, though a king, by a solemn covenant bind himself to his good behaviour), and concerning his conversation in his family particularly, not only how he would walk when he appeared in public, when he sat in the throne, but how he would walk *within his house*, where he was more out of the eye of the world, but where he still saw himself under the eye of God. It is not enough to put on our religion when we go abroad and appear before men; but we must govern ourselves by it in our families. Those that are in public stations are not thereby excused from care in governing their families; nay, rather, they are more concerned to set a good example of *ruling their own houses well*, 1 Tim. iii. 4. When David had his hands full of public

affairs, yet he returned to bless his house, 2 Sam. vi. 20. He resolves, (1.) To act conscientiously and with integrity, to *walk in a perfect way*, in the way of God's commandments; that is a *perfect way*, for the law of the Lord is perfect. This he will walk in with a *perfect heart*, with all sincerity, not dissembling either with God or men. When we make the word of God our rule, and are ruled by it, the glory of God our end, and aim at it, then we walk in a *perfect way with a perfect heart*. (2.) To act considerably and with discretion: *I will behave myself wisely; I will understand or instruct myself in a perfect way*, so some. I will walk circumspectly. Note, We must all resolve to walk by the rules of Christian prudence in the ways of Christian piety. We must never turn aside out of the perfect way, under pretence of *behaving ourselves wisely*; but, while we keep to the good way, we must be *wise as serpents*.

2. A good prayer: *O when wilt thou come unto me?* Note, It is a desirable thing, when a man has a house of his own, to have God come to him and dwell with him in it; and those may expect God's presence that walk with a *perfect heart in a perfect way*. If we compare the account which the historian gives of David (1 Sam. xviii. 14), we shall find how exactly it answers his purpose and prayer, and that neither was in vain. David, as he purposed, *behaved himself wisely in all his ways*; and, as he prayed, *the Lord was with him*.

III. His particular resolution to practise no evil himself (v. 3). *"I will set no wicked thing before my eyes; I will not design nor aim at any thing but what is for the glory of God and the public welfare."* He will never have it in his eye to enrich himself by impoverishing his subjects, or enlarge his own prerogative by encroaching on their property. In all our worldly business we must see that what we set our eyes upon be right and good and not any forbidden fruit, and that we never seek that which we cannot have without sin. It is the character of a good man that he shuts his eyes from seeing evil, Isa. xxxiii. 15. "Nay, I hate the work of those that turn aside from the paths of equity (Job xxxi. 7), not only I avoid it, but I abhor it; *it shall not cleave to me*. If any blot of injustice should come on my hands, it shall be washed off quickly."

IV. His further resolution not to keep bad servants, nor to employ those about him that were vicious. He will not countenance them, nor show them any favour, lest thereby he should harden them in their wickedness, and encourage others to do like them. He will not converse with them himself, nor admit them into the company of his other servants, lest they should spread the infection of sin in his family. He will not confide in them, nor put them in power under him; for those who hated to be reformed would certainly

hinder every thing that is good. When he comes to mention particulars he does not mention drunkards, adulterers, murderers or blasphemers; such gross sinners as these he was in no danger of admitting into his house, nor did he need to covenant particularly against having fellowship with them; but he mentions those whose sins were less scandalous, but no less dangerous, and in reference to whom he needed to stand upon his guard with caution and to behave himself wisely. He will have nothing to do, 1. With spiteful malicious people, who are ill-natured, and will bear a grudge a great while, and care not what mischief they do to those they have a pique against (v. 4): *"A froward heart (one that delights to be cross and perverse) shall depart from me, as 'not fit for society, the bond of which is love. I will not know;"* that is, "I will have no acquaintance or conversation, if I can help it, with such a *wicked person*; for a little of the leaven of malice and wickedness will leaven the whole lump." 2. With slanderers, and those who take a pleasure in wounding their neighbour's reputation secretly (v. 5): *"Whoso privily slanders his neighbour, either raises or spreads false stories, to the prejudice of his good name, him will I cut off from my family and court."* Many endeavour to raise themselves into the favour of princes by unjust representations of persons and things, which they think will please their prince: *If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked*, Prov. xxix. 12. But David will not only not hearken to them, but will prevent the preferment of those that hope thus to curry favour with him: he will punish not only him that falsely accuses another in open court, but him that privily slanders another. I wish David had remembered this vow in the case of Mephibosheth and Ziba. 3. With haughty, conceited, ambitious people; none do more mischief in a family, in a court, in a church, for *only by pride comes contention*: *"Therefore him that has a high look and a proud heart will I not suffer"*. I will have no patience with those that are still grasping at all preferments, for it is certain that they do not aim at doing good, but only at aggrandizing themselves and their families." God resists the proud, and so will David. 4. With false deceitful people, that scruple not to tell lies, or commit frauds (v. 7): *"He that worketh deceit, though he may insinuate himself into my family, yet, as soon as he is discovered, shall not dwell within my house."* Some great men know how to serve their own purposes by such as are skilful to deceive, and they are fit tools for them to work by; but David will make use of no such persons as agents for him: *He that tells lies shall not tarry in my sight*, but shall be expelled the house with indignation. Herein David was a man after God's own heart, for a proud look and a lying tongue are things which God hates; and he was also a type of Christ, who will, in the

great day, banish from his presence *all that love and make a lie*, Rev. xxii. 15.

V. His resolution to put those in trust under him that were honest and good (v. 6): *My eyes shall be upon the faithful in the land*. In choosing his servants and ministers of state he kept to the land of Israel and would not employ foreigners; none shall be preferred but true-born Israelites, and those such as were Israelites indeed, the *faithful in the land*; for even in that land there were those that were unfaithful. These faithful ones his eyes shall be upon, to discover them and find them out; for they were modest, did not crowd into the city to court preferment, but lived retired in the land, in the country, out of the way of it. Those are commonly most fit for places of honour and trust that are least fond of them; and therefore wise princes will spy out such in their recesses and privacies, and take them to dwell with them and act under them. *He that walks in a perfect way*, that makes conscience of what he says and does, *shall serve me*. The kingdom must be searched for honest men to make courtiers of; and, if any man is better than another, he must be preferred. This was a good resolution of David's; but either he did not keep to it or else his judgment was imposed upon when he made Ahithophel his right hand. It should be the care and endeavour of all masters of families, for their own sakes and their children's, to take such servants into their families as they have reason to hope fear God. The Son of David has his eyes upon the *faithful in the land*; his secret is with them, and they shall dwell with him. Saul chose servants for their goodness (1 Sam. viii. 16), but David for their goodness.

VI. His resolution to extend his zeal to the reformation of the city and country, as well as of the court (v. 8): "*I will early destroy all the wicked of the land*, all that are discovered and convicted; the law shall have its course against them." He would do his utmost to *destroy all the wicked*, so that there might be none left that were notoriously wicked. He would do it early; he would lose no time and spare no pains; he would be forward and zealous in promoting the reformation of manners and suppression of vice; and those must rise betimes that will do anything to purpose in that work. That which he aimed at was not only the securing of his own government and the peace of the country, but the honour of God in the purity of his church, *That I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord*. Not Jerusalem only, but the whole land, was the *city of the Lord*; so is the gospel-church. It is the interest of the *city of the Lord* to be purged from wicked doers, who both blemish it and weaken it; and it is therefore the duty of all to do what they can, in their places, towards so good a work, and to be zealously affected in it. The day is coming when the Son of David shall cut off all wicked doers from the new Jeru-

salem, for there shall not enter into it any that do iniquity.

PSALM CII.

Some think that David penned this psalm at the time of Absalom's rebellion; others that Daniel, Nehemiah, or some other prophet penned it for the use of the church, when it was in captivity in Babylon, because it seems to speak of the ruin of Zion and of time set for the rebuilding of it, which Daniel understood in books, Dan. ix. 2. Or perhaps the psalmist was himself great affliction, which he complains of in the beginning of the psalm, but (as in Ps. lxxvii. and elsewhere) he comforts himself under it with the consideration of God's eternity, and the church's prosperity and perpetuity, how much sorer it was now pressed and threatened. But it is clear, from the application ver. 25, 26, to Christ (Heb. i. 10—12), that the psalm has reference to the days of the Messiah, and speaks either of his affliction or of the afflictions of his church for his sake. In this psalm we have, I. A sorrowful complaint which the psalmist makes, either for himself or in the name of the church, of great afflictions, which were very pressing, ver. 1—11. Seasonable comfort fetched in against these grievances, 1. From the eternity of God, ver. 12, 24, 27. 2. From a believing prospect of the deliverance which God would, in due time, work for his afflicted church (ver. 13—22) and the continuance of it in the world, ver. 28. In singing this psalm, if we have not occasion to make the same complaints, yet we may take occasion to sympathize with those that have, and then the comfortable part of this psalm will be the more comfortable to us in the singing of it.

A prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord.

HEAR my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto thee. 2 Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day when I call answer me speedily. 3 For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as a hearth. 4 My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread. 5 By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin. 6 I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert. 7 I watch and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top. 8 Mine enemies reproach me all the day; and they that are mad against me are sworn against me. 9 For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping. 10 Because of thine indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down. 11 My days are like a shadow that inclineth; and I am withered like grass.

The title of this psalm is very observable; it is a *prayer of the afflicted*. It was composed by one that was himself afflicted, afflicted with the church and for it; and of those that are of a public spirit afflictions of that kind lie heavier than any other. It is calculated for an afflicted state, and is intended for the use of others that may be in the like distress; for *whatsoever things were written aforetime were written designedly for our use*. The whole word of God is of use to direct us in prayer; but here, as often elsewhere, the Holy Ghost has drawn up our petition for us, has put words into our mouths

Hos. xiv. 2, *Take with you words.* Here is a prayer put into the hands of the afflicted: let them set, not their hands, but their hearts to it, and present it to God. Note, 1. It is often the lot of the best saints in this world to be sorely affected. 2. Even good men may be almost overwhelmed with their afflictions, and may be ready to faint under them. 3. When our state is afflicted, and our spirits are overwhelmed, it is our duty and interest to pray, and by prayer to *pour out our complaints before the Lord*, which intimates the leave God gives us to be free with him and the liberty of speech we have before him, as well as liberty of access to him; it intimates also what an ease it is to an afflicted spirit to unburden itself by a humble representation of its grievances and griefs. Such a representation we have here, in which,

I. The psalmist humbly begs of God to take notice of his affliction, and of his prayer in his affliction, v. 1, 2. When we pray in our affliction, 1. It should be our care that God would graciously hear us; for, if our prayers be not pleasing to God, they will be to no purpose to ourselves. Let this therefore be in our eye that our prayer may come unto God, even to his ears (xviii. 6); and, in order to that, let us *lift up the prayer*, and our souls with it. 2. It may be our hope that God will graciously hear us, because he has appointed us to seek him and has promised we shall not seek him in vain. If we put up a prayer in faith, we may in faith say, *Hear my prayer, O Lord!* "Hear me," that is, (1.) "Manifest thyself to me, *hide not thy face from me* in displeasure, *when I am in trouble*. If thou dost not quickly free me, yet let me know that thou favourest me; if I see not the operations of thy hand for me, yet let me see the smiles of thy face upon me." God's hiding his face is trouble enough to a good man even in his prosperity (xxx. 7, *Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled*); but if, when we are in trouble, God hides his face, the case is sad indeed. (2.) "Manifest thyself for me; not only hear me, but answer me; grant me the deliverance I am in want of and in pursuit of; answer me speedily, *even in the day when I call*." When troubles press hard upon us, God gives us leave to be thus pressing in prayer, yet with humility and patience.

II. He makes a lamentable complaint of the low condition to which he was reduced by his afflictions. 1. His body was macerated and emaciated, and he had become a perfect skeleton, nothing but skin and bones. As prosperity and joy are represented by *making fat the bones*, and the *bones flourishing like a herb*, so great trouble and grief are here represented by the contrary: *My bones are burnt as a hearth* (v. 3); they *cleave to my skin* (v. 5); nay, *my heart is smitten, and withered like grass* (v. 4); it touches the vitals, and there is a sensible decay there. *I am withered like grass* (v. 11), scorched with the burning heat of my troubles. If we be

thus brought low by bodily distempers, let us not think it strange; the body is like grass, weak and of the earth, no wonder then that it withers. 2. He was very melancholy and of a sorrowful spirit. He was so taken up with the thoughts of his troubles that he *forgot to eat his bread* (v. 4); he had no appetite to his necessary food nor could he relish it. When God hides his face from a soul the delights of sense will be sapless things. He was always *sighing and groaning*, as one pressed above measure (v. 5), and this wasted him and exhausted his spirits. He affected solitude, as melancholy people do. His friends deserted him and were shy of him, and he cared as little for their company (v. 6, 7): "*I am like a pelican of the wilderness, or a bittern* (so some) *that make a doleful noise; I am like an owl, that affects to lodge in deserted ruined buildings; I watch, and am as a sparrow upon the house-top*. I live in a garret, and there spend my hours in poring on my troubles and bemoaning myself." Those who do thus, when they are in sorrow, humour themselves indeed; but they prejudice themselves, and know not what they do, nor what advantage they hereby give to the tempter. In affliction we should sit alone to consider our ways (Lam. iii. 28), but not sit alone to indulge an inordinate grief. 3. He was evil-spoken of by his enemies, and all manner of evil was said against him. When his friends went off from him his foes set themselves against him (v. 8): *My enemies reproach me all the day*, designing thereby both to create vexation to him (for an ingenuous mind regrets reproach) and to bring an odium upon him before men. When they could not otherwise reach him they shot these arrows at him, even *bitter words*. In this they were unwearied; they did it *all the day*; it was a continual dropping. His enemies were very outrageous: *They are mad against me*, and very obstinate and implacable. *They are sworn against me*; as the Jews that bound themselves with an oath that they would kill Paul; or, *They have sworn against me* as accusers, to take away my life. 4. He fasted and wept under the tokens of God's displeasure (v. 9, 10): "*I have eaten ashes like bread*; instead of eating my bread, I have lain down in dust and ashes, and *I have mingled my drink with weeping*; when I should have refreshed myself with drinking I have only eased myself with weeping." And what is the matter? He tells us (v. 10): *Because of thy wrath*. It was not so much the trouble itself that troubled him as the wrath of God which he was under the apprehensions of as the cause of the trouble. This, this was the wormwood and the gall in the affliction and the misery: *Thou hast lifted me up and cast me down*, as that which we cast to the ground with a design to dash it to pieces; we lift up first, that we may throw it down with the more violence; or, "Thou hast formerly lifted me up in honour, and joy, and uncon-

mon prosperity; but the remembrance of that aggravates the present grief and makes it the more grievous." We must eye the hand of God both in lifting us up and casting us down, and say, "Blessed be the name of the Lord, who both gives and takes away." 5. He looked upon himself as a dying man: *My days are consumed like smoke* (v. 3), which vanishes away quickly. Or, They are consumed *in smoke*, of which nothing remains; they are *like a shadow that declines* (v. 11), like the evening-shadow, or a forerunner of approaching night. Now all this, though it seems to speak the psalmist's personal calamities, and therefore is properly a prayer for a particular person afflicted, yet is supposed to be a description of the afflictions of the church of God, with which the psalmist sympathizes, making public grievances his own. The mystical body of Christ is sometimes, like the psalmist's body here, *withered and parched*, nay, like *dead and dry bones*. The church sometimes is forced *into the wilderness*, seems lost, and gives up herself for gone, under the tokens of God's displeasure.

12 But thou, O LORD, shalt endure for ever; and thy remembrance unto all generations. 13 Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come. 14 For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof. 15 So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth thy glory. 16 When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. 17 He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. 18 This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD. 19 For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the LORD behold the earth; 20 To hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death; 21 To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem; 22 When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.

Many exceedingly great and precious comforts are here thought of, and mustered up, to balance the foregoing complaints; for *unto the upright there arises light in the darkness*, so that, though they are cast down, they are not in despair. It is bad with the psalmist himself, bad with the people of God; but he has many considerations to revive himself with.

I. We are dying creatures, and our inter-

ests and comforts are dying, but God is an everliving everlasting God (v. 12): "*My days are like a shadow*"; there is no remedy; night is coming upon me; but, *thou, O Lord! shalt endure for ever*. Our life is transient, but thine is permanent; our friends die, but thou our God diest not; what threatened us cannot touch thee; our names will be written in the dust and buried in oblivion, but *thy remembrance shall be unto all generations*, to the end of time, nay, to eternity, thou shalt be known and honoured." A good man loves God better than himself, and therefore can balance his own sorrow and death with the pleasing thought of the unchangeable blessedness of the Eternal Mind. God *endures for ever*, his church's faithful patron and protector; and, his honour and perpetual remembrance being very much bound up in her interests, we may be confident that they shall not be neglected.

II. Poor Zion is now in distress, but there will come a time for her relief and succour (v. 13): *Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion*. The hope of deliverance is built upon the goodness of God—"Thou wilt have mercy upon Zion, for she has become an object of thy pity;" and upon the power of God—"Thou shalt arise and have mercy, shalt stir up thyself to do it, shalt do it in contempt of all the opposition made by the church's enemies." *The zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this*. That which is very encouraging is that there is a time set for the deliverance of the church, which not only will come some time, but will come at the time appointed, the time which Infinite Wisdom has appointed (and therefore it is the best time) and which Eternal Truth has fixed it to, and therefore it is a certain time, and shall not be forgotten nor further adjourned. At the end of seventy years, the time to favour Zion, by delivering her from the daughter of Babylon, was to come, and at length it did come. Zion was now in ruins, that is, the temple that was built in the city of David: the favouring of Zion is the building of the temple up again, as it is explained, v. 16. This is expected from the favour of God; that will set all to rights, and nothing but that, and therefore Daniel prays (Dan. ix. 17), *Cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary, which is desolate*. The building up of Zion is as great a favour to any people as they can desire. No blessing more desirable to a ruined state than the restoring and re-establishing of their church-privileges. Now this is here wished for and longed for, 1. Because it would be a great rejoicing to Zion's friends (v. 14): *Thy servants take pleasure even in the stones of the temple*, though they were thrown down and scattered, and *favour the dust*, the very rubbish and ruins of it. Observe here, When the temple was ruined, yet the stones of it were to be had for a new building, and there were those who encouraged themselves with that, for they had a

favour even for the dust of it. Those who truly love the church of God love it when it is in affliction as well as when it is in prosperity; and it is a good ground to hope that God will favour the ruins of Zion when he puts it into the heart of his people to favour them, and to show that they do so by their prayers and by their endeavours; as it is also a good plea with God for mercy for Zion that there are those who are so affectionately concerned for her, and are *waiting for the salvation of the Lord*. 2. Because it would have a good influence upon Zion's neighbours, v. 15. It will be a happy means perhaps of their conversion, at least of their conviction; for *so the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord*, shall have high thoughts of him and his people, and even the kings of the earth shall be affected with his glory. They shall have better thoughts of the church of God than they have had, when God by his providence thus puts an honour upon it; they shall be afraid of doing any thing against it when they see God taking its part; nay, they shall say, We will go with you, for we have *seen that God is with you*, Zech. viii. 23. Thus it is said (Est. viii. 17) that *many of the people of the land became Jews, for the fear of the Jews fell upon them*. 3. Because it would redound to the honour of Zion's God (v. 16): *When the Lord shall build up Zion*. They take it for granted it will be done, for God himself has undertaken it, and *he shall then appear in his glory*; and for that reason all that have made his glory their highest end desire it and pray for it. Note, The edifying of the church will be the glorifying of God, and therefore we may be assured it will be done in the set time. Those that pray in faith, *Father, glorify thy name*, may receive the same answer to that prayer which was given to Christ himself by a voice from heaven, *I have both glorified it and I will glorify it yet again*, though now for a time it may be eclipsed.

III. The prayers of God's people now seem to be slighted and no notice taken of them, but they will be reviewed and greatly encouraged (v. 17): *He will regard the prayer of the destitute*. It was said (v. 16) that God will *appear in his glory*, such a glory as kings themselves shall *stand in awe of*, v. 15. When great men *appear in their glory* they are apt to look with disdain upon the poor that apply to them; but the great God will not do so. Observe, 1. The meanness of the petitioners; they are the *destitute*. It is an elegant word that is here used, which signifies the heath in the wilderness, a low shrub, or bush, like the hyssop of the wall. They are supposed to be in a low and broken state, enriched with spiritual blessings, but destitute of temporal good things—the poor, the weak, the desolate, the stripped; thus variously is the word rendered; or it may signify that low and broken spirit which God looks for in all that draw nigh to him and which he will graciously look upon. This

will bring them to their knees. Destitute people should be praying people, 1 Tim. v. 5. 2. The favour of God to them, notwithstanding their meanness: *He will regard their prayer*, and will look at it, will peruse their petition (2 Chron. vi. 40), and *he will not despise their prayer*. More is implied than is expressed: he will value it and be well pleased with it, and will return an answer of peace to it, which is the greatest honour that can be put upon it. But it is thus expressed because others despise their praying, they themselves fear God will despise it, and he was thought to despise it while their affliction was prolonged and their prayers lay unanswered. When we consider our own meanness and vileness, our darkness and deadness, and the manifold defects in our prayers, we have cause to suspect that our prayers will be received with disdain in heaven; but we are here assured of the contrary, for we have an advocate with the Father, and are under grace, not under the law. This instance of God's favour to his praying people, though they are destitute, will be a lasting encouragement to prayer (v. 18): *This shall be written for the generation to come, that none may despair*, though they be destitute, nor think their prayers forgotten because they have not an answer to them immediately. The experiences of others should be our encouragements to seek unto God and trust in him. And, if we have the comfort of the experiences of others, it is fit that we should give God the glory of them: *The people who shall be created shall praise the Lord* for what he has done both for them and for their predecessors. Many that are now unborn shall, by reading the history of the church, be wrought upon to turn proselytes. The people that shall be created anew by divine grace, that are a kind of *first-fruits of his creatures*, shall praise the Lord for his answers to their prayers when they were more destitute.

IV. The prisoners under condemnation unjustly seem as sheep appointed for the slaughter, but care shall be taken for their discharge (v. 19, 20): *God has looked down from the height of his sanctuary, from heaven, where he has prepared his throne, that high place, that holy place; thence did the Lord behold the earth*, for it is a place of prospect, and nothing on this earth is or can be hidden from his all-seeing eye; he looks down, not to take a view of the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, but to do acts of grace, *to hear the groaning of the prisoners* (which we desire to be out of the hearing of), and not only to hear them, but to help them, *to loose those that are appointed to death*, then when there is but a step between them and it. Some understand it of the release of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon. God heard their groaning there as he did when they were in Egypt (Exod. iii. 7, 9) and came down to deliver them. God takes notice not only of the prayers of his afflicted

people, which are the language of grace, but even of their groans, which are the language of nature. See the divine pity in hearing the prisoner's groans, and the divine power in loosing the prisoner's bonds, even when they are appointed to death and are pinioned and double-shackled. We have an instance in Peter, Acts xii. 6. Such instances as these of the divine condescension and compassion will help, 1. *To declare the name of the Lord in Zion*, and to make it appear that he answers to his name, which he himself proclaimed, *The Lord God, gracious and merciful*; and this declaration of his name in Zion shall be the matter of his praise in Jerusalem, v. 21. If God by his providences declare his name, we must by our acknowledgments of them declare his praise, which ought to be the echo of his name. God will discharge his people that were prisoners and captives in Babylon, *that they may declare his name in Zion*, the place he has chosen to put his name there, *and his praise in Jerusalem*, at their return thither; in the land of their captivity they could not sing the songs of Zion (cxxxvii. 3, 4), and God brought them again to Jerusalem in order that they might sing them there. For this end God gives liberty from bondage (*Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name*, cxlii. 7), and life from the dead. *Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee*, cxix. 175. 2. They will help to draw in others to the worship of God (v. 22): *When the people of God are gathered together at Jerusalem* (as they were after their return out of Babylon) many out of the kingdoms joined with them *to serve the Lord*. This was fulfilled Ezra vi. 21, where we find that not only the children of Israel that had come out of captivity, but many that had *separated themselves from them among the heathen*, did *keep the feast of unleavened bread with joy*. But it may look further, at the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ in the latter days. Christ has proclaimed *liberty to the captives*, and *the opening of the prison to those that were bound*, that they may declare the name of the Lord in the gospel-church, in which Jews and Gentiles shall unite.

23 He weakened my strength in the way; he shortened my days. 24 I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: thy years are throughout all generations. 25 Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. 26 They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: 27 But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. 28 The children of thy

servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.

We may here observe,

I. The imminent danger that the Jewish church was in of being quite extirpated and cut off by the captivity in Babylon (v. 23): *He weakened my strength in the way*. They were for many ages in the way to the performance of the great promise made to their fathers concerning the Messiah, longing as much for it as ever a traveller did to be at his journey's end. The legal institutions led them in the way; but when the ten tribes were lost in Assyria, and the two almost lost in Babylon, the strength of that nation was weakened, and, in all appearance, its day shortened; for they said, *Our hope is lost; we are cut off for our parts*, Ezek. xxxvii. 11. And then what becomes of the promise that Shiloh should arise out of Judah, the star out of Jacob, and the Messiah out of the family of David? If these fail, the promise fails. This the psalmist speaks of as in his own person, and it is very applicable to two of the common afflictions of this time:—1. To be sickly. Bodily distempers soon *weaken our strength in the way*, make the keepers of the house to tremble and the strong men to bow themselves. 2. To be short-lived. Where the former is felt, this is feared; when in the midst of our days, according to a course of nature, our strength is weakened, what can we expect but that the *number of our months should be cut off in the midst*? and what should we do but provide accordingly? We must own God's hand in it (for in his hand our strength and time are), and must reconcile it to his love, for it has often been the lot of those that have used their strength well to have it weakened, and of those that could very ill be spared to have their days shortened.

II. A prayer for the continuance of it (v. 24): *"O my God! take me not away in the midst of my days*; let not this poor church be cut off in the midst of the days assigned it by the promise; let it not be cut off till the Messiah shall come. *Destroy it not, for that blessing is in it*," Isa. lxxv. 8. She is a criminal, but, for the sake of that blessing which is in her, she pleads for a reprieve. This is a prayer for the afflicted, and which, with submission to the will of God, we may in faith put up, that God would not *take us away in the midst of our days*, but that, if it be his will, he would spare us to do him further service and to be made riper for heaven.

III. A plea to enforce this prayer taken from the eternity of the Messiah promised, v. 25—27. The apostle quotes these verses (Heb. i. 10—12) and tells us, *He saith this to the Son*, and in that exposition we must acquiesce. It is very comfortable, in reference to all the changes that pass over the church, and all the dangers it is in, that *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*.

They years are throughout all generations, and cannot be shortened. It is likewise comfortable in reference to the decay and death of our own bodies, and the removal of our friends from us, that God is an everliving God, and that therefore, if he be ours, in him we may have everlasting consolation. In this plea observe how, to illustrate the eternity of the Creator, he compares it with the mutability of the creature; for it is God's sole prerogative to be unchangeable. 1. God made the world, and therefore had a being before it from eternity. The Son of God, the eternal Word, made the world. It is expressly said, *All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made; and therefore the same was in the beginning from eternity with God, and was God,* John i. 1—3; Col. i. 16; Eph. iii. 9; Heb. i. 2. Earth and heaven, and the hosts of both, include the universe and its fulness, and these derive their being from God by his Son (v. 25): "*Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth, which is founded on the seas and on the floods and yet it abides; much more shall the church, which is built upon a rock. The heavens are the work of thy hands, and by thee are all their motions and influences directed;*" God is therefore the fountain, not only of all being, but of all power and dominion. See how fit the great Redeemer is to be entrusted with all power, both in heaven and in earth, since he himself, as Creator of both, perfectly knows both and is entitled to both. 2. God will unmake the world again, and therefore shall have a being to eternity (v. 26, 27): *They shall perish, for thou shalt change them by the same almighty power that made them, and therefore, no doubt, thou shalt endure; thou art the same.* God and the world, Christ and the creature, are rivals for the innermost and uppermost place in the soul of man, the immortal soul; now what is here said, one would think, were enough to decide the controversy immediately and to determine us for God and Christ. For, (1.) A portion in the creature is fading and dying: *They shall perish;* they will not last so long as we shall last. The day is coming when *the earth and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up;* and then what will become of those that have laid up their treasure in it? Heaven and earth shall *was old as a garment,* not by a gradual decay, but, when the set time comes, they shall be laid aside like an old garment that we have no more occasion for: *As a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed,* not annihilated, but altered, it may be so that they shall not be at all the same, but *new heavens and a new earth.* See God's sovereign dominion over heaven and earth. He can change them as he pleases and when he pleases; and the constant changes they are subject to, in the revolutions of day and night, summer and winter, are earnest of their last and final change, when *the heavens and time* (which is

measured by them) *shall be no more.* (2.) A portion in God is perpetual and everlasting: *Thou art the same,* subject to no change; and *thy years have no end,* v. 27. Christ will be the same in the performance that he was in the promise, the same to his church in captivity that he was to his church at liberty. Let not the church fear the weakening of her strength, or the shortening of her days, while Christ himself is both her strength and her life; he is the same, and has said, *Because I live you shall live also.* Christ came in the fulness of time, and set up his kingdom in spite of the power of the Old-Testament Babylon, and he will keep it up in spite of the power of the New-Testament Babylon.

IV. A comfortable assurance of an answer to this prayer (v. 28): *The children of thy servants shall continue;* since Christ is the same, the church shall continue from one generation to another; from the eternity of the head we may infer the perpetuity of the body, though often weak and distempered, and even at death's door. Those that hope to wear out the saints of the Most High will be mistaken. Christ's servants shall have children; those children shall have a seed, a succession, of professing people; the church, as well as the world, is under the influence of that blessing, *Be fruitful and multiply.* *These children shall continue,* not in their own persons, by reason of death, but in their seed, which shall be established before God (that is, in his service, and by his grace); the entail of religion shall not be cut off while the world stands, but, as one generation of good people passes away, another shall come, and thus the throne of Christ shall endure.

PSALM CIII.

This psalm calls more for devotion than exposition; it is a most excellent psalm of praise, and of general use. The psalmist, 1. Stirs up himself and his own soul to praise God (ver. 1, 2) for his favour to him in particular (ver. 3—5), to the church in general, and to all good men, to whom he is, and will be, just, and kind, and constant (ver. 6—18), and for his government of the world, ver. 19. 11. He desires the assistance of the holy angels, and all the works of God, in praising him, ver. 20—22. In singing this psalm we must in a special manner get our hearts affected with the goodness of God and enlarged in love and thankfulness.

A psalm of David.

BLESS the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, *bless* his holy name. 2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: 3 Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; 4 Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; 5 Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

David is here communing with his own heart, and he is no fool that thus talks to himself and excites his own soul to that which is good. Observe,

I. How he stirs up himself to the duty of

praise, v. 1, 2. 1. It is the Lord that is to be blessed and spoken well of; for he is the fountain of all good, whatever are the channels or cisterns; it is to his name, his holy name, that we are to consecrate our praise, *giving thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.* 2. It is the soul that is to be employed in blessing God, and *all that is within us.* We make nothing of our religious performances if we do not make heart-work of them, if that which is within us, nay, if *all that is within us*, be not engaged in them. The work requires the inward man, the whole man, and all little enough. 3. In order to our return of praises to God, there must be a grateful remembrance of the mercies we have received from him: *Forget not all his benefits.* If we do not give thanks for them, we do forget them; and that is unjust as well as unkind, since in all God's favours there is so much that is memorable. "O my soul! to thy shame be it spoken, thou hast forgotten many of his benefits; but surely thou wilt not forget them all, for thou shouldst not have forgotten any."

II. How he furnishes himself with abundant matter for praise, and that which is very affecting: "Come, my soul, consider what God has done for thee." 1. "He has pardoned thy sins (v. 3); he has forgiven, and *does forgive, all thy iniquities.*" This is mentioned first because by the pardon of sin that is taken away which kept good things from us, and we are restored to the favour of God, which bestows good things on us. Think what the provocation was; it was iniquity, and yet pardoned; how many the provocations were, and yet all pardoned. *He has forgiven all our trespasses.* It is a continued act; he is still forgiving, as we are still sinning and repenting. 2. "He has cured thy sickness." The corruption of nature is the sickness of the soul; it is its disorder, and threatens its death. This is cured in sanctification; when sin is mortified, the disease is healed; though complicated, it is all healed. Our crimes were capital, but God saves our lives by pardoning them; our diseases were mortal, but God saves our lives by healing them. These two go together; for, as for God, his work is perfect and not done by halves; if God take away the guilt of sin by pardoning mercy, he will break the power of it by renewing grace. Where Christ is made righteousness to any soul he is made sanctification, 1 Cor. i. 30. 3. "He has rescued thee from danger." A man may be in peril of life, not only by his crimes, or his diseases, but by the power of his enemies; and therefore here also we experience the divine goodness: *Who redeemed thy life from destruction* (v. 4), from the destroyer, *from hell* (so the Chaldee), from the second death. *The redemption of the soul is precious*; we cannot compass it, and therefore are the more indebted to divine grace that has wrought it out, to him who has *obtained eternal redemp-*

tion for us. See Job xxxiii. 24, 28. 4. "He has not only saved thee from death and ruin, but has made thee truly and completely happy, with honour, pleasure, and long life." (1.) "He has given thee true honour and great honour, no less than a crown: *He crowns thee with his lovingkindness and tender mercies;*" and what greater dignity is a poor soul capable of than to be advanced into the love and favour of God? *This honour have all his saints.* What is the crown of glory but God's favour? (2.) "He has given thee true pleasure: *He satisfies thy mouth with good things*" (v. 5); it is only the favour and grace of God that can give satisfaction to a soul, can suit its capacities, supply its needs, and answer to its desires. Nothing but divine wisdom can undertake to *fill its treasures* (Prov. viii. 21); other things will surfeit, but not *satiare*, Eccl. vi. 7; Isa. lv. 2. (3.) "He has given thee a prospect and pledge of long life: *Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.*" The eagle is long-lived, and, as naturalists say, when she is nearly 100 years old, casts all her feathers (as indeed she changes them in a great measure every year at moulting time), and fresh ones come, so that she becomes young again. When God, by the graces and comforts of his Spirit, recovers his people from their decays, and fills them with new life and joy, which is to them an earnest of eternal life and joy, then they may be said to *return to the days of their youth*, Job xxxiii. 25.

6 The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. 7 He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel. 8 The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. 9 He will not always chide: neither will he keep *his anger* for ever. 10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. 11 For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. 12 As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. 13 Like as a father pitieth *his* children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. 14 For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we *are* dust. 15 *As for* man, his days *are* as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. 16 For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. 17 But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that

fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; 18 To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.

Hitherto the psalmist had only looked back upon his own experiences and thence fetched matter for praise; here he looks abroad and takes notice of his favour to others also; for in them we should rejoice and give thanks for them, all the saints being fed at a common table and sharing in the same blessings.

I. Truly God is good to all (v. 6): He executes righteousness and judgment, not only for his own people, but for all that are oppressed; for even in common providence he is the patron of wronged innocence, and, one way or other, will plead the cause of those that are injured against their oppressors. It is his honour to humble the proud and help the helpless.

II. He is in a special manner good to Israel, to every Israelite indeed, that is of a clean and upright heart.

1. He has revealed himself and his grace to us (v. 7): He made known his ways unto Moses, and by him his acts to the children of Israel, not only by his rod to those who then lived, but by his pen to succeeding ages. Note, Divine revelation is one of the first and greatest of divine favours with which the church is blessed; for God restores us to himself by revealing himself to us, and gives us all good by giving us knowledge. He has made known his acts and his ways (that is, his nature, and the methods of his dealing with the children of men), that they may know both what to conceive of him and what to expect from him; so Dr. Hammond. Or by his ways we may understand his precepts, the way which he requires us to walk in; and by his acts, or designs (as the word signifies), his promises and purposes as to what he will do with us. Thus fairly does God deal with us.

2. He has never been rigorous and severe with us, but always tender, full of compassion, and ready to forgive.

(1.) It is in his nature to be so (v. 8): The Lord is merciful and gracious; this was his way which he made known unto Moses at Mount Horeb, when he thus proclaimed his name (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7), in answer to Moses's request (ch. xxxiii. 13), *I beseech thee, show me thy way, that I may know thee*. It is my way, says God, to pardon sin. [1.] He is not soon angry, v. 8. He is slow to anger, not extreme to mark what we do amiss nor ready to take advantage against us. He bears long with those that are very provoking, defers punishing, that he may give space to repent, and does not speedily execute the sentence of his law; and he could not be thus slow to anger if he were not plentiful in mercy, the very Father of mercies. [2.] He is not long angry; for (v. 9) he will not always chide, though we always offend and de-

serve chiding. Though he signify his displeasure against us for our sins by the rebukes of Providence, and the reproaches of our own consciences, and thus cause grief, yet he will have compassion, and will not always keep us in pain and terror, no, not for our sins, but, after the spirit of bondage, will give the spirit of adoption. How unlike are those to God who always chide, who take every occasion to chide, and never know when to cease! What would become of us if God should deal so with us? He will not keep his anger for ever against his own people, but will gather them with everlasting mercies, Isa. liv. 8; lvii. 16.

(2.) We have found him so; we, for our parts, must own that he has not dealt with us after our sins, v. 10. The scripture says a great deal of the mercy of God, and we may all set to our seal that it is true, that we have experienced it. If he had not been a God of patience, we should have been in hell long ago; but he has not rewarded us after our iniquities; so those will say who know what sin deserves. He has not inflicted the judgments which we have merited, nor deprived us of the comforts which we have forfeited, which should make us think the worse, and not the better, of sin; for God's patience should lead us to repentance, Rom. ii. 4.

3. He has pardoned our sins, not only my iniquity (v. 3), but our transgressions, v. 12. Though it is of our own benefit, by the pardoning mercy of God, that we are to take the comfort, yet of the benefit others have by it we must give him the glory. Observe, (1.) The transcendent riches of God's mercy (v. 11): As the heaven is high above the earth (so high that the earth is but a point to the vast expanse), so God's mercy is above the merits of those that fear him most, so much above and beyond them that there is no proportion at all between them; the greatest performances of man's duty cannot demand the least tokens of God's favour as a debt, and therefore all the seed of Jacob will join with him in owning themselves less than the least of all God's mercies, Gen. xxxii. 10. Observe, God's mercy is thus great towards those that fear him, not towards those that trifle with him. We must fear the Lord and his goodness. (2.) The fulness of his pardons, an evidence of the riches of his mercy (v. 12): As far as the east is from the west (which two quarters of the world are of greatest extent, because all known and inhabited, and therefore geographers that way reckon their longitudes) so far has he removed our transgressions from us, so that they shall never be laid to our charge, nor rise up in judgment against us. The sins of believers shall be remembered no more, shall not be mentioned unto them; they shall be sought for, and not found. If we thoroughly forsake them, God will thoroughly forgive them.

4. He has pitied our sorrows, v. 13, 14. Observe, (1.) Whom he pities—those that

fear him, that is, all good people, who in this world may become objects of pity on account of the grievances to which they are not only born, but born again. Or it may be understood of those who have not yet received the *spirit of adoption*, but are yet *trembling at his word*; those he *pities*, Jer. xxxi. 18, 20. (2.) How he *pities*—*as a father pities his children*, and does them good as there is occasion. God is a Father to those that fear him and owns them for his children, and he is tender of them as a father. The father *pities* his children that are weak in knowledge and instructs them, *pities* them when they are froward and bears with them, *pities* them when they are sick and comforts them (Isa. lxvi. 13), *pities* them when they have fallen and helps them up again, *pities* them when they have offended, and, upon their submission, forgives them, *pities* them when they are wronged and gives them redress; thus *the Lord pities those that fear him*. (3.) Why he *pities*—*for he knows our frame*. He has reason to know our frame, for he framed us; and, having himself made man of the dust, *he remembers that he is dust*, not only by constitution, but by sentence. *Dust thou art*. He considers the frailty of our bodies and the folly of our souls, how little we can do, and expects accordingly from us, how little we can bear, and lays accordingly upon us, in all which appears the tenderness of his compassion.

5. He has perpetuated his covenant-mercy and thereby provided relief for our frailty, v. 15—18. See here, (1.) How short man's life is and of what uncertain continuance. The lives even of great men and good men are so, and neither their greatness nor their goodness can alter the property of them: *As for man, his days are as grass*, which grows out of the earth, rises but a little way above it, and soon withers and returns to it again. See Isa. xl. 6, 7. Man, in his best estate, seems somewhat more than grass; he flourishes and looks gay; yet then he is but *like a flower of the field*, which, though distinguished a little from the grass, will wither with it. The flower of the garden is commonly more choice and valuable, and, though in its own nature withering, will last the longer for its being sheltered by the garden-wall and the gardener's care; but the flower of the field (to which life is here compared) is not only withering in itself, but exposed to the cold blasts, and liable to be cropped and trodden on by the beasts of the field. Man's life is not only wasting of itself, but its period may be anticipated by a thousand accidents. When the flower is in its perfection a blasting wind, unseen, unlooked for, *passes over it, and it is gone*; it hangs the head, drops the leaves, dwindles into the ground again, *and the place thereof*, which was proud of it, *now knows it no more*. Such a thing is man: God considers this, and pities him; let him consider it himself, and be humble, dead to

this world and thoughtful of another. (2.) How long and lasting God's mercy is to his people (v. 17, 18): it will continue longer than their lives, and will survive their present state. Observe, [1.] The description of those to whom this mercy belongs. They are such as fear God, such as are truly religious, from principle. *First*, They live a life of faith; *for they keep God's covenant*; having taken hold of it, they keep hold of it fast hold, and will not let it go. They keep it as a treasure, keep it as their portion, and would not for all the world part with it, for it is their life. *Secondly*, They live a life of obedience; *they remember his commandments to do them*, else they do not keep his covenant. Those only shall have the benefit of God's promises that make conscience of his precepts. See who those are that have a good memory, as well as a *good understanding* (cx. 10), those that *remember God's commandments*, not to talk of them, but to do them, and to be ruled by them. [2.] The continuance of the mercy which belongs to such as these; it will last them longer than their lives on earth, and therefore they need not be troubled though their lives be short, since death itself will be no abridgment, no infringement, of their bliss. God's mercy is better than life, for it will out-live it. *First*, To their souls, which are immortal; to them the mercy of the Lord is *from everlasting to everlasting*; from everlasting in the councils of it to everlasting in the consequences of it, in their election before the world was and their glorification when this world shall be no more; for they are predestinated to the *inheritance* (Eph. i. 11) and *look for the mercy of the Lord*, the Lord Jesus, unto eternal life. *Secondly*, To their seed, which shall be kept up to the end of time (cii. 28): *His righteousness*, the truth of his promise, shall be *unto children's children*; provided they tread in the steps of their predecessors' piety, and *keep his covenant*, as they did, then shall mercy be preserved to them, even to a *thousand generations*.

19 The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all. 20 Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. 21 Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure. 22 Bless the LORD, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.

Here is, I. The doctrine of universal providence laid down, v. 19. He has secured the happiness of his peculiar people by promise and covenant, but the order of mankind, and the world in general, he secures by com-

mon providence. *The Lord has a throne of his own, a throne of glory, a throne of government. He that made all rules all, and both by a word of power: He has prepared his throne, has fixed and established it that it cannot be shaken; he has afore-ordained all the measures of his government and does all according to the counsel of his own will. He has prepared it in the heavens, above us, and out of sight; for he holds back the face of his throne, and spreads a cloud upon it (Job xxvi. 9); yet he can himself judge through the dark cloud, Job xxii. 13. Hence the heavens are said to rule (Dan. iv. 26), and we are led to consider this by the influence which even the visible heavens have upon this earth, their dominion, Job xxxviii. 33; Gen. i. 16. But though God's throne is in heaven, and there he keeps his court, and thither we are to direct to him (Our Father who art in heaven), yet his kingdom rules over all. He takes cognizance of all the inhabitants, and all the affairs, of this lower world, and disposes all persons and things according to the counsel of his will, to his own glory (Dan. iv. 35): His kingdom rules over all kings and all kingdoms, and from it there is no exempt jurisdiction.*

II. The duty of universal praise inferred from it: if all are under God's dominion, all must do him homage.

1. Let the holy angels praise him (v. 20, 21): *Bless the Lord, you his angels; and again, Bless the Lord, all you his hosts, you ministers of his.* David had been stirring up himself and others to praise God, and here, in the close, he calls upon the angels to do it; not as if they needed any excitement of ours to praise God, they do it continually; but thus he expresses his high thoughts of God as worthy of the adorations of the holy angels, thus he quickens himself and others to the duty with this consideration, That it is the work of angels, and comforts himself in reference to his own weakness and defect in the performance of this duty with this consideration, That there is a world of holy angels who dwell in God's house and are still praising him. In short, the blessed angels are glorious attendants upon the blessed God. Observe, (1.) How well qualified they are for the post they are in. They are able; for they *excel in strength; they are mighty in strength* (so the word is); they are able to bring great things to pass, and to abide in their work without weariness. And they are as willing as they are able; they are willing to know their work; for they *hearken to the voice of his word; they stand expecting commission and instructions from their great Lord, and always behold his face* (Matt. xviii. 10), that they may take the first intimation of his mind. They are willing to do their work: They *do his commandments* (v. 20); they *do his pleasure* (v. 21); they dispute not any divine commands, but readily address themselves to the execution of them. Nor do

they delay, but fly swiftly: They *do his commandments at hearing, or as soon as they hear the voice of his word; so Dr. Hammond. To obey is better than sacrifice; for angels obey, but do not sacrifice.* (2.) What their service is. They are *his angels*, and *ministers of his*—his, for he made them, and made them for himself—his, for he employs them, though he does not need them—his, for he is their owner and Lord; they belong to him and he has them at his beck. All the creatures are his servants, but not as the angels that attend the presence of his glory. Soldiers, and seamen, and all good subjects, serve the king, but not as the courtiers do, the ministers of state and those of the household. [1.] The angels occasionally serve God in this lower world; they *do his commandments*, go on his errands (Dan. ix. 21), fight his battles (2 Kings vi. 17), and minister for the good of his people, Heb. i. 14. [2.] They *continually praise him* in the upper world; they began betimes to do it (Job xxxviii. 7), and it is still their business, from which they rest not *day nor night*, Rev. iv. 8. It is God's glory that he has such attendants, but more his glory that he neither needs them nor is benefited by them.

2. Let *all his works* praise him (v. 22), *all in all places of his dominion*; for, because they are his works, they are under his dominion, and they were made and are ruled that they may be unto him *for a name and a praise. All his works*, that is, all the children of men, in all parts of the world, let them all praise God; yea, and the inferior creatures too, which are God's works also; let them praise him objectively, though they cannot praise him actually, cxlv. 10. Yet all this shall not excuse David from praising God, but rather excite him to do it the more cheerfully, that he may bear a part in this concert; for he concludes, *Bless the Lord, O my soul!* as he began, v. 1. Blessing God and giving him glory must be the alpha and the omega of all our services. He began with *Bless the Lord, O my soul!* and, when he had penned and sung this excellent hymn to his honour, he does not say, Now, O my soul! thou hast blessed the Lord, sit down, and rest thee, but, *Bless the Lord, O my soul!* yet more and more. When we have done ever so much in the service of God, yet still we must stir up ourselves to do more. God's praise is a subject that will never be exhausted, and therefore we must never think this work done till we come to heaven, where it will be for ever in the doing.

PSALM CIV.

It is very probable that this psalm was penned by the same hand, and at the same time, as the former; for as that ended *th's be gins*, with "Bless the Lord, O my soul!" and concludes *with it too*. The style indeed is somewhat different, because the matter is so, the scope of the foregoing psalm was to celebrate the goodness of God and his tender mercy and compassion, to which a soft and sweet style was most agreeable; the scope of this is to celebrate his greatness, and majesty, and sovereign dominion, which ought to be done in the most stately lofty strains of poetry. David, in the former psalm, gave God the glory of his covenant—mercy and love to his own people; in this he gives him the glory of his works of creation and providence, his dominion

over, and his bounty to all the creatures. God is there praised as the God of grace, here as the God of nature. And this psalm is wholly bestowed on that subject; not as Ps. xix., which begins with it, but passes from it to the consideration of the divine law; nor as Ps. viii., which speaks of this but prophetically, and with an eye to Christ. This noble poem is thought by very competent judges greatly to excel, not only for piety and devotion (that is past dispute), but for sight of fancy, brightness of ideas, surprising turns, and all the beauties and ornaments of expression, the Greek and Latin poets upon any subject of this nature. Many great things the psalmist here gives God the glory of. I. The splendour of his majesty in the upper world, ver. 1-4. II. The creation of the sea and the dry land, ver. 5-9. III. The provision he makes for the maintenance of all the creatures according to their nature, ver. 10-18 and again ver. 27, 28. IV. The regular course of the sun and moon, ver. 19-24. V. The furniture of the sea, ver. 25, 26. VI. God's sovereign power over all the creatures, ver. 29-32. And, lastly, he concludes with a pleasant and firm resolution to continue praising God (ver. 33-35), with which we should heartily join in singing this psalm.

BLESS the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty. 2 Who coverest thyself with light as *with* a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain: 3 Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind: 4 Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire: 5 Who laid the foundations of the earth, *that* it should not be removed for ever. 6 Thou coveredst it with the deep as *with* a garment: the waters stood above the mountains. 7 At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away. 8 They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys unto the place which thou hast founded for them. 9 Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth.

When we are addressing ourselves to any religious service we must *stir up ourselves to take hold on God* in it (Isa. lxiv. 7); so David does here. "Come, my soul, where art thou? What art thou thinking of? Here is work to be done, good work, angels' work; set about it in good earnest; let all the powers and faculties be engaged and employed in it: *Bless the Lord, O my soul!*" In these verses,

I. The psalmist looks up to the divine glory shining in the upper world, of which, though it is one of the things not seen, faith is the evidence. With what reverence and holy awe does he begin his meditation with that acknowledgment: *O Lord my God! thou art very great!* It is the joy of the saints that he who is their God is a great God. The grandeur of the prince is the pride and pleasure of all his good subjects. The majesty of God is here set forth by various instances, alluding to the figure which great princes in their public appearances covet to make. Their equipage, compared with his (even of the eastern kings, who most affected pomp), is

but as the light of a glow-worm compared with that of the sun, when he goes forth in his strength. Princes appear great, 1. In their robes; and what are God's robes? *Thou art clothed with honour and majesty, v. 1.* God is seen in his works, and these proclaim him infinitely wise and good, and all that is great. *Thou coverest thyself with light as with a garment, v. 2.* God is *light* (1 John i. 5), the *Father of lights* (Jam. i. 17); he *dwells in light* (1 Tim. vi. 16); he clothes himself with it. The residence of his glory is in the highest heaven, that light which was created the first day, Gen. i. 3. Of all visible beings light comes nearest to the nature of a spirit, and therefore with that God is pleased to cover himself, that is, to reveal himself under that similitude, as men are seen in the clothes with which they cover themselves; and so only, for his face cannot be seen. 2. In their palaces or pavilions, when they take the field; and what is God's palace and his pavilion? *He stretches out the heavens like a curtain, v. 2.* So he did at first, when he made the firmament, which in the Hebrew has its name from its being expanded, or *stretched out*, Gen. i. 7. He made it to divide the waters as a curtain divides between two apartments. So he does still: he now *stretches out the heavens like a curtain*, keeps them upon the stretch, and they continue *to this day according to his ordinance*. The regions of the air are stretched out about the earth, like a curtain about a bed, to keep it warm, and drawn between us and the upper world, to break its dazzling light; for, though God *covers himself with light*, yet, in compassion to us, he *makes darkness his pavilion*. *Thick clouds are a covering to him.* The vastness of this pavilion may lead us to consider how great, how very great, he is that *fills heaven and earth*. He has his *chambers, his upper rooms* (so the word signifies), *the beams whereof he lays in the waters*, the waters that are above the firmament (v. 3), as he has *founded the earth upon the seas and floods*, the waters beneath the firmament. Though air and water are fluid bodies, yet, by the divine power, they are kept as tight and as firm in the place assigned them as a chamber is with beams and rafters. How great a God is he whose presence-chamber is thus reared, thus fixed! 3. In their coaches of state, with their stately horses, which add much to the magnificence of their entries; but God *makes the clouds his chariots*, in which he rides strongly, swiftly, and far above out of the reach of opposition, when at any time he will act by uncommon providences in the government of this world. He descended in a cloud, as in a chariot, to Mount Sinai, to give the law, and to Mount Tabor, to proclaim the gospel (Matt. xvii. 5), and he *walks* (a gentle pace indeed, yet stately) *upon the wings of the wind*. See xviii. 10, 11. He commands the winds, directs them as he pleases, and serves his own purposes by them. 4. In their

retinue or train of attendants; and here also God is very great, for (v. 4) he *makes his angels spirits*. This is quoted by the apostle (Heb. i. 7) to prove the pre-eminence of Christ above the angels. The angels are here said to be *his angels and his ministers*, for they are under his dominion and at his disposal; they are *winds, and a flame of fire*, that is, they appeared in wind and fire (so some), or they are as swift as winds, and pure as flames; or he *makes them spirits*, so the apostle quotes it. They are spiritual beings; and, whatever vehicles they may have proper to their nature, it is certain they have not bodies as we have. Being spirits, they are so much the further removed from the incumbrances of the human nature and so much the nearer allied to the glories of the divine nature. And they are bright, and quick, and ascending, as fire, as *a flame of fire*. In Ezekiel's vision they ran and returned like *a flash of lightning*, Ezek. i. 14. Thence they are called *seraphim—burners*. Whatever they are, they are what God made them, what he still makes them; they derive their being from him, having the being he gave them, are held in being by him, and he makes what use he pleases of them.

II. He looks down, and looks about, to the power of God shining in this lower world. He is not so taken up with the glories of his court as to neglect even the remotest of his territories; no, not the sea and dry land.

1. He has founded the earth, v. 5. Though he has *hung it upon nothing* (Job xxvi. 2), *ponderibus librata suis—balanced by its own weight*, yet it is as immovable as if it had been laid upon the surest foundations. He has built the earth upon her basis, so that though it has received a dangerous shock by the sin of man, and the malice of hell strikes at it, yet it *shall not be removed for ever*, that is, not till the end of time, when it must give way to the new earth. Dr. Hammond's paraphrase of this is worth noting: "God has fixed so strange a place for the earth, that, being a heavy body, one would think it should fall every minute; and yet, which way soever we would imagine it to stir, it must, contrary to the nature of such a body, fall upwards, and so can have no possible ruin but by tumbling into heaven."

2. He has set bounds to the sea; for that also is his. (1.) He brought it within bounds in the creation. At first the earth, which, being the more ponderous body, would subside of course, was *covered with the deep* (v. 6): *The waters were above the mountains*; and so it was unfit to be, as it was designed, a habitation for man; and therefore, on the third day, God said, *Let the waters under the heaven be gathered to one place, and let the dry land appear*, Gen. i. 9. This command of God is here called his *rebuke*, as if he gave it because he was displeased that the earth was thus covered with water and not fit for man to dwell on. Power went along with this

word, and therefore it is also called here *the voice of his thunder*, which is a mighty voice and produces strange effects, v. 7. *At thy rebuke*, as if they were made sensible that they were out of their place, *they fled; they hasted away* (they called, and not in vain, to the rocks and mountains to cover them), as it is said on another occasion (lxxvii. 16), *The waters saw thee, O God! the waters saw thee; they were afraid*. Even those fluid bodies received the impression of God's terror. *But was the Lord displeased against the rivers?* No; it was for the *salvation of his people*, Hab. iii. 8, 13. So here; God rebuked the waters for man's sake, to prepare room for him; *for men must not be made as the fishes of the sea* (Hab. i. 14); they must have air to breathe in. Immediately therefore, with all speed, the waters retired, v. 8. *They go over hill and dale* (as we say), *go up by the mountains and down by the valleys*; they will neither stop at the former nor lodge in the latter, but make the best of their way to the place which thou hast *founded for them*, and there they make their bed. Let the obsequiousness even of the unstable waters teach us obedience to the word and will of God; for shall man alone of all the creatures be obstinate? Let their retiring to and resting in the place assigned them teach us to acquiesce in the disposals of that wise providence which appoints us the bounds of our habitation. (2.) He keeps it within bounds, v. 9. The waters are forbidden to pass over the limits set them; they may not, and therefore they do not, *turn again to cover the earth*. Once they did, in Noah's flood, because God bade them, but never since, because he forbids them, having promised not to drown the world again. God himself glories in this instance of his power (Job xxxviii. 8, &c.) and uses it as an argument with us to fear him, Jer. v. 22. This, if duly considered, would keep the world in awe of the Lord and his goodness, That the waters of the sea would soon cover the earth if God did not restrain them.

10 He sendeth the springs into the valleys, *which* run among the hills. 11 They give drink to every beast of the field: the wild asses quench their thirst. 12 By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, *which* sing among the branches. 13 He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works. 14 He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth; 15 And wine *that* maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make *his* face to shine, and bread *which* strengtheneth man's heart. 16 The trees of the LORD are

full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted; 17 Where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir trees are her house. 18 The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats; and the rocks for the conies.

Having given glory to God as the powerful protector of this earth, in saving it from being deluged, here he comes to acknowledge him as its bountiful benefactor, who provides conveniences for all the creatures.

I. He provides fresh water for their drink: *He sends the springs into the valleys*, v. 10. There is water enough indeed in the sea, that is, enough to drown us, but not one drop to refresh us, be we ever so thirsty—it is all so salt; and therefore God has graciously provided water fit to drink. Naturalists dispute about the origin of fountains; but, whatever are their second causes, here is their first cause; it is God that sends the springs into the brooks, which walk by easy steps between the hills, and receive increase from the rain-water that descends from them. These give drink, not only to man, and those creatures that are immediately useful to him, but to every beast of the field (v. 11); for where God has given life he provides a livelihood and takes care of all the creatures. Even the wild asses, though untameable and therefore of no use to man, are welcome to quench their thirst; and we have no reason to grudge it them, for we are better provided for, though born like the wild ass's colt. We have reason to thank God for the plenty of fair water with which he has provided the habitable part of his earth, which otherwise would not be habitable. That ought to be reckoned a great mercy the want of which would be a great affliction; and the more common it is the greater mercy it is. *Usus communis aquarum—water is common for all.*

II. He provides food convenient for them, both for man and beast: *The heavens drop fatness; they hear the earth*, but God hears them, Hos. ii. 21. *He waters the hills from his chambers* (v. 13), from those chambers spoken of (v. 3), the beams of which he lays in the waters, those store-chambers, the clouds that distil fruitful showers. The hills that are not watered by the rivers, as Egypt was by the Nile, are watered by the rain from heaven, which is called the river of God (lxv. 9), as Canaan was, Deut. xi. 11, 12. Thus the earth is satisfied with the fruit of his works, either with the rain it drinks in (the earth knows when it has enough; it is a pity that any man should not) or with the products it brings forth. It is a satisfaction to the earth to bear the fruit of God's works for the benefit of man, for thus it answers the end of its creation. The food which God brings forth out of the earth (v. 14) is the fruit of his works, which the earth is satisfied with. Observe

how various and how valuable its products are.

1. For the cattle there is grass, and the beasts of prey, that live not on grass, feed on those that do; for man there is herb, a better sort of grass (and a dinner of herbs and roots is not to be despised); nay, he is furnished with wine, and oil, and bread, v. 15. We may observe here, concerning our food, that which will help to make us both humble and thankful. (1.) To make us humble let us consider that we have a necessary dependence upon God for all the supports of this life (we live upon alms; we are at his finding, for our own hands are not sufficient for us),—that our food comes all out of the earth, to remind us whence we ourselves were taken and whither we must return,—and that therefore we must not think to live by bread alone, for that will feed the body only, but must look into the word of God for the meat that endures to eternal life. Let us also consider that we are in this respect fellow-commoners with the beasts; the same earth, the same spot of ground, that brings grass for the cattle, brings corn for man. (2.) To make us thankful let us consider, [1.] That God not only provides for us, but for our servants. The cattle that are of use to man are particularly taken care of; grass is made to grow in great abundance for them, when the young lions, that are not for the service of man, often lack and suffer hunger. [2.] That our food is nigh us, and ready to us. Having our habitation on the earth, there we have our storehouse, and depend not on the merchantships that bring food from afar, Prov. xxxi. 14. [3.] That we have even from the products of the earth, not only for necessity, but for ornament and delight, so good a Master do we serve. First, Does nature call for something to support it, and repair its daily decays? Here is bread, which strengthens man's heart, and is therefore called the staff of life; let none who have that complain of want. Secondly, Does nature go further, and covet something pleasant? Here is wine, that makes glad the heart, refreshes the spirits, and exhilarates them, when it is soberly and moderately used, that we may not only go through our business, but go through it cheerfully. It is a pity that that should be abused to overcharge the heart, and unfit men for their duty, which was given to revive their heart and quicken them in their duty. Thirdly, Is nature yet more humoursome, and does it crave something for ornament too? Here is that also out of the earth—oil to make the face to shine, that the countenance may not only be cheerful but beautiful, and we may be the more acceptable to one another.

2. Nay, the divine providence not only furnishes animals with their proper food, but vegetables also with theirs (v. 16): The trees of the Lord are full of sap, not only men's trees, which they take care of and have an eye to, in their orchards, and parks, and other

enclosures, but God's trees, which grow in the wildernesses, and are taken care of only by his providence; they are full of sap and want no nourishment. Even the cedars of Lebanon, an open forest, though they are high and bulky, and require a great deal of sap to feed them, have enough from the earth; they are trees which he has planted, and which therefore he will protect and provide for. We may apply this to the trees of righteousness, which are the planting of the Lord, planted in his vineyard; these are full of sap, for what God plants he will water, and those that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God, xcii. 13.

III. He takes care that they shall have suitable habitations to dwell in. To men God has given discretion to build for themselves and for the cattle that are serviceable to them; but there are some creatures which God more immediately provides a settlement for. 1. The birds. Some birds, by instinct, make their nests in the bushes near rivers (v. 12): *By the springs that run among the hills some of the fowls of heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches.* They sing, according to their capacity, to the honour of their Creator and benefactor, and their singing may shame our silence. Our heavenly Father feeds them (Matt. vi. 26), and therefore they are easy and cheerful, and take no thought for the morrow. The birds being made to fly above the earth (as we find, Gen. i. 20), they make their nests on high, in the tops of trees (v. 17); it should seem as if nature had an eye to this in planting the cedars of Lebanon, that they might be receptacles for the birds. Those that fly heavenward shall not want resting-places. The stork is particularly mentioned; the fir-trees, which are very high, are her house, her castle. 2. The smaller sort of beasts (v. 18): *The wild goats, having neither strength nor swiftness to secure themselves, are guided by instinct to the high hills, which are a refuge to them; and the rabbits, which are also helpless animals, find shelter in the rocks, where they can set the beasts of prey at defiance.* Does God provide thus for the inferior creatures; and will he not himself be a refuge and dwelling-place to his own people?

19 He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down. 20 Thou makest darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. 21 The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God. 22 The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens. 23 Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening. 24 O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made

them all: the earth is full of thy riches. 25 So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. 26 There go the ships: there is that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein. 27 These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. 28 That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good. 29 Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. 30 Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.

We are here taught to praise and magnify God,

I. For the constant revolutions and succession of day and night, and the dominion of sun and moon over them. The heathen were so affected with the light and influence of the sun and moon, and their serviceableness to the earth, that they worshipped them as deities; and therefore the scripture takes all occasions to show that the gods they worshipped are the creatures and servants of the true God (v. 19): *He appointed the moon for seasons, for the measuring of the months, the directing of the seasons for the business of the husbandman, and the governing of the tides.* The full and change, the increase and decrease, of the moon, exactly observe the appointment of the Creator; so does the sun, for he keeps as punctually to the time and place of his going down as if he were an intellectual being and knew what he did. God herein consults the comfort of man. 1. The shadows of the evening befriend the repose of the night (v. 20): *Thou makest darkness and it is night*, which, though black, contributes to the beauty of nature, and is as a foil to the light of the day; and under the protection of the night all the beasts of the forest creep forth to feed, which they are afraid to do in the day, God having put the fear and dread of man upon every beast of the earth (Gen. ix. 2), which contributes as much to man's safety as to his honour. See how nearly allied those are to the disposition of the wild beasts who wait for the twilight (Job xxiv. 15) and have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; and compare to this the danger of ignorance and melancholy, which are both as darkness to the soul; when, in either of those ways, it is night, then all the beasts of the forest creep forth. Satan's temptations then assault us and have advantage against us. Then the young lions roar after their prey; and, as naturalists tell us, their roaring terrifies the timorous beasts so that they have not strength nor spirit to escape from them,

which otherwise they might do, and so they become an easy prey to them. They are said to *seek their meat from God*, because it is not prepared for them by the care and forecast of man, but more immediately by the providence of God. The roaring of the young lions, like the crying of the young ravens, is interpreted *asking their meat of God*. Does God put this construction upon the language of mere nature, even in venomous creatures? and shall he not much more interpret favourably the language of grace in his own people, though it be weak and broken, *groanings which cannot be uttered*? 2. The light of the morning befriends the business of the day (v. 22, 23): *The sun arises* (for, as he *knows his going down*, so, thanks be to God, he knows his rising again), and then the wild beasts betake themselves to their rest; even they have some society among them, for they *gather themselves together and lay down in their dens*, which is a great mercy to the children of men, that while they are abroad, as becomes honest travellers, between sun and sun, care is taken that they shall not be set upon by wild beasts, for they are then drawn out of the field, and the sluggard shall have no ground to excuse himself from the business of the day with this, That there is a *lion in the way*. Therefore then *man goes forth to his work and to his labour*. The beasts of prey creep forth with fear; man goes forth with boldness, as one that has dominion. The beasts creep forth to spoil and do mischief; man goes forth to work and do good. There is the work of every day, which is to be done in its day, which man must apply to every morning (for the lights are set up for us to work by, not to play by) and which he must stick to till evening; it will be time enough to rest when the night comes, in which no man can work.

II. For the replenishing of the ocean (v. 25, 26): *As the earth is full of God's riches*, well stocked with animals, and those well provided for, so that it is seldom that any creature dies merely for want of food, *so is this great and wide sea*, which seems a useless part of the globe, at least not to answer the room it takes up; yet God has appointed it its place and made it serviceable to man both for navigation (*there go the ships*, in which goods are conveyed, to countries vastly distant, speedily and much more cheaply than by land-carriage) and also to be his storehouse for fish. God made not the sea in vain, any more than the earth; he made it to be inherited, for there are things swimming innumerable, both small and great animals, which serve for man's dainty food. The whale is particularly mentioned in the history of the creation (Gen. i. 21) and is here called the *leviathan*, as Job xli. 1. He is made to *play in the sea*; he has nothing to do, as man has, who *goes forth to his work*; he has nothing to fear, as the beasts have, that lie down in their dens; and therefore he plays with

the waters. It is a pity that any of the children of men, who have nobler powers and were made for nobler purposes, should live as if they were sent into the world, like *leviathan* into the waters, to play therein, spending all their time in pastime. The *leviathan* is said to *play in the waters*, because he is so well armed against all assaults that he sets them at defiance and *laughs at the shaking of a spear*, Job xli. 29.

III. For the seasonable and plentiful provision which is made for all the creatures, v. 27, 28. 1. God is a bountiful benefactor to them: *He gives them their meat; he opens his hand and they are filled with good*. He supports the armies both of heaven and earth. Even the meanest creatures are not below his cognizance. He is open-handed in the gifts of his bounty, and is a great and good house-keeper that provides for so large a family. 2. They are patient expectants from him: *They all wait upon him*. They seek their food, according to the natural instinct God has put into them and in the proper season for it, and affect not any other food, or at any other time, than nature has ordained. They do their part for the obtaining of it: what God gives them *they gather*, and expect not that Providence should put it into their mouths; and what they gather they are satisfied with — *they are filled with good*. They desire no more than what God sees fit for them, which may shame our murmurings, and discontent, and dissatisfaction with our lot.

IV. For the absolute power and sovereign dominion which he has over all the creatures, by which every species is still continued, though the individuals of each are daily dying and dropping off. See here, 1. All the creatures perishing (v. 29): *Thou hidest thy face, withdrawest thy supporting power, thy supplying bounty, and they are troubled immediately*. Every creature has as necessary a dependence upon God's favours as every saint is sensible he has and therefore says with David (Ps. xxx. 7), *Thou hidest hide thy face and I was troubled*. God's displeasure against this lower world for the sin of man is the cause of all the vanity and burden which the whole creation groans under. *Thou takest away their breath*, which is in thy hand, and then, and not till then, *they die and return to their dust*, to their first principles. The *spirit of the beast, which goes downward*, is at God's command, as well as *the spirit of a man, which goes upward*. The death of cattle was one of the plagues of Egypt, and is particularly taken notice of in the drowning of the world. 2. All preserved notwithstanding, in a succession (v. 30): *Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created*. The same spirit (that is, the same divine will and power) by which they were all created at first still preserves the several sorts of creatures in their being, and place, and usefulness; so that, though one generation of them passes away, another comes, and from time to time they are created;

new ones rise up instead of the old ones, and this is a continual creation. Thus the *face of the earth is renewed from day to day by the light of the sun* (which beautifies it anew every morning), from year to year by the products of it, which enrich it anew every spring and put quite another face upon it from what it had all winter. The world is as full of creatures as if none died, for the place of those that die is filled up. This (the Jews say) is to be applied to the resurrection, which every spring is an emblem of, when a new world rises out of the ashes of the old one.

In the midst of this discourse the psalmist breaks out into wonder at the works of God (v. 24): *O Lord! how manifold are thy works!* They are numerous, they are various, of many kinds, and many of every kind; and yet *in wisdom hast thou made them all*. When men undertake many works, and of different kinds, commonly some of them are neglected and not done with due care; but God's works, though many and of very different kinds, are all made in wisdom and with the greatest exactness; there is not the least flaw nor defect in them. The works of art, the more closely they are looked upon with the help of microscopes, the more rough they appear; the works of nature through these glasses appear more fine and exact. They are all made in wisdom, for they are all made to answer the end they were designed to serve, the good of the universe, in order to the glory of the universal Monarch.

31 The glory of the LORD shall endure for ever: the LORD shall rejoice in his works. 32 He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth: he toucheth the hills, and they smoke. 33 I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. 34 My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD. 35 Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless thou the LORD, O my soul. Praise ye the LORD.

The psalmist concludes this meditation with speaking,

I. Praise to God, which is chiefly intended in the psalm.

1. He is to be praised, (1.) As a great God, and a God of matchless perfection: *The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever, v. 31.* It shall endure to the end of time in his works of creation and providence; it shall endure to eternity in the felicity and adorations of saints and angels. Man's glory is fading; God's glory is everlasting. Creatures change, but with the Creator there is no variableness. (2.) As a gracious God: *The Lord shall rejoice in his works.* He continues that complacency in the products of his own wisdom

and goodness which he had when he *saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good, and rested the seventh day.* We often do that which, upon the review, we cannot rejoice in, but are displeased at, and wish undone again, blaming our own management. But God always *rejoices in his works*, because they are all done in wisdom. We regret our bounty and beneficence, but God never does; he rejoices in the works of his grace: *his gifts and callings are without repentance.* (3.) As a God of almighty power (v. 32): *He looks on the earth, and it trembles*, as unable to bear his frowns—trembles, as Sinai did, *at the presence of the Lord.* He touches the hills, and they smoke. The volcanoes, or burning mountains, such as *Ætna*, are emblems of the power of God's wrath fastening upon proud unhumiliated sinners. If an angry look and a touch have such effects, what will the weight of his heavy hand do and the operations of his outstretched arm? *Who knows the power of his anger?* Who then dares set it at defiance? God rejoices in his works because they are all so observant of him; and he will in like manner take pleasure in those that fear him and that tremble at his word.

2. The psalmist will himself be much in praising him (v. 33): *"I will sing unto the Lord, unto my God,* will praise him as *Jehovah*, the Creator, and as *my God*, a God in covenant with me, and this not now only, but *as long as I live, and while I have my being.*" Because we have our being from God, and depend upon him for the support and continuance of it, as long as we live and have our being we must continue to praise God; and when we have no life, no being, on earth, we hope to have a better life and better being in a better world and there to be doing this work in a better manner and in better company.

II. Joy to himself (v. 34): *My meditation of him shall be sweet*; it shall be fixed and close; it shall be affecting and influencing; and therefore it shall be sweet. Thoughts of God will then be most pleasing, when they are most powerful. Note, Divine meditation is a very sweet duty to all that are sanctified: *"I will be glad in the Lord*; it shall be a pleasure to me to praise him; I will be glad of all opportunities to set forth his glory; and I will rejoice in the Lord always and in him only." All my joys shall centre in him, and in him they shall be full.

III. Terror to the wicked (v. 35): *Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth; and let the wicked be no more.* 1. Those that oppose the God of power, and fight against him, will certainly be consumed; none can prosper that harden themselves against the Almighty. 2. Those that rebel against the light of such convincing evidence of God's being, and refuse to serve him whom all the creatures serve, will justly be consumed. Those that make that earth to groan under the burden of their impieties which God thus fills with his riches deserve to be consumed out of it,

and that it should spue them out. 3. Those that heartily desire to praise God themselves cannot but have a holy indignation at those that blaspheme and dishonour him, and a holy satisfaction in the prospect of their destruction and the honour that God will get to himself upon them. Even this ought to be the matter of their praise: "While sinners are consumed out of the earth, let my soul bless the Lord that I am not cast away with the workers of iniquity, but distinguished from them by the special grace of God. When the wicked are no more I hope to be praising God world without end; and therefore, Praise you the Lord; let all about me join with me in praising God. *Hallelujah*; sing praise to Jehovah." This is the first time that we meet with *Hallelujah*; and it comes in here upon occasion of the destruction of the wicked; and the last time we meet with it is upon a similar occasion. When the New-Testament Babylon is consumed, this is the burden of the song, *Hallelujah*, Rev. xix. 1, 3, 4, 6.

PSALM CV.

Some of the psalms of praise are very short, others very long, to teach us that, in our devotions, we should be more observant how our hearts work than how the time passes and neither overstretch ourselves by coveting to be long nor ever-tint ourselves by coveting to be short, but either the one or the other as we find in our hearts to pray. This is a long psalm; the general scope is the same with most of the psalms, to set forth the glory of God, but the subject-matter is particular. Every time we come to the throne of grace we may, if we please, furnish ourselves out of the word of God (out of the history of the New Testament, as this out of the history of the Old) with new songs, with fresh thoughts so copious, so various, so inexhaustible is the subject. In the foregoing psalm we are taught to praise God for his wondrous works of common providence with reference to the world in general. In this we are directed to praise him for his special favours to his church. We find the first eleven verses of this psalm in the beginning of that psalm which David delivered to Asaph to be used (as it should seem) in the daily service of the sanctuary when the ark was fixed in the place he had prepared for it, by which it appears both who penned it and when and upon what occasion it was penned, 1 Chron. xvi. 7, &c. David by it designed to instruct his people in the obligations they lay under to adhere faithfully to their holy religion. Here is the preface (ver. 1—7) and the history itself in several articles. I. God's covenant with the patriarch ver. 8—11. II. His care of them while they were strangers, ver. 12—15. III. His raising up Joseph to be the shepherd and stone of Israel, ver. 16—22. IV. The increase of Israel in Egypt and their deliverance out of Egypt, ver. 23—33. V. The care he took of them in the wilderness and their settlement in Canaan, ver. 39—45. In singing this we must give to God the glory of his wisdom and power, his goodness and faithfulness, must look upon ourselves as concerned in the affairs of the Old-Testament church, both because to it were committed the oracles of God, which are our treasure, and because out of it Christ arose, and these things happened to it for examples.

GIVE thanks unto the LORD; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people. 2 Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works. 3 Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD. 4 Seek the LORD, and his strength: seek his face evermore. 5 Remember his marvellous works that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth; 6 O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen. 7 He is the LORD our God: his judgments are in all the earth.

Our devotion is here warmly excited; and we are stirred up, that we may stir up ourselves to praise God. Observe,

I. The duties to which we are here called and they are many, but the tendency of them all is to give unto God the glory due unto his name. 1. We must give thanks to him, as one who has always been our bountiful benefactor and requires only that we give him thanks for his favours—poor returns for rich receivings. 2. Call upon his name, as one whom you depend upon for further favours. Praying for further mercies is accepted as an acknowledgment of former mercies. Because he has inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him. 3. Make known his deeds (v. 1), that others may join with you in praising him. Talk of all his wondrous works (v. 2), as we talk of things that we are full of, and much affected with, and desire to fill others with. God's wondrous works ought to be the subject of our familiar discourses with our families and friends, and we should talk of them as we sit in the house and as we go by the way (Deut. vi. 7), not merely for entertainment, but for the exciting of devotion and the encouraging of our own and others' faith and hope in God. Even sacred things may be the matter of common talk, provided it be with due reverence. 4. Sing psalms to God's honour, as those that rejoice in him, and desire to testify that joy for the encouragement of others and to transmit it to posterity, as memorable things anciently were handed down by songs, when writing was scarce. 5. Glory in his holy name; let those that are disposed to glory not boast of their own accomplishments and achievements, but of their acquaintance with God and their relation to him, Jer. ix. 23, 24. Praise you his holy name, so some; but it comes all to one, for in glorying in him we give glory to him. 6. Seek him; place your happiness in him, and then pursue that happiness in all the ways that he has appointed. Seek the Lord and his strength, that is, the ark of his strength seek him in the sanctuary, in the way where in he has appointed us to seek him. Seek his strength, that is, his grace, the strength of his Spirit to work in you that which is good, which we cannot do but by strength derived from him, for which he will be enquired of. Seek the Lord and be strengthened; so divers ancient versions read it. Those that would be strengthened in the inward man must fetch in strength from God by faith and prayer. Seek his strength, and then seek his face; for by his strength we hope to prevail with him for his favour, as Jacob did, Hos. xii. 3. "Seek his face evermore; seek to have his favour to eternity, and therefore continue seeking it to the end of the time of your probation. Seek it while you live in this world, and you shall have it while you live in the other world, and even there shall be for ever seeking it in an infinite progression, and yet be for ever satisfied in it." 7. Let the hearts

of those rejoice that do seek him (v. 3); for they have chosen well, are well fixed, and well employed, and they may be sure that their labour will not be in vain, for he will not only be found, but he will be found the rewarder of those that diligently seek him. If those have reason to rejoice that seek the Lord, much more those that have found him.

II. Some arguments to quicken us to these duties. 1. "Consider both what he has said and what he has done to engage us for ever to him. You will see yourselves under all possible obligations to give thanks to him, and call upon his name, if you remember the wonders which should make deep and durable impressions upon you,—the wonders of his providence which he has wrought for you and those who are gone before you, the marvellous works that he has done, which will be had in everlasting remembrance with the thoughtful and with the grateful,—the wonders of his law, which he has written to you, and entrusted you with, the judgments of his mouth, as well as the judgments of his hand," v. 5. 2. "Consider the relation you stand in to him (v. 6): You are the seed of Abraham his servant; you are born in his house, and being thereby entitled to the privilege of his servants, protection and provision, you are also bound to do the duty of servants, to attend your Master, consult his honour, obey his commands, and do what you can to advance his interests. You are the children of Jacob his chosen, and are chosen and beloved for the fathers' sake, and therefore ought to tread in the steps of those whose honours you inherit. You are the children of godly parents; do not degenerate. You are God's church upon earth, and, if you do not praise him, who should?" 3. Consider your interest in him: He is the Lord our God, v. 7. We depend upon him, are devoted to him, and from him our expectation is. Should not a people seek unto their God (Isa. viii. 19) and praise their God? Dan. v. 4. He is Jehovah our God. He that is our God is self-existent and self-sufficient, has an irresistible power and incontestable sovereignty: His judgments are in all the earth; he governs the whole world in wisdom, and gives law to all nations, even to those that know him not. The earth is full of the proofs of his power.

8 He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations. 9 Which covenant he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac; 10 And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant: 11 Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance: 12 When there were but a few men in number: yea, very few, and strangers in it. 13 When

they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people; 14 He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reproved kings for their sakes; 15 Saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm. 16 Moreover he called for a famine upon the land: he brake the whole staff of bread. 17 He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant: 18 Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron; 19 Until the time that his word came: the word of the Lord tried him. 20 The king sent and loosed him, even the ruler of the people, and let him go free. 21 He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance: 22 To bind his princes at his pleasure; and teach his senators wisdom. 23 Israel also came into Egypt; and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham. 24 And he increased his people greatly; and made them stronger than their enemies.

We are here taught, in praising God, to look a great way back, and to give him the glory of what he did for his church in former ages, especially when it was in the founding and forming, which those in its latter ages enjoy the benefit of and therefore should give thanks for. Doubtless we may fetch as proper matter for praise from the histories of the gospels, and the acts of the apostles, which relate the birth of the Christian church, as the psalmist here does from the histories of Genesis and Exodus, which relate the birth of the Jewish church; and our histories greatly outshine theirs. Two things are here made the subject of praise:—

I. God's promise to the patriarchs, that great promise that he would give to their seed the land of Canaan for an inheritance, which was a type of the promise of eternal life made in Christ to all believers. In all the marvellous works which God did for Israel he remembered his covenant (v. 8) and he will remember it for ever; it is the word which he commanded to a thousand generations. See here the power of the promise; it is the word which he commanded and which will take effect. See the perpetuity of the promise; it is commanded to a thousand generations, and the entail of it shall not be cut off. In the parallel place it is expressed as our duty (1 Chron. xvi. 15), Be you mindful always of his covenant. God will not forget it and therefore we must not. The promise is here called a covenant, because there was something required on man's part as the condition of the promise. Observe, 1. The persons

with whom this covenant was made—with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, grandfather, father, and son, all eminent believers, Heb. xi. 8, 9. 2. The ratifications of the covenant; it was made sure by all that is sacred. Is that sure which is sworn to? It is his oath to Isaac and to Abraham. See to whom God *swore by himself*, Heb. vi. 13, 14. Is that sure which has passed into a law? He *confirmed the same for a law*, a law never to be repealed. Is that sure which is reduced to a mutual contract and stipulation? This is confirmed for an *everlasting covenant*, inviolable. 3. The covenant itself: *Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan*, v. 11. The patriarchs had a right to it, not by providence, but by promise; and their seed should be put in possession of it, not by the common ways of settling nations, but by miracles; God will give it to them himself, as it were with his own hand; it shall be given to them as their lot which God assigns them and measures out to them, as *the lot of their inheritance*, a sure title, by virtue of their birth; it shall come to them by descent, not by purchase, by the favour of God, and not any merit of their own. Heaven is the inheritance we have obtained, Eph. i. 11: *And this is the promise which God has promised us* (as Canaan was the promise he promised them), *even eternal life*, 1 John ii. 25; Tit. i. 2.

II. His providences concerning the patriarchs while they were waiting for the accomplishment of this promise, which represent to us the care God takes of his people in this world, while they are yet on this side the heavenly Canaan; for these things *happened unto them for examples and encouragements* to all the heirs of promise, that live by faith as they did.

1. They were wonderfully protected and sheltered, and (as the Jewish masters express it) *gathered under the wings of the divine Majesty*. This is accounted for, v. 12—15. Here we may observe,

(1.) How they were exposed to injuries from men. To the three renowned patriarchs, Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, God's promises were very rich; again and again he told them he would be their God; but his performances in this world were so little proportionable that, if he had not *prepared for them a city in the other world*, he would have been *ashamed to be called their God* (see Heb. xi. 16), because he was always generous; and yet even in this world he was not wanting to them, but that he might appear, to do uncommon things for them, he exercised them with uncommon trials. [1.] They were few, very few. Abraham was called alone (Isa. li. 2); he had but two sons, and one of them he cast out; Isaac had but two, and one of them was forced for many years to flee from his country; Jacob had more, but some of them, instead of being a defence to him, exposed him, when (as he himself pleads, Gen.

xxxiv. 30) he was but few in number, and therefore might easily be destroyed by the natives, he and his house. God's chosen are but a little flock, few, very few, and yet upheld. [2.] They were strangers, and therefore were the most likely to be abused and to meet with strange usage, and the less able to help themselves. Their religion made them to be looked upon as strangers (1 Pet. iv. 4) and to be hooted at as *speckled birds* (Jer. xii. 9). Though the whole land was theirs by promise, yet they were so far from producing and pleading their grant that they *confessed themselves strangers in it*, Heb. xi. 13. [3.] They were unsettled (v. 13): *They went from one nation to another*, from one part of that land to another (for it was then in the holding and occupation of divers nations, Gen. xii. 8; xiii. 3, 18); nay, *from one kingdom to another people*, from Canaan to Egypt, from Egypt to the land of the Philistines, which could not but weaken and expose them; yet they were forced to it by famine. Note, Though frequent removals are neither desirable nor commendable, yet sometimes there is a just and necessary occasion for them, and they may be the lot of some of the best men.

(2.) How they were guarded by the special providence of God, the wisdom and power of which were the more magnified by their being so many ways exposed, v. 14, 15. They were not able to help themselves and yet [1.] No men were suffered to wrong them, but even those that hated them, and would gladly have done them a mischief, had their hands tied, and could not do what they would. This may refer to Gen. xxxv. 5, where we find that *the terror of God* (an unaccountable restraint) *was upon the cities that were round about them*, so that, though provoked, they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob. [2.] Even crowned heads, that did offer to wrong them, were not only checked and chidden for it, but controlled and baffled. *He reproved kings for their sakes in dreams and visions*, saying, "*Touch not my anointed*"; it is at your peril if you do, nay, it shall not be in your power to do it; *do my prophets no harm*." Pharaoh king of Egypt was plagued (Gen. xii. 17) and Abimelech king of Gerar was sharply rebuked (Gen. xx. 6) for doing wrong to Abraham. Note, *First*, Even kings themselves are liable to God's rebukes if they do wrong. *Secondly*, God's prophets are his anointed, for they have the unction of the Spirit, that oil of gladness, 1 John ii. 27. *Thirdly*, Those that offer to touch God's prophets, with design to harm them, may expect to hear of it one way or other. God is jealous for his prophets; *whoso touches them touches the apple of his eye*. *Fourthly*, Even those that touch the prophets, nay, that kill the prophets (as many did), cannot do them any harm, any real harm. *Lastly*, God's anointed prophets are dearer to him than anointed kings themselves. Jeroboam's hand

was withered when it was stretched out against a prophet.

2. They were wonderfully provided for and supplied. And here also, (1.) They were reduced to great extremity. Even in Canaan, the land of promise, *he called for a famine*, v. 16. Note, All judgments are at God's call, and no place is exempt from their visitation and jurisdiction when God sends them forth with commission: To try the faith of the patriarchs, *God broke the whole staff of bread*, even in that good land, that they might plainly see God designed them a better country than that was. (2.) God graciously took care for their relief. It was in obedience to his precept, and in dependence upon his promise, that they were now sojourners in Canaan, and therefore he could not in honour suffer any evil to befall them or any good thing to be wanting to them. As he restrained one Pharaoh from doing them wrong, so he raised up another to do them a kindness, by preferring and entrusting Joseph, of whose story we have here an abstract. He was to be the shepherd and stone of Israel and to save that holy seed alive, Gen. xlix. 24; 1. 20. In order to this, [1.] He was humbled, greatly humbled (v. 17, 18): *God sent a man before them, even Joseph*. Many years before the famine began, he was sent before them, to nourish them in the famine; so vast are the foresights and forecasts of Providence, and so long its reaches. But in what character did *he go to Egypt* who was to provide for the reception of the church there? He went not in quality of an ambassador, no, nor so much as a factor or commissary; but *he was sold thither for a servant*, a slave for term of life, without any prospect of being ever set at liberty. This was low enough, and, one would think, set him far enough from any probability of being great. And yet he was brought lower; he was made a prisoner (v. 18): *His feet they hurt with fetters*. Being unjustly charged with a crime no less heinous than a rape upon his mistress, the iron entered into his soul, that is, was very painful to him; and the false accusation which was the cause of his imprisonment did in a special manner grieve him, and went to his heart; yet all this was the way to his preferment. [2.] He was exalted, highly exalted. He continued a prisoner, neither tried nor bailed, until the time appointed of God for his release (v. 19), when *his word came*, that is, his interpretations of dreams came to pass, and the report thereof came to Pharaoh's ears by the chief butler. And then *the word of the Lord cleared him*; that is, the power God gave him to foretell things to come rolled away the reproach his mistress had loaded him with; for it could not be thought that God would give such a power to so bad a man as he was represented to be. *God's word tried him*, tried his faith and patience, and then it came in power to give command for his release. There is a time

set when God's word will come for the comfort of all that trust in it, Hab. ii. 3. *At the end it shall speak, and not lie*. God gave the word, and then *the king sent and loosed him*; for the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord. Pharaoh, finding him to be a favourite of Heaven, *First*, Discharged him from his imprisonment (v. 20): *He let him go free*. God has often, by wonderful turns of providence, pleaded the cause of oppressed innocence. Secondly, He advanced him to the highest posts of honour, v. 21, 22. He made him lord high chamberlain of his household (*he made him lord of his house*); nay, he put him into the office of lord-treasurer, *the ruler of all his substance*. He made him prime-minister of state, lord-president of his council, to command his princes at his pleasure and teach them wisdom, and general of his forces. According to thy word shall all my people be ruled, Gen. xli. 40, 43, 44. He made him lord chief justice, to judge even his senators and punish those that were disobedient. In all this Joseph was designed to be, 1. A father to the church that then was, to save the house of Israel from perishing by the famine. He was made great, that he might do good, especially in the household of faith. 2. A figure of Christ that was to come, who, because he humbled himself and took upon him the form of a servant, was highly exalted, and has all judgment committed to him. Joseph being thus sent before, and put into a capacity of maintaining all his father's house, *Israel also came into Egypt* (v. 23), where he and all his were very honourably and comfortably provided for many years. Thus the New-Testament church has a place provided for her even in the wilderness, where *she is nourished for a time, times, and half a time*, Rev. xii. 14. Verily she shall be fed.

3. They were wonderfully multiplied, according to the promise made to Abraham that his seed should be as the sand of the sea for multitude, v. 24. In Egypt *he increased his people greatly*; they multiplied like fishes, so that in a little time they became stronger than their enemies and formidable to them. Pharaoh took notice of it. Exod. i. 9, *The children of Israel are more and mightier than we*. When God pleases a little one shall become a thousand; and God's promises, though they work slowly, work surely.

25 He turned their heart to hate his people, to deal subtilly with his servants. 26 He sent Moses his servant; and Aaron whom he had chosen 27 They showed his signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham. 28 He sent darkness, and made it dark; and they rebelled not against his word. 29 He turned their water,

into blood, and slew their fish. 30 Their land brought forth frogs in abundance, in the chambers of their kings. 31 He spake, and there came divers sorts of flies, *and* lice in all their coasts. 32 He gave them hail for rain, *and* flaming fire in their land. 33 He smote their vines also and their fig trees; and brake the trees of their coasts. 34 He spake, and the locusts came, and caterpillars, and that without number, 35 And did eat up all the herbs in their land, and devoured the fruit of their ground. 36 He smote also all the firstborn in their land, the chief of all their strength. 37 He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and *there was* not one feeble *person* among their tribes. 38 Egypt was glad when they departed: for the fear of them fell upon them. 39 He spread a cloud for a covering; and fire to give light in the night. 40 *The people* asked, and he brought quails, and satisfied them with the bread of heaven. 41 He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places *like* a river. 42 For he remembered his holy promise, *and* Abraham his servant. 43 And he brought forth his people with joy, *and* his chosen with gladness: 44 And gave them the lands of the heathen: and they inherited the labour of the people; 45 That they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws. Praise ye the LORD.

After the history of the patriarchs follows here the history of the people of Israel, when they grew into a nation.

I. Their affliction in Egypt (v. 25): *He turned the heart* of the Egyptians, who had protected them, *to hate* them and *deal subtilly* with them. God's goodness to his people exasperated the Egyptians against them; and, though their old antipathy to the Hebrews (which we read of Gen. xliii. 32; xlv. 34) was laid asleep for a while, yet now it revived with more violence than ever: formerly they hated them because they despised them, now because they feared them. They *dealt subtilly* with them, set all their politics on work to find out ways and means to weaken them, and waste them, and prevent their growth; they made their burdens heavy and their lives bitter, and slew their male children as soon as they were born. Malice is

crafty to destroy: Satan has the serpent's subtlety, with his venom. It was God that turned the hearts of the Egyptians against them; for every creature is that to us that he makes it to be, a friend or an enemy. Though God is not the author of the sins of men, yet he serves his own purposes by them.

II. Their deliverance out of Egypt, that work of wonder, which, that it might never be forgotten, is put into the preface to the ten commandments. Observe,

1. The instruments employed in that deliverance (v. 26): *He sent Moses his servant* on this errand and joined Aaron in commission with him. Moses was designed to be their lawgiver and chief magistrate, Aaron to be their chief priest; and therefore, that they might respect them the more and submit to them the more cheerfully, God made use of them as their deliverers.

2. The means of accomplishing that deliverance; these were the plagues of Egypt. Moses and Aaron observed their orders, in summoning them just as God appointed them, and *they rebelled not against his word* (v. 28) as Jonah did, who, when he was sent to denounce God's judgments against Nineveh, went to Tarshish. Moses and Aaron were not moved, either with a foolish fear of Pharaoh's wrath or a foolish pity of Egypt's misery, to relax or retard any of the plagues which God ordered them to inflict on the Egyptians, but stretched forth their hand to inflict them as God appointed. Those that are instructed to execute judgment will find their remissness construed as a rebellion against God's word. The plagues of Egypt are here called God's *signs*, and *his wonders* (v. 27); they were not only proofs of his power, but tokens of his wrath, and to be looked upon with admiration and holy awe. *They showed the words of his signs* (so it is in the original), for every plague had an exposition going along with it; they were not, as the common works of creation and providence, silent signs, but speaking ones, and they spoke aloud. They are all or most of them here specified, though not in the order in which they were inflicted. (1.) The plague of darkness, v. 28. This was one of the last, though here mentioned first. God *sent darkness*, and, coming with commission, it came with efficacy; his command *made it dark*. And then *they* (that is, the people of Israel) *rebelled not against God's word*, namely, a command which some think was given them to circumcise all among them that had not been circumcised, in doing which the three days' darkness would be a protection to them. The old translation follows the LXX., and reads it, *They were not obedient to his word*, which may be applied to Pharaoh and the Egyptians, who, notwithstanding the terror of this plague, *would not let the people go*; but there is no ground for it in the Hebrew. (2.) The turning of the river Nilus (which

they idolized) *into blood*, and all their other waters, which *slew their fish* (v. 29), and so they were deprived, not only of their drink, but of the daintiest of their meat, Num. xi. 5. (3.) The frogs, shoals of which their land brought forth, which poured in upon them, not only in such numbers, but with such fury, that they could not keep them out of the *chambers of their kings* and great men, whose hearts had been full of vermin, more nauseous and more noxious—contempt of, and enmity to, both God and his Israel. (4.) Flies of divers sorts swarmed in their air, and lice in their clothes, v. 31; Exod. viii. 17, 24. Note, God can make use of the meanest, and weakest, and most despicable animals, for the punishing and humbling of proud oppressors, to whom the impotency of the instrument cannot but be a great mortification, as well as an undeniable conviction of the divine omnipotence. (5.) Hail-stones shattered their trees, even the strongest timber-trees in *their coasts*, and killed their vines, and their other fruit-trees, v. 32, 33. Instead of rain to cherish their trees, he gave them hail to crush them, and with it thunder and lightning, to such a degree that *the fire ran along upon the ground*, as if it had been a stream of kindled brimstone, Exod. ix. 23. (6.) *Locusts and caterpillars* destroyed all the herbs which were made for the service of man and ate the bread out of their mouths, v. 34, 35. See what variety of judgments God has, wherewith to plague proud oppressors, that will not let his people go. God did not bring the same plague twice, but, when there was occasion for another, it was still a new one; for he has many arrows in his quiver. Locusts and caterpillars are God's armies; and, how weak soever they are singly, he can raise such numbers of them as to make them formidable, Joel, i. 4, 6. (7.) Having mentioned all the plagues but those of the murrain and boils, he concludes with that which gave the conquering stroke, and that was the death of *the first-born*, v. 36. In the dead of the night the joys and hopes of their families, the *chief of their strength* and flower of their land, were all struck dead by the destroying angel. They would not release God's first-born, and therefore God seized theirs by way of reprisal, and thereby forced them to dismiss his too, when it was too late to retrieve their own; for *when God judges he will overcome*, and those will certainly sit down losers at last that contend with him.

3. The mercies that accompanied this deliverance. In their bondage, (1.) They had been impoverished, and yet they came out rich and wealthy. God not only brought them forth, but *he brought them forth with silver and gold*, v. 37. God empowered them to ask and collect the contributions of their neighbours (which were indeed but part of payment for the service they had done them) and inclined the Egyptians to furnish them with what they asked. Their wealth was his,

and therefore he might, their hearts were in his hand, and therefore he could, give it to the Israelites. (2.) Their lives had been made bitter to them, and their bodies and spirits broken by their bondage; and yet, when God brought them forth, *there was not one feeble person*, none sick, none so much as sickly, *among their tribes*. They went out that very night that the plague swept away all the first-born of Egypt, and yet they went out all in good health, and brought not with them any of the diseases of Egypt. Surely never was the like, that among so many thousands there was not one sick! So false was the representation which the enemies of the Jews, in after-ages, gave of this matter, that they were all sick of a leprosy, or some loathsome disease, and that therefore the Egyptians thrust them out of their land. (3.) They had been trampled upon and insulted over; and yet they were brought out with honour (v. 38): *Egypt was glad when they departed*; for God had so wonderfully owned them, and pleaded their cause, that *the fear of Israel fell upon them*, and they owned themselves baffled and overcome. God can and will make his church a *burdensome stone* to all that *heave at it* and seek to displace it, so that those shall think themselves happy that get out of its way, Zech. xii. 3. *When God judges, he will overcome*. (4.) They had spent their days in sorrow and in sighing, by reason of their bondage; but now he brought them forth *with joy and gladness*, v. 43. When Egypt's cry for grief was loud, their first-born being all slain, Israel's shouts for joy were as loud, both when they looked back upon the land of slavery out of which they were rescued and when they looked forward to the pleasant land to which they were hastening. God now put a new song into their mouth.

4. The special care God took of them in the wilderness. (1.) For their shelter. Besides the canopy of heaven, he provided them another heavenly canopy: He *spread a cloud for a covering* (v. 39), which was to them not only a screen and umbrella, but a cloth of state. A cloud was often God's pavilion (xviii. 11) and now it was Israel's; for they also were his hidden ones. (2.) For their guidance and refreshment in the dark. He appointed a pillar of *fire to give light in the night*, that they might never be at a loss. Note, God graciously provides against all the grievances of his people, and furnishes them with convenient succours for every condition, for day and night, till they come to heaven, where it will be all day to eternity. (3.) He fed them both with necessities and dainties. Sometimes he furnished their tables with wild fowl (v. 40): *The people asked, and he brought quails*; and, when they were not thus feasted, yet they were abundantly satisfied *with the bread of heaven*. Those are curious and covetous indeed who will not be so satisfied. Man did eat angels' food, and

that constantly and on free-cost. And, as every bit they ate had miracle in it, so had every drop they drank: *He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out, v. 41.* Common providence fetches waters from heaven, and bread out of the earth; but for Israel the divine power brings bread from the clouds and water from the rocks: so far is the God of nature from being tied to the laws and courses of nature. The water did not only gush out once, but it ran *like a river*, plentifully and constantly, and attended their camp in all their removes; hence they are said to have the *rock follow them* (1 Cor. x. 4), and, which increased the miracle, *this river of God* (so it might be truly called) *ran in dry places*, and yet was not drunk in and lost, as one would have expected it to be, by the sands of the desert of Arabia. To this that promise alludes, *I will give rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen*, Isa. xliii. 19, 20.

5. Their entrance, at length, into Canaan (v. 44): *He gave them the lands of the heathen*, put them in possession of that which they had long been put in hopes of; and what the Canaanites had taken pains for God's Israel had the enjoyment of: *They inherited the labour of the people*; and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just. The Egyptians had long inherited their labours, and now they inherited the labours of the Canaanites. Thus sometimes one enemy of the church is made to pay another's scores.

6. The reasons why God did all this for them. (1.) Because he would himself perform the promises of the word, v. 42. They were unworthy and unthankful, yet he did those great things in their favour *because he remembered the word of his holiness* (that is, his covenant) *with Abraham his servant*, and he would not suffer one iota or tittle of that to fall to the ground. See Deut. vii. 8. (2.) Because he would have them to perform the precepts of the word, to bind them to which was the greatest kindness he could put upon them. He put them in possession of Canaan, not that they might live in plenty and pleasure, in ease and honour, and might make a figure among the nations, but *that they might observe his statutes and keep his laws*,—that, being formed into a people, they might be under God's immediate government, and revealed religion might be the basis of their national constitution,—that, having a good land given them, they might out of the profits of it bring sacrifices to God's altar,—and that, God having thus done them good, they might the more cheerfully receive his law, concluding that also designed for their good, and might be sensible of their obligations in gratitude to live in obedience to him. We are *therefore* made, maintained, and redeemed, that we may live in obedience to the will of God; and the hallelujah with which the psalm concludes may be taken both as a thankful acknowledgment of God's favours and as a cheerful concur-

rence with this great intention of them. Has God done so much for us, and yet does he expect so little from us? *Praise you the Lord.*

PSALM CVI.

We must give glory to God by making confession, not only of his goodness but of our own badness, which serve as foils to each other. Our badness makes his goodness appear the more illustrious, as his goodness makes our badness the more heinous and scandalous. The foregoing psalm was a history of God's goodness to Israel; this is a history of their rebellions and provocations, and yet it begins and ends with Hallelujah; for even sorrow for sin must not put us out of tune for praising God. Some think it was penned at the time of the captivity in Babylon and the dispersion of the Jewish nation thereupon, because of that prayer in the close, ver. 47. I rather think it was penned by David at the same time with the foregoing psalm, because we find the first verse and the last two verses in that psalm which David delivered to Asaph, at the bringing of the ark to the place he had prepared for it (1 Chron. xvi. 34–38), “Gather us from among the heathen;” for we may suppose that in Saul's time there was a great dispersion of pious Israelites, when David was forced to wander. In this psalm we have, I. The preface to the narrative, speaking honour to God (ver. 1, 2), comfort to the saints (ver. 3), and the desire of the faithful towards God's favour, ver. 4, 5. II. The narrative itself of the sins of Israel, aggravated by the great things God did for them, an account of which is intermixed. Their provocations at the Red Sea (ver. 6–13), lusting (ver. 13–15), mutinying (ver. 16–18), worshipping the golden calf (ver. 19–23), murmuring (ver. 24–27), joining themselves to Balaam (ver. 28–31), quarrelling with Moses (ver. 32–39), incorporating themselves with the nations of Canaan, ver. 34–39. To this is added an account how God had rebuked them for their sins, and yet saved them from ruin, ver. 40–46. III. The conclusion of the psalm with prayer and praise, ver. 47, 48. It may be of use to us to sing this psalm, that, being put in mind by it of our sins, the sins of our land, and the sins of our fathers, we may be humbled before God and yet not despair of mercy, which even rebellious Israel often found with God.

PRAISE ye the LORD. O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. 2 Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? *who* can show forth all his praise? 3 Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times. 4 Remember me, O LORD, with the favour *that thou bearest unto thy people*: O visit me with thy salvation; 5 That I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance.

We are here taught,

I. To bless God (v. 1, 2). *Praise you the Lord*, that is, 1. Give him thanks for his goodness, the manifestation of it to us, and the many instances of it. *He is good and his mercy endures for ever*; let us therefore own our obligations to him and make him a return of our best affections and services. 2. Give him the glory of his greatness, his *mighty acts*, proofs of his almighty power, wherein he has done great things, and such as would be opposed. *Who can utter these?* Who is worthy to do it? Who is able to do it? They are so many that they cannot be numbered, so mysterious that they cannot be described; when we have said the most we can of the mighty acts of the Lord, the one half is not told; still there is more to be said; it is a subject that cannot be exhausted. We must *show forth his praise*; we may show forth some of it, but *who can show forth all?* Not the angels themselves. This will not

excuse us in not doing what we can, but should quicken us to do all we can.

II. To bless the people of God, to call and account them happy (v. 3): *Those that keep judgment are blessed*, for they are fit to be employed in praising God. God's people are those whose principles are sound—*They keep judgment* (they adhere to the rules of wisdom and religion, and their practices are agreeable); they do *righteousness*, are just to God and to all men, and herein they are steady and constant; they do it *at all times*, in every manner of conversation, at every turn, in every instance, and herein persevering to the end.

III. To bless ourselves in the favour of God, to place our happiness in it, and to seek it, accordingly, with all seriousness, as the psalmist here, v. 4, 5. 1. He has an eye to the lovingkindness of God, as the fountain of all happiness: "*Remember me, O Lord! to give me that mercy and grace which I stand in need of, with the favour which thou bearest to thy people.*" As there are a people in the world who are in a peculiar manner God's people, so there is a peculiar favour which God bears to that people, which all gracious souls desire an interest in; and we need desire no more to make us happy. 2. He has an eye to the salvation of God, the great salvation, that of the soul, as the foundation of happiness: *O visit me with thy salvation.* "Afford me (says Dr. Hammond) that pardon and that grace which I stand in need of, and can hope for from none but thee." Let that salvation be my portion for ever, and the pledges of it my present comfort. 3. He has an eye to the blessedness of the righteous, as that which includes all good (v. 5): "*That I may see the good of thy chosen and be as happy as the saints are; and happier I do not desire to be.*" God's people are here called his *chosen*, his *nation*, his *inheritance*; for he has set them apart for himself, incorporated them under his own government, is served by them and glorified in them. The chosen people of God have a good which is peculiar to them, which is the matter both of their gladness and of their glorying, which is their pleasure, and their praise. God's people have reason to be a cheerful people, and to boast in their God all the day long; and those who have that gladness, that glory, need not envy any of the children of men their pleasure or pride. The gladness of God's nation, and the glory of his inheritance, are enough to satisfy any man; for they have everlasting joy and glory at the end of them.

6 We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly. 7 Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies; but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea. 8 Nevertheless

he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known. 9 He rebuked the Red sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through the depths, as through the wilderness. 10 And he saved them from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. 11 And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left. 12 Then believed they his words; they sang his praise.

Here begins a penitential confession of sin, which was in a special manner seasonable now that the church was in distress; for thus we must justify God in all that he brings upon us, acknowledging that *therefore* he has done right, because *we have done wickedly*; and the remembrance of former sins, notwithstanding which God did not cast off his people, is an encouragement to us to hope that, though we are justly corrected for our sins, yet we shall not be utterly abandoned.

I. God's afflicted people here own themselves guilty before God (v. 6): "*We have sinned with our fathers*, that is, like our fathers, after the similitude of their transgression. We have added to the stock of hereditary guilt, and filled up the measure of our fathers' iniquity, to augment yet the fierce anger of the Lord," Num. xxxii. 14, Matt. xxiii. 32. And see how they lay a load upon themselves, as becomes penitents: "*We have committed iniquity*, that which is in its own nature sinful, and *we have done wickedly*; we have sinned with a high hand presumptuously." Or this is a confession, not only of their imitation of, but their interest in, their fathers' sins: *We have sinned with our fathers*, for we were in their loins and we bear their iniquity, Lam. v. 7.

II. They bewail the sins of their fathers when they were first formed into a people, which, since children often smart for, they are concerned to sorrow for, even further than to the third and fourth generation. Even we now ought to take occasion from the history of Israel's rebellions to lament the depravity and perverseness of man's nature and its unaptness to be amended by the most probable means. Observe here,

1. The strange stupidity of Israel in the midst of the favours God bestowed upon them (v. 7): *They understood not thy wonders in Egypt.* They saw them, but they did not rightly apprehend the meaning and design of them. *Blessed are those that have not seen, and yet have understood.* They thought the plagues of Egypt were intended for their deliverance, whereas they were intended also for their instruction and conviction, not only to force them out of their

Egyptian slavery, but to cure them of their inclination to Egyptian idolatry, by evidencing the sovereign power and dominion of the God of Israel, above all gods, and his particular concern for them. We lose the benefit of providences for want of understanding them. And, as their understandings were dull, so their memories were treacherous; though one would think such astonishing events should never have been forgotten, yet they remembered them not, at least *they remembered not the multitude of God's mercies in them. Therefore God is distrusted because his favours are not remembered.*

2. Their perverseness arising from this stupidity: *They provoked him at the sea, even at the Red Sea.* The provocation was, despair of deliverance (because the danger was great) and wishing they had been left in Egypt still, *Exod. xiv. 11, 12.* Quarrelling with God's providence, and questioning his power, goodness, and faithfulness, are as great provocations to him as any whatsoever. The place aggravated the crime; it was *at the sea, at the Red Sea*, when they had newly come out of Egypt and the wonders God had wrought for them were fresh in their minds; yet they reproach him, as if all that power had no mercy in it, but he had brought them out of Egypt on purpose to *kill them in the wilderness.* They never lay at God's mercy so immediately as in their passage through the Red Sea, yet there they affront it, and provoke his wrath.

3. The great salvation God wrought for them notwithstanding their provocations, *v. 8—11.* (1.) He forced a passage for them through the sea: *He rebuked the Red Sea* for standing in their way and retarding their march, *and it was dried up* immediately; as, in the creation, *at God's rebuke the waters fled*, *civ. 7.* Nay, he not only prepared them a way, but, by the pillar of cloud and fire, he *led them into the sea*, and, by the conduct of Moses, led them through it as readily as *through the wilderness.* He encouraged them to take those steps, and subdued their fears, when those were their most dangerous and threatening enemies. See *Isa. lxiii. 12—14.* (2.) He interposed between them and their pursuers, and prevented them from cutting them off, as they designed. The Israelites were all on foot, and the Egyptians had all of them chariots and horses, with which they were likely to overtake them quickly, but *God saved them from the hand of him that hated them*, namely, Pharaoh, who never loved them, but now hated them the more for the plagues he had suffered on their account. *From the hand of his enemy*, who was just ready to seize them, *God redeemed them* (*v. 10*), interposing himself, as it were, in the pillar of fire, between the persecuted and the persecutors. (3.) To complete the mercy, and turn the deliverance into a victory, the Red Sea, which was a lane to them, was a grave to the Egyptians (*v. 11*): *The*

waters covered their enemies, so as to slay them, but not so as to conceal their shame. For, the next tide, they were thrown up dead upon the shore, *Exod. xiv. 30.* *There was not one of them left alive*, to bring tidings of what had become of the rest. And why did God do this for them? Nay, why did he not cover them, as he did their enemies, for their unbelief and murmuring? He tells us (*v. 8*): *it was for his name's sake.* Though they did not deserve this favour, he designed it; and their undeservings should not alter his designs, nor break his measures, nor make him withdraw his promise, or fail in the performance of it. He did this for his own glory, *that he might make his mighty power to be known*, not only in dividing the sea, but in doing it notwithstanding their provocations. Moses prays (*Num. xiv. 17, 19*), *Let the power of my Lord be great and pardon the iniquity of this people.* The power of the God of grace in pardoning sin and sparing sinners is as much to be admired as the power of the God of nature in dividing the waters.

4. The good impression this made upon them for the present (*v. 12*): *Then believed they his words*, and acknowledged that God was with them of a truth, and had, in mercy to them, brought them out of Egypt, and not with any design to slay them in the wilderness; then *they feared the Lord and his servant Moses*, *Exod. xiv. 31.* Then *they sang his praise*, in that song of Moses penned on this great occasion, *Exod. xv. 1.* See in what a gracious and merciful way God sometimes silences the unbelief of his people, and turns their fears into praises; and so it is written, *Those that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and those that murmured shall learn doctrine*, *Isa. xxix. 24.*

13 They soon forgot his works: they waited not for his counsel: 14 But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. 15 And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul. 16 They envied Moses also in the camp, and Aaron the saint of the LORD. 17 The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram. 18 And a fire was kindled in their company; the flame burned up the wicked. 19 They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image. 20 Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass. 21 They forgot God their saviour, which had done great things in Egypt; 22 Wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red sea. 23 Therefore

ne said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy *them*. 24 Yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not his word: 25 But murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of the LORD. 26 Therefore he lifted up his hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness: 27 To overthrow their seed also among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands. 28 They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead. 29 Thus they provoked *him* to anger with their inventions: and the plague brake in upon them. 30 Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed. 31 And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore. 32 They angered *him* also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: 33 Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.

This is an abridgment of the history of Israel's provocations in the wilderness, and of the wrath of God against them for those provocations: and this abridgment is abridged by the apostle, with application to us Christians (1 Cor. x. 5, &c.); for these things were written for our admonition, that we sin not like them, lest we suffer like them.

I. The cause of their sin was disregard to the works and word of God, *v. 13*. 1. They minded not what he had done for them: *They soon forgot his works*, and lost the impressions they had made upon them. Those that do not improve God's mercies to them, nor endeavour in some measure to render according to the benefit done unto them, do indeed forget them. This people soon forgot them (God took notice of this, *Exod. xxxii. 8*, *They have turned aside quickly*): *They made haste, they forgot his works* (so it is in the margin), which some make to be two separate instances of their sin. *They made haste*; their expectations anticipated God's promises; they expected to be in Canaan shortly, and because they were not they questioned whether they should ever be there and quarrelled with all the difficulties they met with in their way; whereas *he that believeth does not make haste*, *Isa. xxviii. 16*. And, withal, *they forgot his works*, which were the undeniable evidences of his wisdom, power, and goodness, and denied the conclu-

sion as confidently as if they had never seen the premises proved. This is mentioned again (*v. 21, 22*): *They forgot God their Saviour*; that is, they forgot that he had been their Saviour. Those that forget the works of God forget God himself, who makes himself known by his works. They forgot what was done but a few days before, which we may suppose they could not but talk of, even then, when, because they did not make a good use of it, they are said to forget it: it was what God did for them in *Egypt, in the land of Ham, and by the Red Sea*, things which we at this distance cannot, or should not, be unmindful of. They are called *great things* (for, though the great God does nothing mean, yet he does some things that are in a special manner great), *wondrous works*, out of the common road of Providence, therefore observable, therefore memorable, and *terrible things*, awful to them, and dreadful to their enemies, and yet soon forgotten. Even miracles that were seen passed away with them as tales that are told. 2. They minded not what God had said to them nor would they depend upon it: *They waited not for his counsel*, did not attend his word, though they had Moses to be his mouth to them; they took up resolves about which they did not consult him and made demands without calling upon him. They would be in Canaan directly, and had not patience to tarry God's time. The delay was intolerable, and therefore the difficulties were looked upon as insuperable. This is explained (*v. 24*): *They believed not his word*, his promise that he would make them masters of Canaan; and (*v. 25*), *They hearkened not to the voice of the Lord*, who gave them counsel which they would not wait for, not only by Moses and Aaron, but by Caleb and Joshua, *Num. xiv. 6, 7, &c.* Those that will not wait for God's counsel shall justly be given up to their own hearts' lusts, to walk in their own counsels.

II. Many of their sins are here mentioned, together with the tokens of God's displeasure which they fell under for those sins.

1. They would have flesh, and yet would not believe that God could give it to them (*v. 14*): *They lusted a lust* (so the word is) *in the wilderness*; there, where they had bread enough and to spare, yet nothing would serve them but they must have flesh to eat. They were now purely at God's finding, being supported entirely by miracles, so that this was a reflection upon the wisdom and goodness of their Creator. They were also, in all probability, within a step of Canaan, yet had not patience to stay for dainties till they came thither. They had flocks and herds of their own, but they will not kill them; God must give them flesh as he gave them bread, or they will never give him credit, or their good word. They did not only wish for flesh, but they lusted exceedingly after it. A desire, even of lawful

things, when it is inordinate and violent, becomes sinful; and therefore this is called *lust after evil things* (1 Cor. x. 6), though the quails, as God's gift, were good things, and were so spoken of, Ps. cv. 40. Yet this was not all: *They tempted God in the desert*, where they had had such experience of his goodness and power, and questioned whether he could and would gratify them herein. See lxxviii. 19, 20. Now how did God show his displeasure against them for this. We are told how (v. 15): *He gave them their request*, but gave it them in anger, and with a curse, for he *sent leanness into their soul*; he filled them with uneasiness of mind, and terror of conscience, and a self-reproach, occasioned by their bodies being sick with the surfeit, such as sometimes drunkards experience after a great debauch. Or this is put for that great plague with which the Lord smote them, *while the flesh was yet between their teeth*, as we read, Num. xi. 33. It was the consumption of the life. Note, (1.) What is asked in passion is often given in wrath. (2.) Many that fare deliciously every day, and whose bodies are healthful and fat, have, at the same time, leanness in their souls, no love to God, no thankfulness, no appetite to the bread of life, and then the soul must needs be lean. Those wretchedly forget themselves that feast their bodies and starve their souls. Then God gives the good things of this life in love, when with them he gives grace to glorify him in the use of them; for then *the soul delights itself in fatness*, Isa. lv. 2.

2. They quarrelled with the government which God had set over them both in church and state (v. 16): *They envied Moses* his authority in the camp, as generalissimo of the armies of Israel and chief justice in all their courts; they envied Aaron his power, as *saint of the Lord*, consecrated to the office of high priest, and Korah would needs put in for the pontificate, while Dathan and Abiram, as princes of the tribe of Reuben, Jacob's eldest son, would claim to be chief magistrates, by the so-much-admired right of primogeniture. Note, Those are preparing ruin for themselves who envy those whom God has put honour upon and usurp the dignities they were never designed for. And justly will contempt be poured upon those who put contempt upon any of the saints of the Lord. How did God show his displeasure for this? We are told how, and it is enough to make us tremble (v. 17, 18); we have the story, Num. xvi. 32, 35. (1.) Those that flew in the face of the civil authority were punished by the earth, which opened and swallowed them up, as not fit to go upon God's ground, because they would not submit to God's government. (2.) Those that would usurp the ecclesiastical authority in things pertaining to God suffered the vengeance of heaven, for *fire came out from the Lord and consumed them*, and the pretending sacrificers were themselves

sacrificed to divine justice. *The flame burnt up the wicked*; for though they vied with Aaron, the saint of the Lord, for holiness (Num. xvi. 3, 5), yet God adjudged them wicked, and as such cut them off, as in due time he will destroy the man of sin, that wicked one, notwithstanding his proud pretensions to holiness.

3. They made and worshipped the golden calf, and this in Horeb, where the law was given, and where God had expressly said, *Thou shalt neither make any graven image nor bow down to it*; they did both: *They made a calf and worshipped it*, v. 19.

(1.) Herein they bade defiance to, and put an affront upon, the two great lights which God has made to rule the moral world:—[1.] That of human reason; for *they changed their glory*, their God, at least the manifestation of him, which always had been in a cloud (either a dark cloud or a bright one), without any manner of visible similitude, *into the similitude of Apis*, one of the Egyptian idols, *an ox that eateth grass*, than which nothing could be more grossly and scandalously absurd, v. 20. Idolaters are perfectly besotted, and put the greatest disparagement possible both upon God, in representing him by the image of a beast, and upon themselves, in worshipping it when they have so done. That which is here said to be the changing of their glory is explained by St. Paul (Rom. i. 23) to be the *changing of the glory of the incorruptible God*. [2.] That of divine revelation, which was afforded to them, not only in the words God spoke to them, but in the works he wrought for them, *wondrous works*, which declared aloud that the Lord Jehovah is the only true and living God and is alone to be worshipped, v. 21, 22.

(2.) For this God showed his displeasure by declaring the decree that he would cut them off from being a people, as they had, as far as lay in their power, in effect cut him off from being a God; he *spoke of destroying them* (v. 23), and certainly he would have done it if *Moses, his chosen, had not stood before him in the breach* (v. 23), if he had not seasonably interposed to deal with God as an advocate about the breach or ruin God was about to devote them to and wonderfully prevailed to turn away his wrath. See here the mercy of God, and how easily his anger is turned away, even from a provoking people. See the power of prayer, and the interest which God's chosen have in heaven. See a type of Christ, God's chosen, his elect, in whom his soul delights, who stood before him in the breach to turn away his wrath from a provoking world, and ever lives, for this end, making intercession.

4. They gave credit to the report of the evil spies concerning the land of Canaan, in contradiction to the promise of God (v. 24): *They despised the pleasant land*. Canaan was a pleasant land, Deut. viii. 7. They undervalued it when they thought it not worth

venturing for, no, not under the guidance of God himself, and therefore were for making a captain and returning to Egypt again. They *believed not God's word* concerning it, but *murmured in their tents*, basely charging God with a design upon them in bringing them thither that they might become a prey to the Canaanites, Num. xiv. 2, 3. And, when they were reminded of God's power and promise, they were so far from hearkening to that voice of the Lord that they attempted to stone those who spoke to them, Num. xiv. 10. The heavenly Canaan is a pleasant land. A promise is left us of entering into it; but there are many that despise it, that neglect and refuse the offer of it, that prefer the wealth and pleasure of this world before it, and grudge the pains and hazards of this life to obtain that. This also was so displeasing to God that *he lifted up his hand against them*, in a way of threatening, *to destroy them in the wilderness*: nay, in a way of swearing, for he swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest (xcv. 11; Num. xiv. 28); nay, and he threatened that their children also should be *overthrown and scattered* (v. 26, 27), and the whole nation dispersed and disinherited; but Moses prevailed for mercy for their seed, that they might enter Canaan. Note, Those who despise God's favours, and particularly the pleasant land, forfeit his favours, and will be shut out for ever from the pleasant land.

5. They were guilty of a great sin in the matter of Peor; and this was the sin of the new generation, when they were within a step of Canaan (v. 28): *They joined themselves to Baal-peor*, and so were entangled both in idolatry and in adultery, in corporeal and in spiritual whoredom, Num. xxv. 1—3. Those that did often partake of the altar of the living God now ate the sacrifices of the dead, of the idols of Moab (that were dead images, or dead men canonized or deified), or sacrifices to the infernal deities on the behalf of their dead friends. *Thus they provoked God to anger with their inventions* (v. 29), in contempt of him and his institutions, his commands, and his threatenings. The iniquity of Peor was so great that, long after, it is said, *They were not cleansed from it*, Josh. xxii. 17. God testified his displeasure at this, (1.) By sending a plague among them, which in a little time swept away 24,000 of those impudent sinners. (2.) By stirring up Phinehas to use his power as a magistrate for the suppressing of the sin and checking the contagion of it. He stood up in his zeal for the Lord of hosts, and executed judgment upon Zimri and Cozbi, sinners of the first rank, genteel sinners; he put the law in execution upon them, and this was a service so pleasing to God that upon it *the plague was stayed*, v. 30. By this, and some other similar acts of public justice on that occasion (Num. xxv. 4, 5), the guilt ceased to be national, and the general controversy was let

fall. When the proper officers did their duty God left it to them, and did not any longer keep the work in his own hands by the plague. Note, National justice prevents national judgments. But, Phinehas herein signaling himself, a special mark of honour was put upon him, for what he did was *counted to him for righteousness to all generations* (v. 31), and, in recompence of it, the priesthood was entailed on his family. *He shall make an atonement by offering up the sacrifices*, who had so bravely made an atonement (so some read it, v. 30) by offering up the sinners. Note, It is the honour of saints to be zealous against sin.

6. They continued their murmurings to the very last of their wanderings; for in the fortieth year they *angered God at the waters of strife* (v. 32), which refers to that story, Num. xx. 3—5. And that which aggravated it now was that *it went ill with Moses for their sakes*; for, though he was the meekest of all the men in the earth, yet their clamours at that time were so peevish and provoking that they put him into a passion, and, having now grown very old and off his guard, *he spoke unadvisedly with his lips* (v. 33), and not as became him on that occasion; for he said in a heat, *Hear now, you rebels, must we fetch water out of this rock for you?* This was Moses's infirmity, and is written for our admonition, that we may learn, when we are in the midst of provocation, to keep our mouth as with a bridle (xxxix. 1—3), and to *take heed to our spirits*, that they admit not resentments too much; for, when the spirit is provoked, it is much ado, even for those that have a great deal of wisdom and grace, not to *speak unadvisedly*. But it is charged upon the people as their sin: *They provoked his spirit* with that with which they angered God himself. Note, We must answer not only for our own passions, but for the provocation which by them we give to the passions of others, especially of those who, if not greatly provoked, would be meek and quiet. God shows his displeasure against this sin of theirs by shutting Moses and Aaron out of Canaan for their misconduct upon this occasion, by which, (1.) God discovered his resentment of all such intemperate heats, even in the dearest of his servants. If he deals thus severely with Moses for one unadvised word, what does their sin deserve who have spoken so many presumptuous wicked words? *If this was done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?* (2.) God deprived them of the blessing of Moses's guidance and government at a time when they most needed it, so that his death was more a punishment to them than to himself. It is just with God to remove those relations from us that are blessings to us, when we are peevish and provoking to them and grieve their spirits.

34 They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the LORD

commanded them: 35 But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. 36 And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them. 37 Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, 38 And shed innocent blood, *even* the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood. 39 Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions. 40 Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his people, inasmuch that he abhorred his own inheritance. 41 And he gave them into the hand of the heathen; and they that hated them ruled over them. 42 Their enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand. 43 Many times did he deliver them; but they provoked *him* with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity. 44 Nevertheless he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry: 45 And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies. 46 He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives. 47 Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto thy holy name, *and* to triumph in thy praise. 48 Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the LORD.

Here, I. The narrative concludes with an account of Israel's conduct in Canaan, which was of a piece with that in the wilderness, and God's dealings with them, wherein, as all along, both justice and mercy appeared.

1. They were very provoking to God. The miracles and mercies which settled them in Canaan made no more deep and durable impressions upon them than those which fetched them out of Egypt; for by the time they were just settled in Canaan they corrupted themselves, and forsook God. Observe,

(1.) The steps of their apostasy. [1.] They spared the nations which God had doomed to destruction (v. 34); when they had got the good land God had promised them they had no zeal against the wicked inhabitants whom the Lord commanded them to extirpate, pretending pity; but so merciful is God that no

man needs to be in any case more compassionate than he. [2.] When they spared them they promised themselves that, notwithstanding this, they would not join in any dangerous affinity with them. But the way of sin is down-hill; omissions make way for commissions; when they neglect to *destroy the heathen* the next news we hear is, They were *mingled among the heathen*, made league with them and contracted an intimacy with them, so that they *learned their works*, v. 35. That which is rotten will sooner corrupt that which is sound than be cured or made sound by it. [3.] When they mingled with them and learned some of their works that seemed innocent diversions and entertainments, yet they thought they would never join with them in their worship; but by degrees they learned that too (v. 36): *They served their idols* in the same manner, and with the same rites, that they served them; and they became a *snare to them*. That sin drew on many more, and brought the judgments of God upon them which they themselves could not but be sensible of and yet knew not how to recover themselves. [4.] When they joined with them in some of their idolatrous services, which they thought had least harm in them, the little thought that ever they should be guilty of that barbarous and inhuman piece of idolatry the sacrificing of their living children to their dead gods; but they came to that at last (v. 37, 38), in which Satan triumphed over his worshippers, and regaled himself in blood and slaughter: *They sacrificed their sons and daughters*, pieces of themselves, to devils, and added murder, the most unnatural murder, to their idolatry; one cannot think of it without horror. They *shed innocent blood*, the most innocent, for it was infant-blood, nay, it was the *blood of their sons and their daughters*. See the power of the spirit that works in the children of disobedience, and see his malice. The beginning of idolatry and superstition like that of strife, is as the letting forth of water, and there is no villany which those that venture upon it can be sure they shall stop short of, for God justly gives them up to a *reprobate mind*, Rom. i. 28.

(2.) Their sin was, in part, their own punishment; for by it, [1.] They wronged their country: *The land was polluted with blood*, v. 38. That pleasant land, that holy land, was rendered uncomfortable to themselves, and unfit to receive those kind tokens of God's favour and presence in it which were designed to be its honour. [2.] They wronged their consciences (v. 39): *They went a whoring with their own inventions*, and so debauched their own minds, and were defiled with their own works, and rendered odious in the eyes of the holy God, and perhaps of their own consciences.

2. God brought his judgments upon them and what else could be expected? For his name is Jealous, and he is a jealous God (1.) He fell out with them for it, v. 40. H

was angry with them. *The wrath of God, that consuming fire, was kindled against his people;* for from them he took it as more insulting and ungrateful than from the heathen that never knew him. Nay, he was sick of them: *He abhorred his own inheritance,* which once he had taken pleasure in; yet the change was not in him, but in them. This is the worst thing in sin, that it makes us loathsome to God; and the nearer any are to God in profession the more loathsome are they if they rebel against him, like a dunghill at our door. (2.) Their enemies then fell upon them, and, their defence having departed, made an easy prey of them (v. 41, 42): *He gave them into the hands of the heathen.* Observe here how the punishment answered to the sin: They mingled with the heathen and learned their works; from them they willingly took the infection of sin, and therefore God justly made use of them as the instruments of their correction. Sinners often see themselves ruined by those by whom they have suffered themselves to be debauched. Satan, who is a tempter, will be a tormentor. The heathen hated them. Apostates lose all the love on God's side, and get none on Satan's; and when those that *hated them ruled over them,* and they were brought into subjection under them, no marvel that they oppressed them and ruled them with rigour; and thus God made them know the difference between *his service and the service of the kings of the countries,* 2 Chron. xii. 8. (3.) When God granted them some relief, yet they went on in their sins, and their troubles also were continued, v. 43. This refers to the days of the Judges, when God often raised up deliverers and wrought deliverances for them, and yet they elapsed to idolatry and *provoked God with their counsel,* their idolatrous inventions, to deliver them up to some other oppressor, so that at last they were brought very low for *their iniquity.* Those that by sin disparage themselves, and will not by repentance humble themselves, are justly debased, and humbled, and brought low, by the judgments of God. (4.) At length they cried unto God, and God returned in favour to them, v. 44—61. They were chastened for their sins, but not destroyed, cast down, but not cast off. God appeared for them, [1.] As a God of mercy, who looked upon their grievances, *regarded their affliction, beheld when distress as upon them* (so some), who looked over their complaints, for he *heard their cry* with tender compassion (Exod. iii. 7) and overtook their provocations; for though he had judgment, and had reason to say it, that he would destroy them, yet he *repented, according to the multitude of his mercies,* and reversed the sentence. Though he is not a *man that he could repent,* so as to change his mind, yet he is a gracious God, who pities us, and changes his way. [2.] As a God of truth, he *remembered for them his covenant,* and made good every word that he had spoken;

and therefore, bad as they were, he would not break with them, because he would not break his own promise [3.] As a God of power, who has all hearts in his hand, and turns them which way soever he pleases. *He made them to be pitied even of those that carried them captives,* and hated them, and ruled them with rigour. He not only restrained the remainder of their enemies' wrath, that it should not utterly consume them, but he infused compassion even into their stony hearts, and made them relent, which was more than any art of man could have done with the utmost force of rhetoric. Note, God can change lions into lambs, and, *when a man's ways please the Lord,* will make even his enemies to pity him and be at peace with him. When God pities men shall. *Tranquillus Deus tranquillat omnia—A God at peace with us makes every thing at peace.*

II. The psalm concludes with prayer and praise. 1. Prayer for the completing of his people's deliverance. Even when the Lord brought back the captivity of his people still there was occasion to pray, *Lord, turn again our captivity* (cxxxvi. 1, 4); so here (v. 47), *Save us, O Lord our God! and gather us from among the heathen.* We may suppose that many who were forced into foreign countries, in the times of the Judges (as Naomi was, Ruth i. 1), had not returned in the beginning of David's reign, Saul's time being discouraging, and therefore it was seasonable to pray, *Lord, gather the dispersed Israelites from among the heathen, to give thanks to thy holy name,* not only that they may have cause to give thanks and hearts to give thanks, but that they may have opportunity to do it in the courts of the Lord's house, from which they were now banished, and so may triumph in thy praise, over those that had in scorn challenged them to sing the Lord's song in a strange land. 2. Praise for the beginning and progress of it (v. 48): *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting.* He is a blessed God from eternity, and will be so to eternity, and so let him be praised by all his worshippers. Let the priests say this, and then let all the people say, *Amen, Hallelujah,* in token of their cheerful concurrence in all these prayers, praises, and confessions. According to this rubric, or directory, we find that when this psalm (or at least the closing verses of it) was sung all the people said, *Amen,* and praised the Lord by saying, *Hallelujah.* By these two comprehensive words it is very proper, in religious assemblies, to testify their joining with their ministers in the prayers and praises which, as their mouth, they offer up to God, according to his will, saying *Amen* to the prayers and *Hallelujah* to the praises

PSALM CVII.

The psalmist, having in the two foregoing psalms celebrated the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, in his dealings with his church in particular, here observes some of the instances of his providential care of the children of men in general, especially in

their distresses; for he is not only King of saints, but King of nations, not only the God of Israel, but the God of the whole earth, and a common Father to all mankind. Though this may especially refer to Israelites in their personal capacity, yet there were those who pertained not to the commonwealth of Israel and yet were worshippers of the true God; and even those who worshipped images had some knowledge of a supreme "Numen," to whom, when they were in earnest, they looked above all their false gods. And of these, when they prayed in their distresses, God took a particular care. 1. The psalmist specifies some of the most common calamities of human life, and shows how God succours those that labour under them, in answer to their prayers. 1. Banishment and dispersion, ver. 2-9. 2. Captivity and imprisonment, ver. 10-16. 3. Sickness and distemper of body, ver. 17-22. 4. Danger and distress at sea, ver. 23-33. These are put for all similar perils, in which those that cry unto God have ever found him very present help. . . . He specifies the varieties and vicissitudes of events concerning nations and families, in all which God's hand is to be eyed by his own people, with joyful acknowledgments of his goodness, ver. 33-43. When we are in any of these or the like distresses it will be comfortable to sing this psalm, with application; but, if we be not, others are, and have been, of whose deliverances it becomes us to give God the glory, for we are members one of another.

O GIVE thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. 2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy; 3 And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south. 4 They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. 5 Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. 6 Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses. 7 And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation. 8 Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! 9 For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.

Here is, I. A general call to all to give thanks to God, v. 1. Let all that sing this psalm, or pray over it, set themselves herein to give thanks to the Lord; and those that have not any special matter for praise may furnish themselves with matter enough from God's universal goodness. In the fountain he is good; in the streams his mercy endures for ever and never fails.

II. A particular demand hereof from the redeemed of the Lord, which may well be applied spiritually to those that have an interest in the great Redeemer and are saved by him from sin and hell. They have, of all people, most reason to say that God is good, and his mercy everlasting; these are the children of God that were scattered abroad, whom Christ died to gather together in one, out of all lands, John xi. 52; Matt. xxiv. 31. But it seems here to be meant of a temporal deliverance, wrought for them when in their distress they cried unto the Lord, v. 6. Is any afflicted? Let him pray. Does any pray? God will certainly hear and help. When troubles be-

come extreme that is man's time to cry those who but whispered prayer before th cry aloud, and then it is God's time to su cour. In the mount he will be seen. They were in an enemy's country, but G wrought out their rescue: He redeemed th from the hand of the enemy (v. 2), not might or power, it may be (Zech. iv. 6), n by price or reward (Isa. xlv. 13), but by Spirit of God working on the spirit men. 2. They were dispersed as out-cas but God gathered them out of all the cou tries whither they were scattered in the clou and dark day, that they might again be incorporated, v. 3. See Deut. xxx. 4; Eze xxxiv. 12. God knows those that are his, a where to find them. 3. They were bew dered, had no road to travel in, no dwellin place to rest in, v. 4. When they were r deemed out of the hand of the enemy, a gathered out of the lands, they were in dang of perishing in their return home throug the dry and barren deserts. They wander in the wilderness, where there was no trodd path, no company, but a solitary way, lodging, no conveniences, no accommod tions, no inhabited city where they mig have quarters or refreshment. But God l them forth by the right way (v. 7), direct them to an inn, nay, directed them to a hon that they might go to a city of habitatio which was inhabited, nay, which they the selves should inhabit. This may refer to poor travellers in general, those particular whose way lay through the wilds of Arabi where we may suppose they were often at loss; and yet many in that distress we wonderfully relieved, so that few perishe Note, We ought to take notice of the god hand of God's providence over us in o journeys, going out and coming in, directi us in our way, and providing for us plac both to bait in and rest in. Or (as sou think) it has an eye to the wanderings of th children of Israel in the wilderness for years; it is said (Deut. xxxii. 10) God l them about, and yet here he led them by right way. God's way, though to us it seem about, will appear at last to have been th right way. It is applicable to our conditio in this world; we are here as in a wilde ness, have here no continuing city, but dw in tents as strangers and pilgrims. But v are under the guidance of his wise and god providence, and, if we commit ourselves to it, we shall be led in the right way to the ci that has foundations. 4. They were read to perish for hunger (v. 5): Their soul e fainted in them. They were spent with th fatigues of their journey and ready to drop dow for want of refreshment. Those that ha constant plenty, and are every day fed to th full, know not what a miserable case it is to be hungry and thirsty, and to have no sup ply. This was sometimes the case of Isra in the wilderness, and perhaps of other po travellers; but God's providence finds o

ways to satisfy the longing soul and fill the hungry soul with goodness, v. 9. Israel's wants were seasonably supplied, and many have been wonderfully relieved when they were ready to perish. The same God that has led us has fed us all our life long unto this day, has fed us with food convenient, has provided food for the soul, and filled the hungry soul with goodness. Those that hunger and thirst after righteousness, after God, the living God, and communion with him, shall be abundantly replenished with the goodness of his house, both in grace and glory. Now for all this those who receive mercy are called upon to return thanks (v. 8): *Oh that men* (it is meant especially of those men whom God has graciously relieved) *would praise the Lord for his goodness to them in particular, and for his wonderful works to others of the children of men!* Note, (1.) God's works of mercy are wonderful works, works of wonderful power considering the weakness, and of wonderful grace considering the unworthiness, of those he shows mercy to. (2.) It is expected of those who receive mercy from God that they return praise to him. (3.) We must acknowledge God's goodness to be children of men as well as to the children of God, to others as well as to ourselves.

10 Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, *being bound in affliction and iron*; 11 Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the Most High: 12 Therefore he brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and *there was none to help*. 13 Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses. 14 He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder. 15 Oh that *men* would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! 16 For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.

We are to take notice of the goodness of God towards prisoners and captives. Observe, A description of this affliction. Prisoners are said to sit in darkness (v. 10), in dungeons, close prisons, which intimates that they are desolate and disconsolate; they sit in the shadow of death, which intimates not only great distress and trouble, but great danger. Prisoners are many times appointed to die; they sit despairing to get out, but resolving to make the best of it. They are found in affliction, and many times in iron, as Joseph. This sore a calamity is imprisonment, which should make us prize li-

berty, and be thankful for it. 2. The cause of this affliction, v. 11. It is because they rebelled against the words of God. Wilful sin is rebellion against the words of God; it is a contradiction to his truths and a violation of his laws. They contemned the counsel of the Most High, and thought they neither needed it nor could be the better for it; and those that will not be counselled cannot be helped. Those that despise prophesying, that regard not the admonitions of their own consciences nor the just reproofs of their friends, condemn the counsel of the Most High, and for this they are bound in affliction, both to punish them for and to reclaim them from their rebellions. 3. The design of this affliction, and that is to bring down their heart (v. 12), to humble them for sin, to make them low in their own eyes, to cast down every high, proud, aspiring thought. Afflicting providences must be improved as humbling providences; and we not only lose the benefit of them, but thwart God's designs and walk contrary to him in them if our hearts be unhumbed and unbroken, as high and hard as ever under them. Is the estate brought down with labour, the honour sunk? Have those that exalted themselves fallen down, and is there none to help them? Let this bring down the spirit to confess sin, to accept the punishment of it, and humbly to sue for mercy and grace. 4. The duty of this afflicted state, and that is to pray (v. 13): *Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble*, though before perhaps they had neglected him. Prisoners have time to pray, who, when they were at liberty, could not find time; they see they have need of God's help, though formerly they thought they could do well enough without him. Sense will make men cry when they are in trouble, but grace will direct them to cry unto the Lord, from whom the affliction comes and who alone can remove it. 5. Their deliverance out of the affliction: *They cried unto the Lord, and he saved them*, v. 13. He brought them out of darkness into light, welcome light, and then doubly sweet and pleasant, brought them out of the shadow of death to the comforts of life, and their liberty was to them life from the dead, v. 14. Were they fettered? He broke their bands asunder. Were they imprisoned in strong castles? He broke the gates of brass and the bars of iron wherewith those gates were made fast; he did not put back, but cut in sunder. Note, When God will work deliverance the greatest difficulties that lie in the way shall be made nothing of. Gates of brass and bars of iron, as they cannot keep him out from his people (he was with Joseph in the prison), so they cannot keep them in when the time, the set-time, for their enlargement, comes. 6. The return that is required from those whose bands God has loosed (v. 15): *Let them praise the Lord for his goodness*, and take occasion from their own experience of it, and share in it, to bless

him for that goodness which the earth is full of, *the world and those that dwell therein.*

17 Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. 18 Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death. 19 Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses. 20 He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered *them* from their destructions. 21 Oh that *men* would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! 22 And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.

Bodily sickness is another of the calamities of this life which gives us an opportunity of experiencing the goodness of God in recovering us, and of that the psalmist speaks in these verses, where we may observe,

I. That we, by our sins, bring sickness upon ourselves and then it is our duty to pray, v. 17—19. 1. It is the sin of the soul that is the cause of sickness; we bring it upon ourselves both meritoriously and efficiently: *Fools, because of their transgression, are thus afflicted*; they are thus corrected for the sins they have committed and thus cured of their evil inclinations to sin. If we knew no sin, we should know no sickness; but the transgression of our life, and the iniquity of our heart, make it necessary. Sinners are fools; they wrong themselves, and all against their own interest, not only their spiritual, but their secular interest. They prejudice their bodily health by intemperance and endanger their lives by indulging their appetites. This their way is their folly, and they need the rod of correction to drive out the foolishness that is bound up in their hearts.

2. The weakness of the body is the effect of sickness, v. 18. When people are sick *their soul abhors all manner of meat*; they not only have no desire to eat nor power to digest it, but they nauseate it, and their stomach is turned against it. And here they may read their sin in their punishment: those that doted most on the meat that perishes, when they come to be sick are sick of it, and the dainties they loved are loathed; what they took too much of now they can take nothing of, which commonly follows upon the overcharging of the heart with surfeiting and drunkenness. And when the appetite is gone the life is as good as gone: *They draw near unto the gates of death*; they are, in their own apprehension and in the apprehension of all about them, at the brink of the grave, as ready to be turned to de-

struction. 3. Then is a proper time for prayer: *Then they cry unto the Lord, v. 19. Is any sick? Let him pray; let him be prayed for.* Prayer is a salve for every sore.

II. That it is by the power and mercy of God that we are recovered from sickness, and then it is our duty to be thankful. Compare with this Job xxxiii. 18, 28. 1. When those that are sick call upon God he returns them an answer of peace. They cry unto him and he *saves them out of their distresses* (v. 19); he removes their grief and prevents their fears. (1.) He does it easily: *He sent his word and healed them* v. 20. This may be applied to the miraculous cures which Christ wrought when he was upon earth, by a word's speaking; he said, *Be clean, Be whole*, and the work was done. It may also be applied to the spiritual cures which the Spirit of grace works in regeneration; he sends his word, and heals souls, convinces, converts, sanctifies them, and all by the word. In the common instances of recovery from sickness God in his providence does but speak, and it is done. (2.) He does it effectually: *He delivers them out of their destructions*, that they shall neither be destroyed nor distressed with the fear of being so. Nothing is too hard for that God to do who kills and makes alive again, brings down to the grave and raises up, who *turneth man almost to destruction* and yet saith, *Return*. 2. When those that have been sick are restored they must return to God an answer of praise (v. 21, 22): *Let all men praise the Lord for his goodness*, and let those, particularly, to whom God has thus granted a new life, spend it in his service *let them sacrifice with thanksgiving*, not only bring a thank-offering to the altar, but a thankful heart to God. Thanksgivings are the best thank-offerings, and shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock. *And let them declare his works with rejoicing*, to his honour and for the encouragement of others.

The living, the living, they shall praise him. 23 They that go down to the ships, that do business in great waters; 24 These see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep. 25 For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. 26 They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. 27 They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end. 28 Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. 29 He maketh the storm calm, so that the waves thereof are still. 30 Then are they glad because

they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven. 31 Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! 32 Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.

The psalmist here calls upon those to give glory to God who are delivered from dangers at sea. Though the Israelites dealt not much in merchandise, yet their neighbours the Tyrians and Zidonians did, and for them perhaps this part of the psalm was especially calculated.

I. Much of the power of God appears at all times in the sea, 23, 24. It appears to those that go down to the sea in ships, as mariners, merchants, fishermen, or passengers, that do business in great waters. And surely none will expose themselves there but those that have business (among all Solomon's pleasant things we do not read of any pleasure-boat he had), but those that go on business, lawful business, may, in faith, put themselves under the divine protection. These see the works of the Lord, and his wonders, which are the more surprising, because most are born and bred upon land, and what passes at sea is new to them. The deep itself is a wonder, its vastness, its saltness, its ebbing and flowing. The great variety of living creatures in the sea is wonderful. Let those that go to sea be led, by all the wonders they observe there, to consider and adore the infinite perfections of that God whose the sea is, for he made it and manages it.

II. It especially appears in storms at sea, which are much more terrible than at land. Observe here, 1. How dangerous and dreadful a tempest at sea is. Then wonders begin to appear in the deep, when God commands and raises the strong wind, which fulfils his word, cxlviii. 8. He raises the winds, as a prince by his commission raises forces. Satan pretends to be the prince of the power of the air; but he is a pretender; the powers of the air are at God's command, not at his. When the wind becomes stormy it lifts up the waves of the sea, v. 25. Then the ships are kicked like tennis-balls on the tops of the waves; they seem to mount up to the heavens, and then they couch again, as if they would go down to the depths, v. 26. A stranger, who had never seen it, would not think it possible for a ship to live at sea, as it will in a storm, and ride it out, but would expect that the next wave would bury it and it would never come up again; and yet God, who taught man discretion to make ships that should so strangely keep above water, does by his special providence preserve them, that they answer the end to admiration. When the ships are thus tossed the soul of the seaman melts because of trouble; and,

when the storm is very high, even those that are used to the sea can neither shake off nor dissemble their fears, but they reel to and fro, the tossing makes them giddy, and they stagger and are sick, it may be, like a drunken man; the whole ship's crew are in confusion and quite at their wits' end (v. 27), not knowing what to do more for their preservation; all their wisdom is swallowed up, and they are ready to give up themselves for gone, Jonah i. 5, &c. 2. How seasonable it is at such a time to pray. Those that go to sea must expect such perils as are here described, and the best preparation they can make for them is to make sure a liberty of access to God by prayer, for then they will cry unto the Lord, v. 28. We have a saying, "Let those that would learn to pray go to sea;" I say, Let those that will go to sea learn to pray, and accustom themselves to pray, that they may come with the more boldness to the throne of grace when they are in trouble. Even heathen mariners, in a storm, cried every man to his god; but those that have the Lord for their God have a present and powerful help in that and every other time of need, so that when they are at their wits' end they are not at their faith's end. 3. How wonderfully God sometimes appears for those that are in distress at sea, in answer to their prayers: He brings them out of the danger; and, (1.) The sea is still: He makes the storm a calm, v. 29. The winds fall, and only by their soft and gentle murmurs serve to lull the waves asleep again, so that the surface of the sea becomes smooth and smiling. By this Christ proved himself to be more than a man that even the winds and the seas obeyed him. (2.) The seamen are made easy: They are glad because they are quiet, quiet from the noise, quiet from the fear of evil. Quietness after a storm is a very desirable thing, and sensibly pleasant. (3.) The voyage becomes prosperous and successful: So he brings them to their desired haven, v. 30. Thus he carries his people safely through all the storms and tempests that they meet with in their voyage heaven-ward, and lands them, at length, in the desired harbour. 4. How justly it is expected that all those who have had a safe passage over the sea, and especially who have been delivered from remarkable perils at sea, should acknowledge it with thankfulness, to the glory of God. Let them do it privately in their closets and families. Let them praise the Lord for his goodness to themselves and others, v. 31. Let them do it publicly (v. 32), in the congregation of the people and in the assembly of the elders; there let them erect the memorials of their deliverance, to the honour of God, and for the encouragement of others to trust him.

33 He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the watersprings into dry ground; 34 A fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them

that dwell therein. 35 He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into watersprings. 36 And there he maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a city for habitation; 37 And sow the fields, and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase. 38 He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly; and suffereth not their cattle to decrease. 39 Again, they are minished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow. 40 He poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the wilderness, *where there is no way*. 41 Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction, and maketh *him* families like a flock. 42 Therighteous shall see *it*, and rejoice: and all iniquity shall stop her mouth. 43 Whoso is wise, and will observe these *things*, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the LORD.

The psalmist, having given God the glory of the providential reliefs granted to persons in distress, here gives him the glory of the revolutions of providence, and the surprising changes it sometimes makes in the affairs of the children of men.

I. He gives some instances of these revolutions.

1. Fruitful countries are made barren and barren countries are made fruitful. Much of the comfort of this life depends upon the soil in which our lot is cast. Now, (1.) The sin of man has often marred the fruitfulness of the soil and made it unserviceable, v. 33, 34. Land watered with *ivers* is sometimes *turned into a wilderness*, and that which had been full of water-springs now has not so much as water-streams; it is turned *into dry and sandy ground*, that has not consistency and moisture enough to produce any thing valuable. Many a *fruitful land* is turned into saltness, not so much from natural causes as from the just judgment of God, who thus punishes the *wickedness of those that dwell therein*; as the vale of Sodom became a salt sea. Note, If the land be bad, it is because the inhabitants are so. Justly is the ground made unfruitful to those that bring not forth fruit unto God, but serve Baal with their corn and wine. (2.) The goodness of God has often mended the barrenness of the soil, and turned a *wilderness*, a land of drought, *into water-springs*, v. 35. The land of Canaan, which was once the glory of all lands for fruitfulness, is said to be, at this day, a fruitless, useless, worthless spot of ground, as was foretold, Deut. xxix. 23. This land of ours, which formerly was much of it an uncultivated desert, is now full of all good

things, and more abundant honour is given to *that part which lacked*. Let the plantations in America, and the colonies settled there, compared with the desolations of many countries in Asia and Europe, that formerly were famous, expound this.

2. Necessitous families are raised and enriched, while prosperous families are impoverished and go to decay. If we look abroad in the world, (1.) We see many greatly increasing whose beginning was small, and whose ancestors were mean and made no figure, v. 36—38. Those that were *hungry* are made to *dwell* in fruitful lands; there they take root, and gain a settlement, and *prepare a city for habitation* for themselves and theirs after them. Providence puts good land under their hands, and they build upon it. Cities took rise from rising families. But as lands will not serve for men without lodgings, and therefore they must *prepare a city of habitation*, so lodgings, though ever so convenient, will not serve without lands, and therefore they must *sow the fields, and plant vineyards* (v. 37), for the king himself is served of the field. And yet the fields, though favoured with water-springs, will not *yield fruits of increase*, unless they be sown, nor will vineyards be had, unless they be planted; man's industry must attend God's blessing, and then God's blessing will crown man's industry. The fruitfulness of the soil should engage, for it does encourage, diligence; and, ordinarily, *the hand of the diligent, by the blessing of God, makes rich*, v. 38. *He blesses them also, so that they are, in a little time, multiplied greatly, and he diminishes not their cattle*. As in the beginning, so still it is, by the blessing of God, that the earth and all the creatures *increase and multiply* (Gen. i. 22), and we depend upon God for the increase of the cattle as well as for the increase of the ground. Cattle would decrease many ways if God should but permit it, and men would soon suffer by it. (2.) We see many that have thus suddenly risen as suddenly sunk and brought to nothing (v. 39). *Again they are diminished and brought low* by adverse providences, and end their days as low as they began them; or their families after them lose as fast as they got, and scatter what they heaped together. Note, Worldly wealth is an uncertain thing, and often those that are filled with it, ere they are aware, grow so secure and sensual with it that, ere they are aware, they lose it again. Hence it is called *deceitful riches* and the *mammon of unrighteousness*. God has many ways of making men poor; he can do it by *oppression, affliction, and sorrow*, as he tempted Job and brought him low.

3. Those that were high and great in the world are abased, and those that were mean and despicable are advanced to honour, v. 40, 41. We have seen, (1.) Princes dethroned and reduced to straits. *He pours contempt upon* them, even among those that

have idolized them. Those that exalt themselves God will abase, and, in order thereunto, will infatuate: He makes *them to wander in the wilderness, where there is no way*. He baffles those counsels by which they thought to support themselves, and their own power and pomp, and drives them headlong, so that they know not what course to steer, nor what measures to take. We met with this before, Job xii. 24, 25. (2.) Those of low degree advanced to the posts of honour (v. 41): *Yet setteth he the poor on high, raiseth from the dust to the throne of glory*, 1 Sam. ii. 8; Ps. cxlii. 7, 8. Those that were afflicted and trampled on are not only delivered, but set on high out of the reach of their troubles, above their enemies, and have dominion over those to whom they had been in subjection. That which adds to their honour, and strengthens them in their elevation, is the multitude of their children: *He maketh him families like a flock of sheep*, so numerous, so useful, so sociable with one another, and so meek and peaceable. He that sent them meat sent them mouths. *Happy is the man that has his quiver filled with arrows*, for he shall boldly speak with the enemy in the gate, cxxvii. 5. God is to be acknowledged both in setting up families and in building them up. Let not princes be envied, nor the poor despised, for God has many ways of changing the condition of both.

II. He makes some improvement of these remarks; such surprising turns as these are of use, 1. For the solacing of saints. They observe these dispensations with pleasure (v. 42): *The righteous shall see it and rejoice in the glorifying of God's attributes and the manifesting of his dominion over the children of men*. It is a great comfort to a good man to see how God manages the children of men, as the potter does the clay, so as to serve his own purposes by them, to see despised virtue advanced and impious pride brought low to the dust, to see it evinced beyond dispute that verily there is a God that judges in the earth. 2. For the silencing of sinners: *All iniquity shall stop her mouth*; it shall be a full conviction of the folly of atheists, and of those that deny the divine providence; and, forasmuch as practical atheism is at the bottom of all sin, it shall in effect stop the mouth of all iniquity. When sinners see how their punishment answers to their sin, and how justly God deals with them in taking away from them those gifts of his which they had abused, they shall not have one word to say for themselves; for God will be justified, he will be clear. 3. For the satisfying of all concerning the divine goodness (v. 43): *Whoso is wise, and will observe these things*, these various dispensations of divine providence, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord. Here is, (1.) A desirable end proposed, and that is, rightly to understand the lovingkindness of the Lord. It is of great use to us, in religion, to be fully assured of

God's goodness, to be experimentally acquainted and duly affected with it, that his lovingkindness may be before our eyes, xxvi. 3. (2.) A proper means prescribed for attaining this end, and that is a due observance of God's providence. We must lay up these things, mind them, and keep them in mind, Luke ii. 19. (3.) A commendation of the use of this means as an instance of true wisdom: *Whoso is wise*, let him by this both prove his wisdom and improve it. A prudent observance of the providences of God will contribute very much to the accomplishing of a good Christian.

PSALM CVIII.

This psalm begins with praise and concludes with prayer, and faith is at work in both. 1. David here gives thanks to God for mercies to himself, ver. 1—5. II. He prays to God for mercies for the land, pleading the promises of God and putting them in suit, ver. 6—13. The former part is taken out of Ps. lvii. 7, &c., the latter out of Ps. lx. 5, &c., and both with very little variation, to teach us that we may in prayer use the same words that we have formerly used, provided it be with new affections. It intimates likewise that it is not only allowable, but sometimes convenient, to gather some verses out of one psalm and some out of another, and to put them together, to be sung to the glory of God. In singing this psalm we must give glory to God and take comfort to ourselves.

A song or psalm of David.

O GOD, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory. 2 Awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early. 3 I will praise thee, O LORD, among the people: and I will sing praises unto thee among the nations. 4 For thy mercy is great above the heavens: and thy truth reacheth unto the clouds. 5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: and thy glory above all the earth.

We may here learn how to praise God from the example of one who was master of the art. 1. We must praise God with fixedness of heart. Our heart must be employed in the duty (else we make nothing of it) and engaged to the duty (v. 1): *O God! my heart is fixed*, and then *I will sing and give praise*. Wandering straggling thoughts must be gathered in, and kept close to the business; for they must be told that here is work enough for them all. 2. We must praise God with freeness of expression: I will praise him with my glory, that is, with my tongue. Our tongue is our glory, and never more so than when it is employed in praising God. When the heart is inditing this good matter our tongue must be as the pen of a ready writer, xlv. 1. David's skill in music was his glory, it made him famous, and this should be consecrated to the praise of God; and therefore it follows, *Awake my psaltery and harp*. Whatever gift we excel in we must praise God with. 3. We must praise God with fervency of affection, and must stir up ourselves to do it, that it may be done in a lively manner and not carelessly (v. 2): *Awake, psaltery and harp*; let it not be done with a dull and sleepy tune, but let the airs be all lively. I

myself will awake early to do it, with all that is within me, and all little enough. Warm devotions honour God. 4. We must praise God publicly, as those that are not ashamed to own our obligations to him and our thankful sense of his favours, but desire that others also may be in like manner affected with the divine goodness (v. 3): *I will praise thee among the people of the Jews; nay, I will sing to thee among the nations of the earth.* Whatever company we are in we must take all occasions to speak well of God; and we must not be shy of singing psalms, though our neighbours hear us, for it looks like being ashamed of our Master. 5. We must, in our praises, magnify the mercy and truth of God in a special manner (v. 4), mercy in promising, truth in performing. The heavens are vast, but the mercy of God is more capacious; the skies are high and bright, but the truth of God is more eminent, more illustrious. We cannot see further than the heavens and clouds; whatever we see of God's mercy and truth there is still more to be seen, more reserved to be seen, in the other world. 6. Since we find ourselves so defective in glorifying God, we must beg of him to glorify himself, to do all, to dispose all, to his own glory, to get himself honour and make himself a name (v. 5): *Be thou exalted, O God! above the heavens, higher than the angels themselves can exalt thee with their praises, and let thy glory be spread over all the earth. Father, glorify thy own name. Thou hast glorified it; glorify it again.* It is to be our first petition, *Hallowed be thy name.*

6 That thy beloved may be delivered: save *with thy right hand*, and answer me. 7 God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. 8 Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine; Ephraim also is the strength of mine head; Judah is my lawgiver; 9 Moab is my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe; over Philistia will I triumph. 10 Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom? 11 *Wilt not thou, O God, who hast cast us off? and wilt not thou, O God, go forth with our hosts?* 12 Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man. 13 Through God we shall do valiantly: for *he it is that shall tread down our enemies.*

We may here learn how to pray as well as praise. 1. We must be public-spirited in prayer, and bear upon our hearts, at the throne of grace, the concerns of the church of God, v. 6. It is God's beloved, and therefore must be ours: and therefore we must

pray for its deliverance, and reckon that we are answered if God grant what we ask for his church, though he delay to give us what we ask for ourselves. *"Save thy church, and thou answerest me; I have what I would have."* Let the earth be filled with God's glory, and the prayers of David are ended. (lxxii. 19, 20); he desires no more. 2. We must, in prayer, act faith upon the power and promise of God—upon his power (*Save with thy right hand, which is mighty to save*), and upon his promise: *God has spoken in his holiness, in his holy word, to which he has sworn by his holiness, and therefore I will rejoice, v. 7.* What he has promised he will perform, for it is the word both of his truth and of his power. An active faith can rejoice in what God has said, though it be not yet done; for with him saying and doing are not two things, whatever they are with us. 3. We must, in prayer, take the comfort of what God has secured to us and settled upon us, though we are not yet put in possession of it. God had promised David to give him, (1.) The hearts of his subjects; and therefore he surveys the several parts of the country as his own already: *"Shechem and Succoth, Gilead and Manasseh, Ephraim and Judah, are all my own," v. 8.* With such assurance as this we may speak of the performance of what God has promised to the Son of David he will, without fail, give him the heathen for his inheritance and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession, for so has he spoken in his holiness; nay, of all the particular persons that were given him he will lose none; he also, as David, shall have the hearts of his subjects, John vi. 37. And, (2.) The necks of his enemies. These are promised, and therefore David looks upon Moab, and Edom, and Philistia, as his own already (v. 9): *Over Philistia will I triumph, which explains lx. 8, Philistia, triumph thou because of me, which some think should be read, O my soul! triumph thou over Philistia.* Thus the exalted Redeemer is set down at God's right hand, in a full assurance that all his enemies shall in due time be made his footstool, though all things are not yet put under him, Heb. ii. 8. 4. We must take encouragement from the beginnings of mercy to pray and hope for the perfecting of it (v. 10, 11): *"Who will bring me into the strong cities that are yet unconquered? Who will make me master of the country of Edom, which is yet unsubdued?"* The question was probably to be debated in his privy council, or a council of war, what methods they should take to subdue the Edomites and to reduce that country; but he brings it into his prayers, and leaves it in God's hands. *Wilt not thou, O God? Certainly thou wilt.* It is probable that he spoke with the more assurance concerning the conquest of Edom because of the ancient oracle concerning Jacob and Esau, that the elder should serve the younger, and the blessing of Jacob, by which he was made Esau's lord,

Gen. xxvii. 37. 5. We must not be discouraged in prayer, nor beaten off from our hold of God, though Providence has in some instances frowned upon us: "Though thou hast cast us off, yet thou wilt now go forth with our hosts, v. 11. Thou wilt comfort us again after the time that thou hast afflicted us." Adverse events are sometimes intended for the trial of the constancy of our faith and prayer, which we ought to persevere in whatever difficulties we meet with, and not to faint. 6. We must seek help from God, renouncing all confidence in the creature (v. 12):

Lord, give us help from trouble, prosper our designs, and defeat the designs of our enemies against us." It is not unseasonable to talk of trouble at the same time that we talk of triumphs, especially when it is to quicken prayer for help from heaven; and it is a good plea, *Vain is the help of man*. "It is really so, and therefore we are undone if thou do not help us; we apprehend it to be so, and therefore depend upon thee for help and have the more reason to expect it." 7. We must depend entirely upon the favour and grace of God, both for strength and success in our work and warfare, v. 13. (1.) We must do our part, but we can do nothing of ourselves; it is only *through God that we shall do valiantly*. Blessed Paul will own that even he can do nothing, nothing to purpose, *but through Christ strengthening him*, Phil. iv. 13. (2.) When we have acquitted ourselves ever so well, yet we cannot speed by any merit or might of our own; it is God himself that *treads down our enemies*, else we with all our valour cannot do it. Whatever we do, whatever we gain, God must have all the glory.

PSALM CIX.

Whether David penned this psalm when he was persecuted by Saul, or when his son Absalom rebelled against him, or upon occasion of some other trouble that was given him, is uncertain; and whether the particular enemy he prays against was Saul, or Doeg, or Ahithophel, or some other not mentioned in the story, we cannot determine; but it is certain that in penning it he had an eye to Christ, his sufferings and his persecutors, for that interpretation (ver. 8) is applied to Judas, Acts. i. 20. The rest of the prayers here against his enemies were the expressions, not of passion, but of the Spirit of prophecy. I. He lodges a complaint in the court of heaven of the malice and base ingratitude of his enemies and with it an appeal to the righteous God, ver. 1—5. II. He prays against his enemies, and devotes them to destruction, ver. 6—20. III. He prays for himself, that God would help and succour him in his low condition, ver. 21—29. IV. He concludes with a joyful expectation that God would appear for him, ver. 30, 31. In singing this psalm we must comfort ourselves with the believing foresight of the certain destruction of all the enemies of Christ and his church, and the certain salvation of all those that trust in God and keep close to him.

To the chief Musician. A psalm of David.

HOLD not thy peace, O God of my praise; 2 For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me: they have spoken against me with a lying tongue. 3 They compassed me about also with words of hatred; and fought against me without a cause. 4 For my love they are my adversaries: but I give myself unto prayer. 5 And they

have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love.

It is the unspeakable comfort of all good people that, whoever is against them, God is for them, and to him they may apply as to one that is pleased to concern himself for them. Thus David here.

I. He refers himself to God's judgment (v. 1): "*Hold not thy peace, but let my sentence come forth from thy presence*, xvii. 2. Delay not to give judgment upon the appeal made to thee." God saw what his enemies did against him, but seemed to connive at it, and to keep silence: "Lord," says he, "do not always do so." The title he gives to God is observable: "*O God of my praise!* the God in whom *I glory*, and not in any wisdom or strength of my own, from whom I have every thing that is my praise, or the God whom I have praised, and will praise, and hope to be for ever praising." He had before called God *the God of his mercy* (lix. 10), here he calls him *the God of his praise*. Forasmuch as God is *the God of our mercies* we must make him *the God of our praises*; if all is of him and from him, all must be to him and for him.

II. He complains of his enemies, showing that they were such as it was fit for the righteous God to appear against. 1. They were very spiteful and malicious: They are *wicked*; they delight in doing mischief (v. 2); their words are *words of hatred*, v. 3. They had an implacable enmity to a good man, because of his goodness. "They open their mouths against me to swallow me up, and *fight against me to cut me off if they could*." 2. They were notorious liars; and lying comprehends two of the seven things which the Lord hates. "They are *deceitful* in their protestations and professions of kindness, while at the same time they speak against me behind my back, *with a lying tongue*." They were equally false in their flatteries and in their calumnies. 3. They were both politic and restless in their designs. "They *compassed me about* on all sides, so that, which way soever I looked, I could see nothing but what made against me." 4. They were unjust; their accusations of him, and sentence against him, were all groundless: "*They have fought against me without a cause*; I never gave them any provocation." Nay, which was worst of all, 5. They were very ungrateful, and *rewarded him evil for good*, v. 5. Many a kindness he had done them, and was upon all occasions ready to do them, and yet he could not work upon them to abate their malice against him, but, on the contrary, they were the more exasperated because they could not provoke him to give them some occasion against him (v. 4): *For my love they are my adversaries*. The more he endeavoured to gratify them the more they hated him. We may wonder that it is possible that any should be so wicked; and yet, since there have been so

many instances of it, we should not wonder if any be so wicked against us.

III. He resolves to keep close to his duty and take the comfort of that: *But I give myself unto prayer* (v. 4), *I prayer* (so it is in the original); "I am for prayer, I am a man of prayer, I love prayer, and prize prayer, and practise prayer, and make a business of prayer, and am in my element when I am at prayer." A good man is made up of prayer, *gives himself to prayer*, as the apostles, Acts vi. 4. When David's enemies falsely accused him, and misrepresented him, he applied to God and by prayer committed his cause to him. Though they were his adversaries for his love, yet he continued to pray for them; if others are abusive and injurious to us, yet let not us fail to do our duty to them, nor *sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for them*, I Sam. xii. 23. Though they hated and persecuted him for his religion, yet he kept close to it; they laughed at him: for his devotion, but they could not laugh him out of it. "Let them say what they will, *I give myself unto prayer*." Now herein David was a type of Christ, who was compassed about with words of hatred and lying words, whose enemies not only persecuted him without cause, but for his love and his good works (John x. 32); and yet he *gave himself to prayer*, to pray for them. *Father, forgive them.*

6 Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand. 7 When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin. 8 Let his days be few; and let another take his office. 9 Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. 10 Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg: let them seek *their bread* also out of their desolate places. 11 Let the extortioner catch all that he hath; and let the strangers spoil his labour. 12 Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children. 13 Let his posterity be cut off; and in the generation following let their name be blotted out. 14 Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the LORD; and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out. 15 Let them be before the LORD continually, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth. 16 Because that he remembered not to show mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart. 17 As

he loved cursing, so let it come unto him: as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him. 18 As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones. 19 Let it be unto him as the garment which covereth him, and for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually. 20 *Let this be the reward of mine adversaries from the LORD, and of them that speak evil against my soul.*

David here fastens upon some one particular person that was worse than the rest of his enemies, and the ringleader of them, and in a devout and pious manner, not from a principle of malice and revenge, but in a holy zeal for God and against sin and with an eye to the enemies of Christ, particularly Judas who betrayed him, whose sin was greater than Pilate's that condemned him (John xix. 11), he imprecates and predicts his destruction, foresees and pronounces him completely miserable, and such a one as our Saviour calls him, *A son of perdition*. Calvin speaks of it as a detestable piece of sacrilege, common in his time among Franciscan friars and other monks, that if any one had malice against a neighbour he might hire some of them to curse him every day, which he would do in the words of these verses; and particularly he tells of a lady in France who, being at variance with her own and only son, hired a parcel of friars to curse him in these words. Greater impiety can scarcely be imagined than to vent a devilish passion in the language of sacred writ, to kindle strife with coals snatched from God's altar and to call for fire from heaven with a tongue set on fire of hell.

1. The imprecations here are very terrible—woe, and a thousand woes, to that man against whom God says *Amen* to them; and they are all in full force against the implacable enemies and persecutors of God's church and people, that *will not repent, to give him glory*. It is here foretold concerning this bad man,

1. That he should be cast and sentenced as a criminal, with all the dreadful pomp of a trial, conviction, and condemnation (v. 7): *Set thou a wicked man over him*, to be as cruel and oppressive to him as he has been to others; for God often makes one wicked man a scourge to another, to spoil the spoilers and to deal treacherously with those that have dealt treacherously. *Set the wicked over him* (so some), that is, Satan, as it follows; and then it was fulfilled in Judas, in whom Satan entered, to hurry him into sin first and then into despair. Set his own wicked heart over him, set his own conscience against him; let that fly in his face

Let Satan stand on his right hand, and be let loose against him to deceive him, as he did Ahab to his destruction, and then to accuse him and resist him, and then he is certainly cast, having no interest in that advocate who alone can say, *The Lord rebuke thee, Satan* (Zech. iii. 1, 2); when he shall be judged at men's bar let not his usual arts to evade justice do him any service, but let his sin find him out and let him be condemned; nor shall he escape before God's tribunal, but he condemned there when the day of inquisition and recompence shall come. Let his prayer become sin, as the clamours of a condemned malefactor not only find no acceptance, but are looked upon as an affront to the court. The prayers of the wicked now become sin, because soured with the leaven of hypocrisy and malice; and so they will in the great day, because then it will be too late to cry, *Lord, Lord, open to us*. Let every thing be turned against him and improved to his disadvantage, even his prayers.

2. That, being condemned, he should be executed as a most notorious malefactor. (1.) That he should lose his life, and the number of his months be cut off in the midst, by the sword of justice: *Let his days be few, or shortened*, as a condemned criminal has but a few days to live (v. 8); such bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days.

(2.) That consequently all his places should be disposed of to others, and they should enjoy his preferments and employments: *Let another take his office*. This Peter applies to the filling up of Judas's place in the truly sacred college of the apostles, by the choice of Matthias, Acts i. 20. Those that mismanage their trusts will justly have their office taken from them and given to those that will approve themselves faithful. (3.) That his family should be beheaded and beggared, but his wife should be made a widow and is children fatherless, by his untimely death.

9. Wicked men, by their wicked courses, bring ruin upon their wives and children, whom they ought to take care of and provide for. Yet his children, if, when they lost their father, they had a competency to live upon, might still subsist in comfort; but they shall be vagabonds and shall beg: they shall not have a house of their own to live in, nor any certain dwelling-place, nor now where to have a meal's-meat, but shall creep out of their desolate places with fear and trembling, like beasts out of their dens, to seek their bread (v. 10), because they are conscious to themselves that all mankind have reason to hate them for their father's sake.

(.) That his estate should be ruined, as the estates of malefactors are confiscated (v. 11): *Let the extortioner, the officer, seize all that he has and let the stranger, who was nothing in to his estate, spoil his labour*, either for his crimes or for his debts, Job v. 4, 5.

(.) That his posterity should be miserable. Fatherless children, though they have no-

thing of their own, yet sometimes are well provided for by the kindness of those whom God inclines to pity them; but this wicked man having never shown mercy there shall be none to extend mercy to him, by favouring his fatherless children when he is gone, v. 12. The children of wicked parents often fare the worse for their parents' wickedness in this way that the bowels of men's compassion are shut up from them, which yet ought not to be, for why should children suffer for that which was not their fault, but their infelicity? (6.) That his memory should be infamous, and buried in oblivion and disgrace (v. 13): *Let his posterity be cut off; let his end be to destruction* (so Dr. Hammond); and in the next generation let their name be blotted out, or remembered with contempt and indignation, and (v. 15) let an indelible mark of disgrace be left upon it. See here what hurries some to shameful deaths, and brings the families and estates of others to ruin, makes them and theirs despicable and odious, and entails poverty, and shame, and misery, upon their posterity; it is sin, that mischievous destructive thing. The learned Dr. Hammond applies this to the final dispersion and desolation of the Jewish nation for their crucifying Christ; their princes and people were cut off, their country was laid waste, and their posterity were made fugitives and vagabonds.

II. The ground of these imprecations bespeaks them very just, though they sound very severe. 1. To justify the imprecations of vengeance upon the sinner's posterity, the sin of his ancestors is here brought into the account (v. 14, 15), *the iniquity of his fathers and the sin of his mother*. These God often visits even upon the children's children, and is not unrighteous therein: when wickedness has long run in the blood justly does the curse run along with it. Thus all the innocent blood that had been shed upon the earth, from that of righteous Abel, was required from that persecuting generation, who, by putting Christ to death, filled up the measure of their fathers, and left as long a train of vengeance to follow them as the train of guilt was that went before them, which they themselves agreed to by saying, *His blood be upon us and on our children*. 2. To justify the imprecations of vengeance upon the sinner himself, his own sin is here charged upon him, which called aloud for it. (1.) He had loved cruelty, and therefore give him blood to drink (v. 16): *He remembered not to show mercy*, remembered not those considerations which should have induced him to show mercy, remembered not the objects of compassion that had been presented to him, but persecuted the poor, whom he should have protected and relieved, and slew the broken in heart, whom he should have comforted and healed. Here is a barbarous man indeed, not fit to live. (2.) He had loved cursing, and therefore let the curse

come upon his head, *v.* 17—19. Those that were out of the reach of his cruelty he let fly at with his curses, which were impotent and ridiculous; but they shall return upon him. *He delighted not in blessing*; he took no pleasure in wishing well to others, nor in seeing others do well; he would give nobody a good word or a good wish, much less would he do any body a good turn; and so let all good be far from him. *He clothed himself with cursing*; he was proud of it as an ornament that he could frighten all about him with the curses he was liberal of; he confided in it as armour, which would secure him from the insults of those he feared. And let him have enough of it. Was he fond of cursing? *Let God's curse come into his bowels like water* and swell him as with a dropsy, and let it soak like oil into his bones. The word of the curse is *quick and powerful*, and divides between the joints and the marrow; it works powerfully and effectually; it fastens on the soul; it is a piercing thing, and there is no antidote against it. Let it compass him on every side as a garment, *v.* 19. Let God's cursing him be his shame, as his cursing his neighbour was his pride; let it cleave to him as a girdle, and let him never be able to get clear of it. Let it be to him like the waters of jealousy, which caused the belly to swell and the thigh to rot. This points at the utter ruin of Judas, and the spiritual judgments which fell on the Jews for crucifying Christ. The psalmist concludes his imprecations with a terrible *Amen*, which signifies not only, "I wish it may be so," but "I know it shall be so." *Let this be the reward of my adversaries from the Lord*, *v.* 20. And this will be the reward of all the adversaries of the Lord Jesus; his enemies that will not have him to reign over them shall be brought forth and slain before him. And he will one day recompense tribulation to those that trouble his people.

21 But do thou for me, O God the Lord, for thy name's sake: because thy mercy is good, deliver thou me. 22 For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me. 23 I am gone like the shadow when it declineth: I am tossed up and down as the locust. 24 My knees are weak through fasting; and my flesh faileth of fatness. 25 I became also a reproach unto them: when they looked upon me they shook their heads. 26 Help me, O LORD my God: O save me according to thy mercy: 27 That they may know that this is thy hand; that thou, LORD, hast done it. 28 Let them curse, but bless thou: when they arise, let them be ashamed; but let

thy servant rejoice. 29 Let mine adversaries be clothed with shame, and let them cover themselves with their own confusion, as with a mantle. 30 I will greatly praise the LORD with my mouth; yea, I will praise him among the multitude. 31 For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor to save him from those that condemn his soul.

David, having denounced God's wrath against his enemies, here takes God's comforts to himself, but in a very humble manner, and without boasting.

I. He pours out his complaint before God concerning the low condition he was in, which probably, gave advantage to his enemies to insult over him: "I am poor and needy, and therefore a proper object of pity, and on that needs and craves thy help." 1. He was troubled in mind (*v.* 22): *My heart is wounded within me*, not only broken with outward troubles, which sometimes prostrate and sink the spirits, but wounded with a sense of guilt and a wounded spirit who can bear? who can heal? 2. He apprehended himself drawing near to his end: *I am gone like the shadow when it declines*, as good as gone already. Man's life, at best, is like a shadow; sometimes it is like the evening shadow, the presage of night approaching, like the shadow when it declines. 3. He was unsettled, tossed up and down like the locust, his mind fluctuating and unsteady, still putting him upon new counsels, his outward condition far from any fixation, but still upon the remove, hunted like a partridge on the mountains. 4. His body was wasted, and almost worn away (*v.* 24): *My knees are weak through fasting* either forced fasting (for want of food when he was persecuted, or for want of appetite when he was sick) or voluntary fasting, when he chastened his soul either for sin or affliction, his own or other's, xxxix. 13; lxix. 13. *My flesh fails of fatness*; that is, it has lost the fatness it had, so that I have become skeleton, nothing but skin and bones." But it is better to have this leanness in the body while the soul prospers and is in health, than like Israel, to have leanness sent into the soul, while the body is feasted. 5. He was ridiculed and reproached by his enemies (*v.* 25); his devotions and his afflictions thus made the matter of their laughter, and, upon both those accounts, God's people have been exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that were at ease. In all this David was a type of Christ, who in his humiliation was thus wounded, thus weakened, thus reproached; he was also a type of the church, who is often afflicted, tossed with tempests, and comforted.

II. He prays for mercy for himself in general (*v.* 21): "Do thou for me, O God! Lord! appear for me, act for me." If

be for us, he will do for us, will do more abundantly for us than we are able either to ask or think. He does not prescribe to God what he should do for him, but refers himself to his wisdom: "Lord, do for me what seems good in thy eyes. Do that which thou knowest will be for me, really for me, in the issue for me, though for the present it may seem to make against me." More particularly, he prays (v. 26): "*Help me, O Lord my God! O save me! Help me under my trouble, save me out of my trouble; save me from sin, help me to do my duty.*" He prays (v. 28), "Though they curse, *bless thou.*" Here, (1.) He despises the causeless curses of his enemies: *Let them curse.* He said of Shimei, *So let him curse.* They can but show their malice; they can do him no more mischief than the bird by wandering or the swallow by flying, Prov. xxvi. 2. He values the blessing of God as sufficient to counterbalance their curses: *Bless thou,* and then it is no matter though they curse. If God bless us, we need not care who curses us; for how can they curse those whom God has not cursed, nay, whom he has blessed? Num. xxiii. 8. Men's curses are impotent; God's blessings are omnipotent; and those whom we unjustly curse may in faith expect and pray for God's blessing, his special blessing. When the Pharisees cast out the poor man for confessing Christ, Christ found him, John ix. 35. When men without cause say all the ill they can of us, and wish all the ills they can to us, we may with comfort lift up our heart to God in this petition: *Let them curse, but bless thou.* He prays (v. 28), *Let thy servant rejoice.* Those that know how to value God's blessing, let them but be sure of it, and they will be glad of it.

III. He prays that his enemies might be ashamed (v. 28), clothed with shame (v. 29), that they might cover themselves with their own confusion, that they might be left to themselves, to do that which would expose them and manifest their folly before all men, or rather that they might be disappointed in their designs and enterprises against David, and thereby might be filled with shame, as the adversaries of the Jews were, Neh. vi. 16. Nay, in this he prays that they might be brought to repentance, which is the chief thing we should beg of God for our enemies. Sinners indeed bring shame upon themselves, but they are true penitents that take shame to themselves and cover themselves with their own confusion.

IV. He pleads God's glory, the honour of his name:—*Do for me, for thy name's sake* (v. 21), especially the honour of his goodness, by which he has proclaimed his name: "*Deceiver me, because thy mercy is good;* it is what thou thyself dost delight in, and it is what I depend upon. Save me, not according to my merit, for I have none to pretend to, but according to thy mercy; let that be the foundation, the reason, the measure, of my salvation."

Lastly, He concludes the psalm with joy: the joy of faith, joy in assurance that his present conflicts would end in triumphs. 1. He promises God that he will praise him (v. 30). "*I will greatly praise the Lord, not only with my heart, but with my mouth; I will praise him, not in secret only, but among the multitude.*" 2. He promises himself that he shall have cause to praise God (v. 31): *He shall stand at the right hand of the poor,* nigh to him, a present help; he shall stand at his right hand, as his patron and advocate to plead his cause against his accusers and to bring him off, to save him from those that condemn his soul and would execute their sentence if they could. God was David's protector in his sufferings, and was present also with the Lord Jesus in his, stood at his right hand, so that he was not moved (xvi. 8), saved his soul from those that pretended to be the judges of it, and received it into his own hands. Let all those that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him.

PSALM CX.

This psalm is pure gospel; it is only, and wholly, concerning Christ, the Messiah promised to the fathers and expected by them. It is plain that the Jews of old, even the worst of them so understood it, however the modern Jews have endeavoured to pervert it and to rob us of it; for when the Lord Jesus proposed a question to the Pharisees upon the first words of this psalm, where he takes it for granted that David, in spirit, calls Christ his Lord though he was his Son, they chose rather to say nothing, and to own themselves grieved, than to make it a question whether David does indeed speak of the Messiah or no; for they freely yield so plain a truth, though they foresee it will turn to their own disgrace, Matt. xxii. 41, &c. Of him therefore, no doubt the prophet here speaks, of him and of no other man. Christ, as our Redeemer, executes the office of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king, with reference both to his humiliation and his exaltation, and of each of these we have here an account. I. His prophetic office, ver. 2. II. His priestly office, ver. 4. III. His kingly office, ver. 1, 3, 5, 6. IV. His estates of humiliation and exaltation, ver. 7. In singing this psalm we must set faith upon Christ, submit ourselves entirely to him, to his grace and government, and triumph in him as our prophet, priest, and king, by whom we hope to be ruled, and taught, and saved, for ever, and as the prophet, priest, and king, of the whole church, who shall reign till he has put down all opposing rule, principality, and power, and delivered up the kingdom to God the Father.

A psalm of David.

THE LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. 2 The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. 3 Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. 4 The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

Some have called this psalm *David's creed*, almost all the articles of the Christian faith being found in it; the title calls it *David's psalm*, for in the believing foresight of the Messiah he both praised God and solaced himself, much more may we, in singing it, to whom that is fulfilled, and therefore more clearly revealed, which is here foretold. Glorious things are here spoken of Christ, and such as oblige us to consider how great he is.

I. That he is David's Lord. We must take special notice of this because he himself does. Matt. xxii. 43, *David, in spirit, calls him Lord*. And as the apostle proves the dignity of Melchizedek, and in him of Christ, by this, that so great a man as Abraham was paid him *tithes* (Heb. vii. 4), so we may by this prove the dignity of the Lord Jesus that David, that great man, *called him his Lord*; by him that king acknowledges himself to reign, and to him to be acceptable as a servant to his lord. Some think he calls him his *Lord* because he was the Lord that was to descend from him, his son and yet his Lord. Thus his immediate mother calls him her *Saviour* (Luke i. 47); even his parents were his subjects, his saved ones.

II. That he is constituted a sovereign Lord by the counsel and decree of God himself: *The Lord, Jehovah, said unto him, Sit as a king. He receives of the Father this honour and glory* (2 Pet. i. 17), from him who is the fountain of honour and power, and *takes it not to himself*. He is therefore rightful Lord, and his title is incontestable; for what God has said cannot be gainsaid. He is therefore everlasting Lord; for what God has said shall not be unsaid. He will certainly take and keep possession of that kingdom which the Father has committed to him, and none can hinder.

III. That he was to be advanced to the highest honour, and entrusted with an absolute sovereign power both in heaven and in earth: *Sit thou at my right hand*. Sitting is a resting posture; after his services and sufferings, he entered into rest from all his labours. It is a ruling posture; he sits to give law, to give judgment. It is a remaining posture; he sits like a king for ever. Sitting at the right hand of God denotes both his dignity and his dominion, the honour put upon him and the trusts reposed in him by the Father. All the favours that come from God to man, and all the service that comes from man to God, pass through his hand.

IV. That all his enemies were in due time to be made his footstool, and not till then; but then also he must reign in the glory of the Mediator, though the work of the Mediator will be, in a manner, at an end. Note, 1. Even Christ himself has enemies that fight against his kingdom and subjects, his honour and interest, in the world. There are those that will not have him to reign over them, and thereby they join themselves to Satan, who will not have him to reign at all. 2. These enemies will be made his footstool; he will subdue them and triumph over them; he will do it easily, as easily as we put a footstool in its proper place, and such a propriety there will be in it. He will make himself easy by the doing of it, as a man that sits with a footstool under his feet; he will subdue them in such a way as shall be most for his honour and their perpetual disgrace; he will tread down the wicked, Mal. iv. 3. 3. God the Father has undertaken to do it: *I*

will make them thy footstool, who can do it. 4. It will not be done immediately. All his enemies are now in a chain, but not yet made his footstool. This the apostle observes. Heb. ii. 8, *We see not yet all things put under him*. Christ himself must wait for the completing of his victories and triumphs. 5. He shall wait till it is done; and all their might and malice shall not give the least disturbance to his government. His sitting at God's right hand is a pledge to him of his setting his feet, at last, on the necks of all his enemies.

V. That he should have a kingdom set up in the world, beginning at Jerusalem (v. 2): *"The Lord shall send the rod or sceptre of thy strength out of Zion*, by which thy kingdom shall be erected, maintained, and administered." The Messiah, when he sits on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, will have a church on earth, and will have an eye to it; for he is *King upon the holy hill of Zion* (ii. 6), in opposition to Mount Sinai, that frightful mountain, on which the law was given, Heb. xii. 18, 24; Gal. iv. 24, 25. The kingdom of Christ took rise from Zion, the city of David, for he was the Son of David, and was to have the *throne of his father David*. By the rod of his strength, or his strong rod, is meant his everlasting gospel, and the power of the Holy Ghost going along with it—the report of the word, and the arm of the Lord accompanying it (Isa. liii. 1, Rom. i. 16),—the gospel coming in word, in power, and in the *holy Ghost*, 1 Thess. i. 5. By the word and Spirit of God souls were to be reduced first, and brought into obedience to God, and then ruled and governed according to the will of God. This strong rod God sent forth; he poured out the Spirit, and gave both commissions and qualifications to those that preached the word, and *ministered the Spirit*, Gal. iii. 5. It was sent out of Zion, for there the Spirit was given, and there the preaching of the gospel among all nations must begin, at Jerusalem. See Luke xxiv. 47, 49. *Out of Zion must go forth the law of faith*, Isa. ii. 3. Note, The gospel of Christ, being sent of God, is *mighty through God* to do wonders, 2 Cor. x. 4. It is *the rod of Christ's strength*. Some make it to allude not only to the sceptre of a prince, denoting the glory of Christ shining in the gospel, but to a shepherd's crook, his rod and staff, denoting the tender care Christ takes of his church; for he is both *the great and the good Shepherd*.

VI. That his kingdom, being set up, should be maintained and kept up in the world, in spite of all the oppositions of the power of darkness. 1. Christ shall rule, shall give laws, and govern his subjects by them, shall perfect them, and make them easy and happy, shall do his own will, fulfil his own counsels, and maintain his own interests among men. His kingdom is of God, and it shall stand, his crown sits firmly on his head, and there it

shall flourish. 2. He shall rule in the midst of his enemies. He sits in heaven in the midst of his friends; his throne of glory there is surrounded with none but faithful worshippers of him, Rev. v. 11. But he rules on earth in the midst of his enemies, and his throne of government here is surrounded with those that hate him and fight against him. Christ's church is a lily among thorns, and his disciples are sent forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; he knows where they dwell, even where Satan's seat is (Rev. ii. 13), and this redounds to his honour that he not only keeps his ground, but gains his point, notwithstanding all the malignant policies and powers of hell and earth, which cannot shake the rock on which the church is built. *Great is the truth, and will prevail.*

VII. That he should have a great number of subjects, who should be to him for a name and a praise, v. 3.

1. That they should be his own people, and such as he should have an incontestable title to. They are given to him by the Father, who gave them their lives and beings, and to whom their lives and beings were forfeited. *Thine they were and thou gavest them me*, John xvii. 6. They are redeemed by him; he has purchased them to be to himself a peculiar people, Tit. ii. 14. They are his by right, antecedent to their consent. He had much people in Corinth before they were converted, Acts xviii. 10.

2. That they should be a willing people, a people of willingness, alluding to servants that choose their service and are not coerced to it (they love their masters and would not go out free), to soldiers that are volunteers and not pressed men ("Here am I, send me"), to sacrifices that are free-will offerings and not offered of necessity; we present ourselves living sacrifices. Note, Christ's people are a willing people. The conversion of a soul consists in its being willing to be Christ's, coming under his yoke and into his interests, with an entire compliancy and satisfaction.

3. That they should be so in the day of his power, in the day of thy muster (so some); when thou art enlisting soldiers thou shalt find a multitude of volunteers forward to be enlisted; let but the standard be set up and he Gentiles will seek to it, Isa. xi. 10; lx. 3. Or when thou art drawing them out to battle they shall be willing to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes, Rev. xiv. 4. In the day of thy armies (so some); "when the first preachers of the gospel shall be sent forth, as Christ's armies, to reduce apostate men, and to ruin the kingdom of apostate angels, then all that are thy people shall be willing; that will be thy time of setting up thy kingdom." In the day of thy strength, so we take it. There is a general power which goes along with the gospel to all, proper to make them willing to be Christ's people, arising from the supreme authority of its great author and the intrinsic excellency of the things themselves contained

in it, besides the undeniable miracles that were wrought for the confirmation of it. And there is also a particular power, the power of the Spirit, going along with the power of the word, to the people of Christ, which is effectual to make them willing. The former leaves sinners without matter of excuse; this leaves saints without matter of boasting. Whoever are willing to be Christ's people, it is the free and mighty grace of God that makes them so.

4. That they should be so in the beauty of holiness, that is, (1.) They shall be allured to him by the beauty of holiness; they shall be charmed into a subjection to Christ by the sight given them of his beauty, who is the holy Jesus, and the beauty of the church, which is the holy nation. (2.) They shall be admitted by him into the beauty of holiness, as spiritual priests, to minister in his sanctuary; for by the blood of Jesus we have boldness to enter into the holiest. (3.) They shall attend upon him in the beautiful attire or ornaments of grace and sanctification. Note, Holiness is the livery of Christ's family and that which becomes his house for ever. Christ's soldiers are all thus clothed; these are the colours they wear. The armies of heaven follow him in fine linen, clean and white, Rev. xix. 14.

5. That he should have great numbers of people devoted to him. The multitude of the people is the honour of the prince, and that shall be the honour of this prince. *From the womb of the morning thou hast the dew of thy youth*, that is, abundance of young converts, like the drops of dew in a summer's morning. In the early days of the gospel, in the morning of the New Testament, the youth of the church, great numbers flocked to Christ, and there were multitudes that believed, a remnant of Jacob, that was as a dew from the Lord, Mic. v. 7; Isa. lxiv. 4, 8. Or thus: "From the womb of the morning (from their very childhood) thou hast the dew of thy people's youth, that is, their hearts and affections when they are young; it is thy youth, because it is dedicated to thee." The dew of the youth is a numerous, illustrious, hopeful show of young people flocking to Christ, which would be to the world as dew to the ground, to make it fruitful. Note, The dew of our youth, even in the morning of our days, ought to be consecrated to our Lord Jesus.

6. That he should be not only a king, but a priest, v. 4. The same Lord that said, *Sit thou at my right hand, swore, and will not repent, Thou art a priest*, that is, Be thou a priest; for by the word of his oath he was consecrated. Note, (1.) Our Lord Jesus Christ is a priest. He was appointed to that office and faithfully executes it; he is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sin (Heb. v. 1), to make atonement for our sins and to recommend our services to God's acceptance. He is God's minister to us, and our advocate with God,

and so is a Mediator between us and God. (2.) He is a *priest for ever*. He was designed for a priest, in God's eternal counsels; he was a priest to the Old-Testament saints, and will be a priest for all believers to the end of time, Heb. xiii. 8. He is said to be a *priest for ever*, not only because we are never to expect any other dispensation of grace than this by the priesthood of Christ, but because the blessed fruits and consequences of it will remain to eternity. (3.) He is made a priest with an oath, which the apostle urges to prove the pre-eminence of his priesthood above that of Aaron, Heb. vii. 20, 21. *The Lord has sworn*, to show that in the commission there was no implied reserve of a power of revocation; for *he will not repent*, as he did concerning Eli's priesthood, 1 Sam. ii. 30. This was intended for the honour of Christ and the comfort of Christians. The priesthood of Christ is confirmed by the highest ratifications possible, that it might be an unshaken foundation for our faith and hope to build upon. (4.) He is a priest, not of the order of Aaron, but of that of Melchizedek, which, as it was prior, so it was upon many accounts superior, to that of Aaron, and a more lively representation of Christ's priesthood. Melchizedek was a *priest upon his throne*, so is Christ (Zech. vi. 13), king of righteousness and king of peace. Melchizedek had no successor, nor has Christ; his is an unchangeable priesthood. The apostle comments largely upon these words (Heb. vii.) and builds on them his discourse of Christ's priestly office, which he shows was no new notion, but built upon this most sure word of prophecy. For, as the New Testament explains the Old, so the Old Testament confirms the New, and Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega of both.

5 The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. 6 He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the *places* with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries. 7 He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head.

Here we have our great Redeemer

I. Conquering his enemies (v. 5, 6) in order to the making of them *his footstool*, v. 1. Our Lord Jesus will certainly bring to nought all the opposition made to his kingdom, and bring to ruin all those who make that opposition and persist in it. He will be too hard for those, whoever they may be, that fight against him, against his subjects and the interest of his kingdom among men, either by persecutions or by perverse disputings. Observe here,

1. The conqueror: *The Lord—Adonai*, the Lord Jesus, he to whom all judgment is committed, he shall make his own part good against his enemies *The Lord at thy right*

hand, O church! so some; that is, the Lord that is nigh unto his people, and a very present help to them, that is at their right hand, to strengthen and succour them, shall appear for them against his and their enemies. See cix. 31. *He shall stand at the right hand of the poor*, xvi. 8. Some observe that when Christ is said to do his work at the right hand of his church it intimates that, if we would have Christ to appear for us, we must *best ourselves*, 2 Sam. v. 24. Or, rather, *At thy right hand, O God!* referring to v. 1, in the dignity and dominion to which he is advanced. Note, Christ's sitting at the right hand of God speaks as much terror to his enemies as happiness to his people.

2. The time fixed for this victory: *In the day of his wrath*, that is, the time appointed for it, when the measure of their iniquities is full and they are ripe for ruin. When the day of his patience has expired, then the day of his wrath comes. Note, (1.) Christ has wrath of his own, as well as grace. It concerns us to *kiss the Son*, for he can be *angry* (ii. 12), and we read of the *wrath of the Lamb*, Rev. vi. 16. (2.) There is a day of wrath set, a year of *recompences for the controversy of Zion, the year of the redeemed*. The time is set for the destruction of particular enemies, and when that time shall come it shall be done, how unlikely soever it may seem; but the great day of his wrath will be at the end of time, Rev. vi. 17.

3. The extent of this victory. (1.) It shall reach very high: *He shall strike through kings*. The greatest of men, that set themselves against Christ, shall be made to fall before him. Though they be *kings of the earth*, and rulers, accustomed to carry their point, they cannot carry it against Christ, they do but make themselves ridiculous by the attempt, ii. 2—5. Be their power among men ever so despotic, Christ will call them to an account; be their strength ever so great, their policies ever so deep, Christ will be too hard for them, and wherein they deal proudly he will be above them. Satan is the prince of this world, Death the king of terrors, and we read of kings that make war with the Lamb: but they shall all be brought down and broken. (2.) It shall reach very far. The trophies of Christ's victories will be set up *among the heathen*, and in many countries, wherever any of his enemies are, not his eye only, but his *hand, shall find them out* (xxi. 8) and his wrath shall follow them. He will *plead with all nations*, Joel iii. 2.

4. The equity of this victory: *He shall judge among them*. It is not a military execution, which is done in fury, but a judicial one. Before he condemns and slays, he will judge: he will make it appear that they have brought this ruin upon themselves, and have themselves rolled the stone which returns upon them, that he may be *justified when he speaks*, and the *heavens may declare his righteousness*. See Rev. xix. 1, 2.

5. The effect of this victory; it shall be the complete and utter ruin of all his enemies. He shall strike them through, for he strikes home and gives an incurable wound: He shall wound the heads, which seems to refer to the first promise of the Messiah (Gen. iii. 15), that he should bruise the serpent's head. He shall wound the head of his enemies, Ps. lxviii. 21. Some read it, *He shall wound him that is the head over many countries*, either Satan or Antichrist, whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of his mouth. He shall make such destruction of his enemies that he shall fill the places with the dead bodies. The slain of the Lord shall be many. See Isa. xxxiv. 3, &c.; Ezek. xxxix. 12, 14; Rev. xiv. 20; xix. 17, 18. The filling of the valleys (for so some read it) with dead bodies, perhaps denotes the filling of hell (which is sometimes compared to the valley of Hinnom, Isa. xxx. 33; Jer. vii. 32) with damned souls, for that will be the portion of those that persist in their enmity to Christ.

II. We have here the Redeemer saving his friends and comforting them (v. 7); for their benefit, 1. He shall be humbled: *He shall drink of the brook in the way*, that bitter cup which the Father put into his hand. He shall be so abased and impoverished, and withal so intent upon his work, that he shall drink puddle-water out of the lakes in the highway; so some. The wrath of God, running in the channel of the curse of the law, was the brook in the way, in the way of his undertaking, which he must go through, or which ran in the way of our salvation and obstructed it, which lay between us and heaven. Christ drank of this brook when he was made a curse for us, and therefore, when he entered upon his suffering, he went over the brook Kidron, John xviii. 1. He drank deeply of this black brook (so Kidron signifies), this bloody brook, so drank of the brook in the way as to take it out of the way of our redemption and salvation. 2. He shall be exalted: *Therefore shall he lift up the head*. When he died he bowed the head (John xix. 30), but he soon lifted up the head by his own power in his resurrection. He lifted up the head as a conqueror, yea, more than a conqueror. This denotes not only his exaltation, but his exultation; not only his elevation, but his triumph in it. Col. ii. 15, *Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them*. David spoke as a type of him in this (Ps. xxvii. 6), *Now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies*. His exaltation was the reward of his humiliation; because he humbled himself, therefore God also highly exalted him, Phil. ii. 9. Because he drank of the brook in the way therefore he lifted up his own head, and so lifted up the heads of all his faithful followers, who, if they suffer with him, shall also reign with him.

PSALM CXI.

his and divers of the psalms that follow it seem to have been penned by David for the service of the church in their solemn feasts, and not upon any particular occasion. This is a psalm of praise.

The title of it is "Hallelujah—Praise ye the Lord," intimating that we must address ourselves to the use of this psalm with hearts disposed to praise God. It is composed alphabetically, each sentence beginning with a several letter of the Hebrew alphabet, in order exactly, two sentences to each verse, and three a piece to the last two. The psalmist, exhorting to praise God, 1. Sets himself for an example, ver. 1. 11. Furnishes us with matter for praise from the works of God. 1. The greatness of his works and the glory of them. 2. The righteousness of them. 3. The goodness of them. 4. The power of them. 5. The conformity of them to his word of promise. 6. The perpetuity of them. These observations are intermixed, ver. 2—9. III. He recommends the holy fear of God, and a conscientious obedience to his commands, as the most acceptable way of praising God, ver. 10.

PRAISE ye the LORD. I will praise the LORD with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation. 2 The works of the LORD are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. 3 His work is honourable and glorious: and his righteousness endureth for ever. 4 He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered: the LORD is gracious and full of compassion. 5 He hath given meat unto them that fear him: he will ever be mindful of his covenant.

The title of the psalm being *Hallelujah*, the psalmist (as every author ought to have) has an eye to his title, and keeps to his text.

I. He resolves to praise God himself, v. 1. What duty we call others to we must oblige and excite ourselves to; nay, whatever others do, whether they will praise God or no, we and our houses must determine to do it, we and our hearts; for such is the psalmist's resolution here: *I will praise the Lord with my whole heart*. My heart, my whole heart, being devoted to his honour, shall be employed in this work; and this in the assembly, or secret, of the upright, in the cabinet-council, and in the congregation of Israelites. Note, We must praise God both in private and in public, in less and greater assemblies, in our own families and in the courts of the Lord's house; but in both it is most comfortable to do it in concert with the upright, who will heartily join in it. Private meetings for devotion should be kept up as well as more public and promiscuous assemblies.

II. He recommends to us the works of the Lord as the proper subject of our meditations when we are praising him—the dispensations of his providence towards the world, towards the church, and towards particular persons.

1. God's works are very magnificent, great like himself; there is nothing in them that is mean or trifling: they are the products of infinite wisdom and power, and we must say this upon the first view of them, before we come to enquire more particularly into them, that the works of the Lord are great, v. 2. There is something in them surprising, and that strikes an awe upon us. All the works of the Lord are spoken of as one (v. 3); it is his work, such is the beauty and harmony of Providence and so admirably do all its dispensa-

tions centre in one design; it was cried to *the wheels, O wheel!* Ezek. x. 13. Take all together, and it is *honourable and glorious*, and such as becomes him. 2. They are entertaining and exercising to the inquisitive—*sought out of all those that have pleasure therein*. Note, (1.) All that truly love God have pleasure in his works, and reckon all well that he does; nor do their thoughts dwell upon any subject with more delight than on the works of God, which the more they are looked into the more they give us of a pleasing surprise. (2.) Those that have pleasure in the works of God will not take up with a superficial transient view of them, but will diligently search into them and observe them. In studying both natural and political history we should have this in our eye, to discover the greatness and glory of God's works. (3.) These works of God, that are humbly and diligently sought into, shall be *sought out*; those that *seek shall find* (so some read it); *they are found of all those that have pleasure in them*, or found in all their parts, designs, purposes, and several concerns (so Dr. Hammond), for the *secret of the Lord is with those that fear him*, xxv. 14. 3. They are all just and holy: *His righteousness endures for ever*. Whatever he does, he never did, nor ever will do, any wrong to any of his creatures; and therefore his works *endure for ever* (Eccl. iii. 14) because the righteousness of them endures. 4. They are admirable and memorable, fit to be registered and kept on record. Much that we do is so trifling that it is not fit to be spoken of or told again; the greatest kindness is to forget it. But notice is to be taken of God's works, and an account to be kept of them (v. 4). *He has made his wonderful works to be remembered*; he has done that which is worthy to be remembered, which cannot but be remembered, and he has instituted ways and means for the keeping of some of them in remembrance, as the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt by the passover. *He has made himself a memorial by his wonderful works* (so some read it); see Isa. lxiii. 10. By that which God did with his *glorious arm he made himself an everlasting name*. 5. They are very kind. In them the Lord shows that he is *gracious and full of compassion*. As of the works of creation, so of the works of providence, we must say, They are not only all very great, but all very good. Dr. Hammond takes this to be the name which God has made to himself by his wonderful works, the same with that which he proclaimed to Moses, *The Lord God is gracious and merciful*, Exod. xxiv. 6. God's pardoning sin is the most wonderful of all his works and which ought to be remembered to his glory. It is a further instance of his grace and compassion that *he has given meat to those that fear him*, v. 5. He gives them their daily bread, food convenient for them; so he does to others by common providence, but to those that fear him he gives it by covenant and in pursuance of the pro-

mise, for it follows, *He will be ever mindful of his covenant*; so that they can taste covenant-love even in common mercies. Some refer this to the manna with which God fed his people Israel in the wilderness, others to the spoil they got from the Egyptians when they came out with great substance, according to the promise, Gen. xv. 14. When God *broke the heads of Leviathan* he gave him to be meat to his people, Ps. lxxiv. 14. *He has given prey to those that fear him* (so the margin has it) not only fed them, but enriched them, and given their enemies to be a prey to them. 6. They are earnest of what he will do, according to his promise: *He will ever be mindful of his covenant*, for he has ever been so; and, as he never did, so he never will, let one jot or tittle of it fall to the ground. Though God's people have their infirmities, and are often unmindful of his commands, yet he will *ever be mindful of his covenant*.

6 He hath showed his people the power of his works, that he may give them the heritage of the heathen. 7 The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure. 8 They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness. 9 He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name. 10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever.

We are here taught to give glory to God,

I. For the great things he has done for his people, for his people Israel, of old and of late: *He has shown his people the power of his works* (v. 6), in what he has wrought for them; many a time he has given proofs of his omnipotence, and shown them what he can do, and that there is nothing too hard for him to do. Two things are specified to show the power of his works:—1. The possession God gave to Israel in the land of Canaan, *that he might give them*, or in giving them, *the heritage of the heathen*. This he did in Joshua's time, when the seven nations were subdued, and in David's time, when the neighbouring nations were many of them brought into subjection to Israel and became tributaries to David. Herein God showed his sovereignty, in disposing of kingdoms as he pleases, and his might, in making good his disposals. If God will make the heritage of the heathen to be the heritage of Israel, who can either arraign his counsel or stay his hand? 2. The many deliverances which he wrought for his people when by their iniquities they had sold themselves into the hand of their enemies (v. 9): *He sent*

redemption unto his people, not only out of Egypt at first, but often afterwards; and these redemptions were typical of the great redemption which in the fulness of time was to be wrought out by the Lord Jesus, that redemption in Jerusalem which so many waited for.

II. For the stability both of his word and of his works, which assure us of the great things he will do for them. 1. What God has done shall never be undone. He will not undo it himself, and men and devils cannot (v. 7): *The works of his hand are verity and judgment* (v. 8), that is, they are done in truth and uprightness; all he does is consonant to the eternal rules and reasons of equity, all according to the counsel of his wisdom and the purpose of his will, all well done and therefore there is nothing to be altered or amended, but his works are firm and unchangeable. Upon the beginning of his works we may depend for the perfecting of them; work that is done properly will last, will neither go to decay nor sink under the stress that is laid upon it. 2. What God has said shall never be unsaid: *All his commandments are sure*, all straight and therefore all steady. His purposes, the rule of his actions, shall all have their accomplishment: *Has he spoken, and will he not make it good?* No doubt he will; whether he commands light or darkness, it is done as he commands. His precepts, the rule of our actions, are unquestionably just and good, and therefore unchangeable and not to be repealed; his promises and threatenings are all sure, and will be made good; nor shall the unbelief of man make either the one or the other of no effect. They are established, and therefore *they stand fast for ever and ever*, and the scripture cannot be broken. The wise God is never put upon new counsels, nor obliged to take new measures, either in his laws or in his providences. All is said, as all is done, in truth and uprightness, and therefore it is immutable. Men's folly and falsehood make them *unstable in all their ways*, but infinite wisdom and truth for ever exclude retraction and revocation: *He has commanded his covenant for ever*. God's covenant is commanded, for he has made it as one that has an incontestable authority to prescribe both what we must do and what we must expect, and an unquestionable ability to perform both what he has promised in the blessings of the covenant and what he has threatened in the curses of it, cv. 8.

III. For the setting up and establishing of religion among men. Because *holy and reverend is his name, and the fear of him is the beginning of wisdom*, therefore *his praise endureth for ever*, that is, he is to be everlastingly praised. 1. Because the discoveries of religion tend so much to his honour. Review what he has made known of himself in his word and in his works, and you will see, and say, that God is great and greatly

to be feared; for his name is holy, his infinite purity and rectitude appear in all that whereby he has made himself known, and because it is holy therefore it is reverend, and to be thought of and mentioned with a holy awe. Note, What is holy is reverend; the angels have an eye to God's holiness when they cover their faces before him, and nothing is more man's honour than his sanctification. It is in his holy places that God appears most terrible, lxviii. 35; Lev. x. 3. 2. Because the dictates of religion tend so much to man's happiness. We have reason to praise God that the matter is so well contrived that our reverence of him and obedience to him are as much our interest as they are our duty. (1.) Our reverence of him is so: *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*. It is not only reasonable that we should fear God, because his name is reverend and his nature is holy, but it is advantageous to us. It is wisdom; it will direct us to speak and act as becomes us, in a consistency with ourselves, and for our own benefit. It is the head of wisdom, that is (as we read it), *it is the beginning of wisdom*. Men can never begin to be wise till they begin to fear God; all true wisdom takes its rise from true religion, and has its foundation in it. Or, as some understand it, it is the chief wisdom, and the most excellent, the first in dignity. It is the principal wisdom, and the principle of wisdom, to worship God and give honour to him as our Father and Master. Those manage well who always act under the government of his holy fear. (2.) Our obedience to him is so: *A good understanding have all those that do his commandments*. Where the fear of the Lord rules in the heart there will be a constant conscientious care to keep his commandments, not to talk of them, but to do them; and such have a good understanding, that is, [1.] They are well understood; their obedience is graciously accepted as a plain indication of their mind that they do indeed fear God. Compare Prov. iii. 4, *So shalt thou find favour and good understanding*. God and man will look upon those as meaning well, and approve of them, who make conscience of their duty, though they have their mistakes. What is honestly intended shall be well taken. [2.] They understand well. First, It is a sign that they do understand well. The most obedient are accepted as the most intelligent; those understand themselves and their interest best that make God's law their rule and are in every thing ruled by it. A great understanding those have that know God's commandments and can discourse learnedly of them, but a good understanding have those that do them and walk according to them. Secondly, It is the way to understand better: *A good understanding are they to all that do them*; the fear of the Lord and the laws that give men a good understanding, and are able to make them *wise unto salvation*. If

any man will do his will, he shall know more and more clearly of the doctrine of Christ, John vii. 17. *Good success have all those that do them* (so the margin), according to what was promised to Joshua if he would observe to do according to the law. Josh. i. 8, *Then thou shalt make thy way prosperous and shalt have good success.* We have reason to praise God, to praise him for ever, for putting man into such a fair way to happiness. Some apply the last words rather to the good man who fears the Lord than to the good God: *His praise endures for ever.* It is not of men perhaps, but it is of God (Rom. ii. 29), and that praise which is of God endures for ever when the praise of men is withered and gone.

PSALM CXII.

This psalm is composed alphabetically, as the former is, and is (like the former) entitled "Hallelujah," though it treats of the happiness of the saints, because it redounds to the glory of God, and whatever we have the pleasure of he must have the praise of. It is a comment upon the last verse of the foregoing psalm, and fully shows how much it is our wisdom to fear God and do his commandments. We have here, I. The character of the righteous, ver. 1. II. The blessedness of the righteous. 1. There is a blessing entailed upon their posterity, ver. 2. 2. There is a blessing conferred upon themselves. (1.) Prosperity outward and inward, ver. 3. (2.) Comfort, ver. 4. (3.) Wisdom, ver. 5. (4.) Stability, ver. 6-8. (5.) Honour, ver. 6, 9. III. The misery of the wicked, ver. 10. So that good and evil are set before us, the blessing and the curse. In singing this psalm we must not only teach and admonish ourselves and one another to answer to the characters here given of the happy, but comfort and encourage ourselves and one another with the privileges and comforts here secured to the holy.

PRAISE ye the LORD. Blessed is the man *that feareth the LORD, that delighteth greatly in his commandments.* 2 His seed shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed. 3 Wealth and riches *shall be* in his house: and his righteousness endureth for ever. 4 Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: *he is* gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous. 5 A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth: he will guide his affairs with discretion.

The psalmist begins with a call to us to praise God, but immediately applies himself to praise the people of God; for whatever glory is acknowledged to be on them it comes from God, and must return to him; as he is their praise, so they are his. We have reason to praise the Lord that there are a people in the world who fear him and serve him, and that they are a happy people, both which are owing entirely to the grace of God. Now here we have,

I. A description of those who are here pronounced blessed, and to whom these promises are made

1. They are well-principled with pious and devout affections. Those have the privileges of God's subjects, not who cry, *Lord, Lord*, but who are indeed well affected to his government. (1.) They are such as stand in awe of God and have a constant reverence for his majesty and deference to his will. The happy man is he *that fears the Lord*, v. 1. (2.) They are such as take a pleasure in their

duty. He *that fears the Lord*, as a Father, with the disposition of a child, not of a slave, *delights greatly in his commandments*, is well pleased with them and with the equity and goodness of them; they are written in his heart; it is his choice to be under them, and he calls them an easy, a pleasant, yoke; it is his delight to be searching into and conversing with God's commandments, by reading, hearing, and meditation, Ps. i. 2. He delights not only in God's promises, but in his precepts, and thinks himself happy under God's government as well as in his favour. It is a pleasure to him to be found in the way of his duty, and he is in his element when he is in the service of God. Herein he delights greatly, more than in any of the employments and enjoyments of this world. And what he does in religion is done from principle, because he sees amiableness in religion and advantage by it.

2. They are honest and sincere in their professions and intentions. They are called *the upright* (v. 2, 4), who are really as good as they seem to be, and deal faithfully both with God and man. There is no true religion without sincerity; that is gospel-perfection.

3. They are both just and kind in all their dealings: *He is gracious, full of compassion, and righteous* (v. 4), dares not do any wrong to any man, but does to every man all the good he can, and that from a principle of compassion and kindness. It was said of God, in the foregoing psalm (v. 4), *He is gracious, and full of compassion*; and here it is said of the good man that he is so; for herein we must be *followers of God as dear children*; be merciful as he is. He is *full of compassion, and yet righteous*; what he does good with is what he came honestly by. God hates robbery by burnt-offerings, and so does he. One instance is given of his beneficence (v. 5): *He shows favour and lends*. Sometimes there is as much charity in lending as in giving, as it obliges the borrower both to industry and honesty. He is *gracious and lends* (xxxvii. 26); he does it from a right principle, not as the usurer lends for his own advantage, nor merely out of generosity, but out of pure charity; he does it in a right manner, not grudgingly, but pleasantly, and with a cheerful countenance.

II. The blessedness that is here entailed upon those that answer to these characters. Happiness, all happiness, *to the man that feareth the Lord*. Whatever men think or say of them, God says that they are blessed; and his saying so makes them so.

1. The posterity of good men shall fare the better for his goodness (v. 2): *His seed shall be mighty on earth*. Perhaps he himself shall not be so great in the world, nor make such a figure, as his seed after him shall for his sake. Religion has been the raising of many a family, if not so as to advance it high, yet so as to fix it firmly. When good men themselves are happy in heaven their seed perhaps are considerable

on earth, and will themselves own that it is by virtue of a blessing descending from them. *The generation of the upright shall be blessed*; if they tread in their steps, they shall be the more blessed for their relation to them, *beloved for the Father's sake* (Rom. xi. 28), for so runs the covenant—*I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed*; while *the seed of evil-doers shall never be renewed*. Let the children of godly parents value themselves upon it, and take heed of doing any thing to forfeit the blessing entailed upon the generation of the upright.

2. They shall prosper in the world, and especially their souls shall prosper, v. 3. (1.) They shall be blessed with outward prosperity as far as is good for them: *Wealth and riches shall be in the upright man's house*, not in his heart (for he is none of those in whom the love of money reigns), perhaps not so much in his hand (for he only begins to raise the estate), but in his house; his family shall grow rich when he is gone. But, (2.) That which is much better is that they shall be blessed with spiritual blessings, which are the true riches. *His wealth shall be in his house*, for he must leave that to others; but *his righteousness* he himself shall have the comfort of to himself, *it endures for ever*. Grace is better than gold, for it will outlast it. He shall have wealth and riches, and yet shall keep up his religion, and in a prosperous condition shall still hold fast his integrity, which many, who kept it in the storm, throw off and let go in the sunshine. Then worldly prosperity is a blessing when it does not make men cool in their piety, but they still persevere in that; and when this endures in the family, and goes along with the wealth and riches, and the heirs of the father's estate inherit his virtues too, that is a happy family indeed. However, the good man's *righteousness endures for ever in the crown of righteousness which fades not away*.

3. They shall have comfort in affliction (v. 4): *Unto the upright there arises light in the darkness*. It is here implied that good men may be in affliction; the promise does not exempt them from that. They shall have their share in the common calamities of human life; but, *when they sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light to them*, Mic. vii. 8. They shall be supported and comforted under their troubles; their spirits shall be light-some when their outward condition is clouded. *Sat lucis intus—There is light enough within*. During the Egyptian darkness the Israelites had light in their dwellings. They shall be in due time, and perhaps when they least expect it, delivered out of their troubles; when he night is darkest the day dawns; nay, at evening-time, when night was looked for, it shall be light.

4. They shall have wisdom for the management of all their concerns, v. 5. He that does good with his estate shall, through the providence of God, increase it, not by miracle,

but by his prudence: *He shall guide his affairs with discretion*, and his God instructs him to discretion and teaches him, Isa. xxviii. 26. It is part of the character of a good man that he will use his discretion in managing his affairs, in getting and saving, that he may have to give. It may be understood of the affairs of his charity: *He shows favour and lends*; but then it is with discretion, that his charity may not be misplaced, that he may give to proper objects what is proper to be given and in due time and proportion. And it is part of the promise to him who thus uses discretion that God will give him more. Those who most use their wisdom see most of their need of it, and ask it of God, who has promised to give it liberally, Jam. i. 5. *He will guide his words with judgment* (so it is in the original); and there is nothing in which we have more occasion for wisdom than in the government of the tongue; blessed is he to whom God gives that wisdom.

6 Surely he shall not be moved for ever: the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. 7 He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD. 8 His heart is established, he shall not be afraid, until he see his desire upon his enemies. 9 He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honour. 10 The wicked shall see it, and be grieved; he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away: the desire of the wicked shall perish.

In these verses we have,

I. The satisfaction of saints, and their stability. It is the happiness of a good man that he shall not be moved for ever, v. 6. Satan and his instruments endeavour to move him, but his foundation is firm and he shall never be moved, at least not moved for ever; if he be shaken for a time, yet he settles again quickly.

1. A good man will have a settled reputation, and that is a great satisfaction. A good man shall have a good name, a name for good things, with God and good people: *The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance* (v. 6); in this sense his righteousness (the memorial of it) endures for ever, v. 9. There are those that do all they can to sully his reputation and to load him with reproach; but his integrity shall be cleared up, and the honour of it shall survive him. Some that have been eminently righteous are had in a lasting remembrance on earth; wherever the scripture is read their good deeds are told for a memorial of them. And the memory of many a good man that is dead and gone is still blessed; but in heaven their remembrance shall be truly everlasting, and the honour of

their righteousness shall there endure for ever, with the reward of it, in the *crown of glory that fades not away*. Those that are forgotten on earth, and despised, are remembered there, and honoured, and *their righteousness found unto praise, and honour, and glory* (1 Pet. i. 7); then, at furthest, shall the horn of a good man *be exalted with honour*, as that of the unicorn when he is a conqueror. Wicked men, now in their pride, *lift up their horns on high*, but they shall all be *cut off*, lxxv. 5, 10. The godly, in their humility and humiliation, have *defiled their horn in the dust* (Job xvi. 15); but the day is coming when it shall *be exalted with honour*. That which shall especially turn to the honour of good men is their liberality and bounty to the poor: *He has dispersed, he has given to the poor*; he has not suffered his charity to run all in one channel, or directed it to some few objects that he had a particular kindness for, but he has dispersed it, *given a portion to seven and also to eight*, has *sown beside all waters*, and by thus scattering he has increased: and this is *his righteousness, which endures for ever*. Alms are called *righteousness*, not because they will justify us by making atonement for our evil deeds, but because they are good deeds, which we are bound to perform; so that if we are not charitable we are not just; we *withhold good from those to whom it is due*. The honour of this endures for ever, for it shall be taken notice of in the great day. *I was hungry, and you gave me meat*. This is quoted as an inducement and encouragement to charity, 2 Cor. ix. 9.

2. A good man shall have a settled spirit, and that is a much greater satisfaction than the former; for *so shall a man have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another*. Surely he shall not be moved, whatever happens, not moved either from his duty or from his comfort; for *he shall not be afraid; his heart is established*, v. 7, 8. This is a part both of the character and of the comfort of good people. It is their endeavour to keep their minds stayed upon God, and so to keep them calm, and easy, and undisturbed; and God has promised them both cause to do so and grace to do so. Observe, (1.) It is the duty and interest of the people of God not to be *afraid of evil tidings*, not to be afraid of hearing bad news; and, when they do, not to be put into confusion by it and into an amazing expectation of worse and worse, but whatever happens, whatever threatens, to be able to say, with blessed Paul, *None of these things move me, neither will I fear, though the earth be removed*, xlvii. 2. (2.) The fixedness of the heart is a sovereign remedy against the disquieting fear of evil tidings. If we keep our thoughts composed, and ourselves masters of them, our wills resigned to the holy will of God, our temper sedate, and our spirits even, under all the unevenness of Providence, we are well fortified against the agitations of

the timorous. (3.) Trusting in the Lord is the best and surest way of fixing and establishing the heart. By faith we must cast anchor in the promise, in the word of God, and so return to him and repose in him as our rest. The heart of man cannot fix any where, to its satisfaction, but in the truth of God, and there it finds firm footing. (4.) Those whose hearts are established by faith will patiently wait till they have gained their point: *He shall not be afraid, till he see his desire upon his enemies*, that is, till he come to heaven, where he shall see Satan, and all his spiritual enemies, trodden under his feet, and, as Israel saw the Egyptians, dead on the sea-shore. *Till he look upon his oppressors* (so Dr. Hammond), till he behold them securely, and look boldly in their faces, as being now no longer under their power. It will complete the satisfaction of the saints, when they shall look back upon their troubles and pressures, and be able to say with St. Paul, when he had recounted the persecutions he endured (2 Tim. iii. 11), *But out of them all the Lord delivered me*.

II. The vexation of sinners, v. 10. Two things shall fret them:—1. The felicity of the righteous: *The wicked shall see the righteous in prosperity and honour and shall be grieved*. It will vex them to see their innocence cleared and their low estate regarded, and those whom they hated and despised, and whose ruin they sought and hoped to see, the favourites of Heaven, and advanced to have *dominion over them* (xlix. 14); this will make them *gnash with their teeth and pine away*. This is often fulfilled in this world. The happiness of the saints is the envy of the wicked, and that envy is the *rottenness of their bones*. But it will most fully be accomplished in the other world, when it shall make damned sinners *gnash with their teeth*, to see *Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom*, to see *all the prophets in the kingdom of God and themselves thrust out*. 2. Their own disappointment: *The desire of the wicked shall perish*. Their desire was wholly to the world and the flesh, and they ruled over them; and therefore, when these perish, their joy is gone, and their expectations from them are cut off, to their everlasting confusion; their hope is as a spider's web.

PSALM CXIII.

This psalm begins and ends with "Hallelujah;" for, as many others, it is designed to promote the great and good work of praising God. 1. We are here called upon and urged to praise God, ver. 1—3. 2. We are here furnished with matter for praise, and words are put into our mouths, in singing which we must with holy fear and love give to God the glory of, 1. The donations of his glory and greatness, ver. 4, 5. 2. The consequences of his grace and goodness (ver. 6—9), which very much illustrate one another, that we may be duly affected with both.

PRAISE ye the LORD. Praise, O ye servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD. 2 Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. 3 From the rising of the sun unto the going down

of the same the LORD's name is to be praised. 4 The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens. 5 Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high, 6 Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth! 7 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; 8 That he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people. 9 He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the LORD.

In this psalm,

I. We are exhorted to give glory to God, to give him the glory due to his name.

1. The invitation is very pressing: *Praise you the Lord*, and again and again, *Praise him, praise him; blessed be his name*, for it is to be praised, r. 1—3. This intimates, (1.) That it is a necessary and most excellent duty, greatly pleasing to God, and has a large room in religion. (2.) That it is a duty we should much abound in, in which we should be frequently employed and greatly enlarged. (3.) That it is work which we are very backward to, and which we need to be engaged and excited to by precept upon precept and line upon line. (4.) That those who are much in praising God themselves will court others to it, both because they find the weight of the work, and that there is need of all the help they can fetch in (there is employment for all hearts, all hands, and all little enough), and because they find the pleasure of it, which they wish all their friends may share in.

2. The invitation is very extensive. Observe, (1.) From whom God has praise—from his own people: they are here called upon to praise God, as those that will answer the call: *Praise, O you servants of the Lord!* They have most reason to praise him; for those that attend him as his servants know him best and receive most of his favours. And it is their business to praise him; that is the work required of them as his servants: it is easy pleasant work to speak well of their Master, and do him what honour they can; if they do not, who should? Some understand it of the Levites; but, if so, all Christians are a royal priesthood, to show forth the praises of him that has called them, 1 Pet. ii. 9. The angels are the servants of the Lord; they need not be called upon by us to praise God, yet it is a comfort to us that they do praise him, and that they praise him better than we can. (2.) From whom he ought to have praise. [1.] From all ages (v. 2)—*from this time forth for evermore*. Let not this work die with us, but let us be doing it in a better world, and let those that come after us be doing it in

this. Let not our seed degenerate, but let God be praised through all the generations of time, and not in this only. We must bless the Lord in our day, by saying, with the psalmist, *Blessed be his name now and always*.

[2.] From all places—from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, that is, throughout the habitable world. Let all that enjoy the benefit of the sun rising (and those that do so must count upon it that the sun will set) give thanks for that light to the Father of lights. God's name is to be praised; it ought to be praised by all nations; for in every place, from east to west, there appear the manifest proofs and products of his wisdom, power, and goodness; and it is to be lamented that so great a part of mankind are ignorant of him, and give that praise to others which is due to him alone. But perhaps there is more in it; as the former verse gave us a glimpse of the kingdom of glory, intimating that God's name shall be *blessed for ever* (when time shall be no more that praise shall be the work of heaven), so this verse gives us a glimpse of the kingdom of grace in the gospel-dispensation of it. When the church shall no longer be confined to the Jewish nation, but shall spread itself all the world over, when in every place spiritual incense shall be offered to our God (Mal. i. 11), then from the rising to the setting of the sun the Lord's name shall be praised by some in all countries.

II. We are here directed what to give him the glory of.

1. Let us look up with an eye of faith, and see how high his glory is in the upper world, and mention that to his praise, v. 4, 5. We are, in our praises, to exalt his name, for he is high, his glory is high. (1.) *High above all nations*, their kings though ever so pompous, their people though ever so numerous. Whether it be true of an earthly king or no that though he is *major singulis*—greater than individuals, he is *minor universis*—less than the whole, we will not dispute; but we are sure it is not true of the King of kings. Put all the nations together, and he is above them all; they are before him as the drop of the bucket and the small dust of the balance, Isa. xl. 15, 17. Let all nations think and speak highly of God, for he is high above them all. (2.) *High above the heavens*; the throne of his glory is in the highest heavens, which should raise our hearts in praising him, Lam. iii. 41. *His glory is above the heavens*, that is, above the angels; he is above what they are, for their brightness is nothing to his,—above what they do, for they are under his command and do his pleasure,—and above what even they can speak him to be. He is exalted above all blessing and praise, not only all ours but all theirs. We must therefore say, with holy admiration, *Who is like unto the Lord our God?* who of all the princes and potentates of the earth? who of all the bright and blessed spirits above? None can equal him, none

dare compare with him. God is to be praised as transcendently, incomparably, and infinitely great; for he *dwells on high*, and from on high sees all, and rules all, and justly attracts all praise to himself.

2. Let us look around with an eye of observation, and see how extensive his goodness is in the lower world, and mention that to his praise. He is a God who *exalts himself to dwell, who humbles himself in heaven, and in earth*. Some think there is a transposition, *He exalts himself to dwell in heaven, he humbles himself to behold on earth*; but the sense is plain enough as we take it, only observe, God is said to *exalt himself* and to *humble himself*, both are his own act and deed; as he is self-existent, so he is both the fountain of his own honour and the spring of his own grace; God's condescending goodness appears,

(1.) In the cognizance he takes of the world below him. His glory is *above the nations and above the heavens*, and yet neither is neglected by him. *God is great, yet he despises not any*, Job xxxvi. 5. *He humbles himself to behold* all his creatures, all his subjects, though he is infinitely above them. Considering the infinite perfection, sufficiency, and felicity of the divine nature, it must be acknowledged as an act of wonderful condescension that God is pleased to take into the thoughts of his eternal counsel, and into the hand of his universal Providence, both the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth (Dan. iv. 35); even in this dominion he humbles himself. [1.] It is condescension in him to behold the things in heaven, to support the beings, direct the motions, and accept the praises and services, of the angels themselves; for he needs them not, nor is benefited by them. [2.] Much more is it condescension in him to *behold the things that are in the earth*, to visit the sons of men, and regard them, to order and overrule their affairs, and to take notice of what they say and do, that he may fill the earth with his goodness, and so set us an example of stooping to do good, of taking notice of, and concerning ourselves about, our inferiors. If it be such condescension for God to behold things in heaven and earth, what an amazing condescension was it for the Son of God to come from heaven to earth and take our nature upon him, that he might *seek and save those that were lost*! Herein indeed he humbled himself.

(2.) In the particular favour he sometimes shows to the least and lowest of the inhabitants of this meaner lower world. He not only beholds the great things in the earth, but the meanest, and those things which great men commonly overlook. Nor does he merely behold them, but does wonders for them, and things that are very surprising, out of the common road of providence and chain of causes, which shows that the world is governed, not by a course of nature, for that

would always run in the same channel, but by a God of nature, who delights in doing things we looked not for. [1.] Those that have been long despicable are sometimes, on a sudden, made honourable (v. 7, 8): *He raises up the poor out of the dust, that he may set him with princes*. First, Thus God does sometimes magnify himself, and his own wisdom, power, and sovereignty. When he has some great work to do he chooses to employ those in it that were least likely, and least thought of for it by themselves or others, to the highest post of honour: Gideon is fetched from threshing, Saul from seeking the asses, and David from keeping the sheep; the apostles are sent from fishing to be *fishers of men*. The treasure of the gospel is put into earthen vessels, and the weak and foolish ones of the world are pitched upon to be preachers of it, to confound the *wise and mighty* (1 Cor. i. 27, 28), that the excellency of the power may be of God, and all may see that promotion comes from him. Secondly, Thus God does sometimes reward the eminent piety and patience of his people who have long groaned under the burden of poverty and disgrace. When Joseph's virtue was tried and manifested he was raised from the prison-dust and *set with princes*. Those that are wise will observe such returns of Providence, and will understand by them *the loving-kindness of the Lord*. Some have applied this to the work of redemption by Jesus Christ, and not unfitly; for through him poor fallen men are raised out of the dust (one of the Jewish rabbies applies it to the resurrection of the dead), nay, out of the dung-hill of sin, and *set among princes*, among angels, those princes of his people. Hannah had sung to this purport, 1 Sam. ii. 6—8. [2.] Those that have been long barren are sometimes, on a sudden, made fruitful, v. 9. This may look back to Sarah and Rebecca, Rachel, Hannah, and Samson's mother, or forward to Elizabeth; and many such instances there have been, in which God has looked on the affliction of his handmaids and taken away their reproach. *He makes the barren woman to keep house*, not only builds up the family, but thereby finds the heads of the family something to do. Note, Those that have the comfort of a family must take the care of it; *bearing children and guiding the house* are put together, 1 Tim. v. 14. When God *sets the barren in a family* he expects that she should *look well to the ways of her household*, Prov. xxxi. 27. She is said to be a *joyful mother of children*, not only because, even in common cases, the pain is forgotten, *for joy that a man-child is born into the world*, but there is particular joy when a child is born to those that have been long childless (as Luke i. 14) and therefore there ought to be particular thanksgiving. *Praise you the Lord*. Yet, in this case, *rejoice with trembling*; for, though the sorrowful mother be made joyful, the joyful mother may be

made sorrowful again, if the children be either removed from her or embittered to her. This, therefore, may be applied to the gospel-church among the Gentiles (the building of which is illustrated by this similitude, Isa. liv. 1, *Sing, O barren! thou that didst not bear, and Gal. iv. 27*), for which we, who, being sinners of the Gentiles, are children of the desolate, have reason to say, *Praise you the Lord.*

PSALM CXIV.

The deliverance of Israel out of Egypt gave birth to their church and nation, which were then founded, then formed; that work of wonder ought therefore to be had in everlasting remembrance. God gloried in it, in the preface to the ten commandments, and Hos. xi. 1, "Out of Egypt have I called my son." In this psalm it is celebrated in lively strains of praise; it was fitly therefore made a part of the great Hallelujah, or song of praise, which the Jews were wont to sing at the close of the passover-supper. It must never be forgotten, I. That they were brought out of slavery, ver. 1. II. That God set up his tabernacle among them, ver. 2. III. That the sea and Jordan were divided before them, ver. 3, 5. IV. That the earth shook at the giving of the law, when God came down on Mount Sinai, ver. 4, 5, 7. V. That God gave them water out of the rock, ver. 8. In singing this psalm we must acknowledge God's power and goodness in what he did for Israel, applying it to the much greater work of wonder, our redemption by Christ, and encouraging ourselves and others to trust in God in the greatest straits.

WHEN Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language; 2 Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion. 3 The sea saw it, and fled: Jordan was driven back. 4 The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs. 5 What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back? 6 Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams; and ye little hills, like lambs? 7 Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob; 8 Which turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters.

The psalmist is here remembering the days of old, the years of the right hand of the Most High, and the wonders which their fathers told them of (Judg. vi. 13), for time, as it does not wear out the guilt of sin, so it should not wear out the sense of mercy. Let it never be forgotten,

I. That God brought Israel out of the house of bondage with a high hand and a stretched-out arm: *Israel went out of Egypt, v. 1.* They did not steal out clandestinely, nor were they driven out, but fairly went out, marched out with all the marks of honour; they went out from a barbarous people, that had used them barbarously, from a people of a strange language, lxxxi. 5. The Israelites, it seems, preserved their own language pure among them, and cared not for learning the language of their oppressors. By this distinction from them they kept up an earnest of their deliverance.

II. That he himself framed their civil and sacred constitution (v. 2): *Judah and Israel were his sanctuary, his dominion.* When he

delivered them out of the hand of their oppressors it was that *they might serve him both in holiness and in righteousness*, in the duties of religious worship and in obedience to the moral law, in their whole conversation. *Let my people go, that they may serve me.* In order to this, 1. He set up his sanctuary among them, in which he gave them the special tokens of his presence with them and promised to receive their homage and tribute. Happy are the people that have God's sanctuary among them (see Exod. xxv. 8, Ezek. xxxvii. 26), much more those that, like Judah here, are his sanctuaries, his living temples, on whom *Holiness to the Lord* is written. 2. He set up his dominion among them, was himself their lawgiver and their judge, and their government was a theocracy: *The Lord was their King.* All the world is God's dominion, but Israel was so in a peculiar manner. What is God's sanctuary must be his dominion. Those only have the privileges of his house that submit to the laws of it; and for this end Christ has redeemed us that he might bring us into God's service and engage us for ever in it.

III. That the Red Sea was divided before them at their coming out of Egypt, both for their rescue and the ruin of their enemies; and the river Jordan, when they entered into Canaan, for their honour, and the confusion and terror of their enemies (v. 3): *The sea saw it, saw there that Judah was God's sanctuary, and Israel his dominion, and therefore fled;* for nothing could be more awful. It was this that drove Jordan back, and was an invincible dam to his streams; God was at the head of that people, and therefore they must give way to them, must make room for them, they must retire, contrary to their nature, when God speaks the word. To illustrate this the psalmist asks, in a poetical strain (v. 5), *What ailed thee, O thou sea! that thou fleddest?* And furnishes the sea with an answer (v. 7); it was at the presence of the Lord. This is designed to express, 1. The reality of the miracle, that it was not by any power of nature, or from any natural cause, but it was at the presence of the Lord, who gave the word. 2. The mercy of the miracle: *What ailed thee?* Was it in a frolic? Was it only to amuse men? No; it was at the presence of the God of Jacob; it was in kindness to the Israel of God, for the salvation of that chosen people, that God was thus displeased against the rivers, and his wrath was against the sea, as the prophet speaks, Hab. iii. 8—13; Isa. li. 10; lxiii. 11, &c. 3. The wonder and surprise of the miracle. Who would have thought of such a thing? Shall the course of nature be changed, and its fundamental laws dispensed with, to serve a turn for God's Israel? Well may the dukes of Edom be amazed and the mighty men of Moab tremble, Exod. xv. 15. 4. The honour hereby put upon Israel, who are taught to triumph over the sea, and Jordan, as unable

to stand before them. Note, There is no sea, no Jordan, so deep, so broad, but, when God's time shall come for the redemption of his people, it shall be divided and driven back if it stand in their way. Apply this, (1.) To the planting of the Christian church in the world. What ailed Satan and the powers of darkness, that they trembled and truckled as they did? Mark i. 34. What ailed the heathen oracles, that they were silenced, struck dumb, struck dead? What ailed their idolatries and witchcrafts, that they died away before the gospel, and melted like snow before the sun? What ailed the persecutors and opposers of the gospel, that they gave up their cause, hid their guilty heads, and called to rocks and mountains for shelter? Rev. vi. 15. It was at the presence of the Lord, and that power which went along with the gospel. (2.) To the work of grace in the heart. What turns the stream in a regenerate soul? What ails the lusts and corruptions, that they fly back, that the prejudices are removed and the whole man has become new? It is at the presence of God's Spirit that imaginations are cast down, 2 Cor. x. 5.

IV. That the earth shook and trembled when God came down on Mount Sinai to give the law (v. 4): *The mountains skipped like rams, and then the little hills might well be excused if they skipped like lambs*, either when they are frightened or when they sport themselves. The same power that fixed the fluid waters and made them stand still shook the stable mountains and made them tremble for all the powers of nature are under the check of the God of nature. Mountains and hills are, before God, but like rams and lambs; even the bulkiest and the most rocky are as manageable by him as they are by the shepherd. The trembling of the mountains before the Lord may shame the stupidity and obduracy of the children of men, who are not moved at the discoveries of his glory. The psalmist asks the mountains and hills what ailed them to skip thus; and he answers for them, as for the seas, it was at the presence of the Lord, before whom, not only those mountains, but the earth itself, may well tremble (v. 7), since it has lain under a curse for man's sin. See Ps. civ. 32; Isa. lxiv. 3, 4. He that made the hills and mountains to skip thus can, when he pleases, dissipate the strength and spirit of the proudest of his enemies and make them tremble.

V. That God supplied them with water out of the rock, which followed them through the dry and sandy deserts. Well may the earth and all its inhabitants tremble before that God who turned the rock into a standing water (v. 8), and what cannot he do who did that? The same almighty power that turned waters into a rock to be a wall to Israel (Exod. xiv. 22) turned the rock into waters to be a well to Israel: as they were protected, so they were provided for, by miracles, stand-

ing miracles; for such was the standing water, that fountain of waters into which the rock, the flinty rock, was turned, and that rock was Christ, 1 Cor. x. 4. For he is a fountain of living waters to his Israel, from whom they receive grace for grace.

PSALM CXV.

Many ancient translations join this psalm to that which goes next before it, the Septuagint particularly, and the vulgar Latin; but it is, in the Hebrew, a distinct psalm. In it we are taught to give glory, 1. To God, and not to ourselves, ver. 1. 2. To God, and not to idols, ver. 2-8. We must give glory to God, 1. By trusting in him, and in his promise and blessing, ver. 9-15. 2. By blessing him, ver. 16-18. Some think this psalm was penned upon occasion of some great distress and trouble that the church of God was in, when the enemies were insolent and threatening, in which case the church does not so much pour out her complaint to God as place her confidence in God, and triumph in doing so; and with such a holy triumph we ought to sing this psalm.

NOT unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake. 2 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God? 3 But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased. 4 Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. 5 They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: 6 They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: 7 They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. 8 They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.

Sufficient care is here taken to answer both the pretensions of self and the reproaches of idolaters.

I. Boasting is here for ever excluded, v. 1. Let no opinion of our own merits have any room either in our prayers or in our praises, but let both centre in God's glory. 1. Have we received any mercy, gone through any service, or gained any success? We must not assume the glory of it to ourselves, but ascribe it wholly to God. We must not imagine that we do any thing for God by our own strength, or deserve any thing from God by our own righteousness; but all the good we do is done by the power of his grace, and all the good we have is the gift of his mere mercy, and therefore he must have all the praise. Say not, *The power of my hand has gotten me this wealth*, Deut. viii. 17. Say not, *For my righteousness the Lord has done these great and kind things for me*, Deut. ix. 4. No; all our songs must be sung to this humble tune, *Not unto us, O Lord!* and again, *Not unto us, but to thy name*, let all the glory be given; for whatever good is wrought in us, or wrought for us, it is for his mercy and his truth's sake, because he will glorify his mercy and fulfil his promise. All our

crowns must be cast at the feet of him that sits upon the throne, for that is the proper place for them. 2. Are we in pursuit of any mercy and wrestling with God for it? We must take our encouragement, in prayer, from God only, and have an eye to his glory more than to our own benefit in it. "Lord, do so and so for us, not that we may have the credit and comfort of it, but that thy mercy and truth may have the glory of it." This must be our highest and ultimate end in our prayers, and therefore it is made the first petition in the Lord's prayer, as that which guides all the rest, *Hallowed be thy name*; and, in order to that, *Give us our daily bread*, &c. This also must satisfy us, if our prayers be not answered in the letter of them. Whatever becomes of us, *unto thy name give glory*. See John xii. 27, 28.

II. The reproach of the heathen is here for ever silenced and justly retorted.

1. The psalmist complains of the reproach of the heathen (v. 2): *Wherefore should they say, Where is now their God?* (1.) "Why do they say so? Do they not know that our God is every where by his providence, and always nigh to us by his promise and grace?" (2.) "Why does God permit them to say so? Nay, why is Israel brought so low that they have some colour for saying so? Lord, appear for our relief, that thou mayest vindicate thyself, and glorify thy own name."

2. He gives a direct answer to their question, v. 3. "Do they ask where is our God? We can tell where he is." (1.) "In the upper world is the presence of his glory: *Our God is in the heavens*, where the gods of the heathen never were, *in the heavens*, and therefore out of sight; but, though his majesty be unapproachable, it does not therefore follow that his being is questionable." (2.) "In the lower world are the products of his power: *He has done whatsoever he pleased*, according to the counsel of his will; he has a sovereign dominion and a universal uncontrollable influence. Do you ask where he is? He is at the beginning and end of every thing, and not far from any of us."

3. He returns their question upon themselves. They asked, Where is the God of Israel? because he is not seen. He does in effect ask, What are the gods of the heathen? because they are seen. (1.) He shows that their gods, though they are not shapeless things, are senseless things. Idolaters, at first, worshipped the sun and moon (Job xxxi. 26), which was bad enough, but not so bad as that which they were now come to (for evil men grow worse and worse), which was the worshipping of images, v. 4. The matter of them was *silver and gold*, dug out of the earth (*man found them poor and dirty in a mine*, Herbert), proper things to make money of, but not to make gods of. The make of them was from the artificer: they are creatures of men's vain imaginations and the works of men's hands, and therefore

can have no divinity in them. If man is the work of God's hands (as certainly he is, and it was his honour that he was made in the image of God) it is absurd to think that that can be God which is the work of men's hands, or that it can be any other than a dishonour to God to make him in the image of man. The argument is irrefragable: *The workmen made it, therefore it is not God*, Hos. viii. 6. These idols are represented here as the most ridiculous things, a mere jest, that would seem to be something, but were really nothing, fitter for a toy-shop than a temple, for children to play with than for men to pray to. The painter, the carver, the statuary, did their part well enough; they made them with *mouhth and eyes, ears and noses, hands and feet*, but they could put no life into them and therefore no sense. They had better have worshipped a dead carcase (for that had life in it once) than a dead image, which neither has life nor can have. *They speak not*, in answer to those that consult them; the crafty priest must speak for them. In Baal's image there was *no voice, neither any that answered*. *They see not* the prostrations of their worshippers before them, much less their burdens and wants. *They hear not* their prayers, though ever so loud; *they smell not* their incense, though ever so strong, ever so sweet; *they handle not* the gifts presented to them, much less have they any gifts to bestow on their worshippers; they cannot *stretch forth their hands to the needy*. *They walk not*, they cannot stir a step for the relief of those that apply to them. Nay, they do not so much as *breathe through their throat*; they have not the least sign or symptom of life, but are as dead, after the priest has pretended to consecrate them and call a deity into them, as they were before. (2.) He thence infers the sottishness of their worshippers (v. 8): *Those that make them images show their ingenuity, and doubtless are sensible men; but those that make them gods show their stupidity and folly, and are like unto them*, as senseless blockish things; *they see not* the invisible things of the true and living God in the works of creation; *they hear not* the voice of the day and the night, which in every speech and language declare his glory, xix. 2, 3. By worshipping these foolish puppets, they make themselves more and more foolish like them, and set themselves at a greater distance from every thing that is spiritual, sinking themselves deeper into the mire of sense; and withal they provoke God to *give them up to a reprobate mind, a mind void of judgment*, Rom. i. 28. Those that trust in them act very absurdly and very unreasonably, are senseless, helpless, useless, like them; and they will find it so themselves, to their own confusion. We shall know where our God is, and so shall they, to their cost, when their gods are gone, Jer. x. 3--11; Isa. xlv. 9, &c.

9 O Israel, trust thou in the LORD

he is their help and their shield. 10 O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield. 11 Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield. 12 The LORD hath been mindful of us: he will bless us; he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron. 13 He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great. 14 The LORD shall increase you more and more, you and your children. 15 Ye are blessed of the LORD which made heaven and earth. 16 The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD's: but the earth hath he given to the children of men. 17 The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence. 18 But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the LORD.

In these verses,

I. We are earnestly exhorted, all of us, to repose our confidence in God, and not suffer our confidence in him to be shaken by the heathens' insulting over us upon the account of our present distresses. It is folly to trust in dead images, but it is wisdom to trust in the living God, for he is a *help and a shield* to those that do *trust in them*, a help to furnish them with and forward them in that which is good, and a shield to fortify them against and protect them from every thing that is evil. Therefore, 1. Let Israel trust in the Lord; the body of the people, as to their public interests, and every particular Israelite, as to his own private concerns, let them leave it to God to dispose of all for them, and believe he will dispose of all for the best and will be *their help and shield*. 2. Let the priests, the Lord's ministers, and all the families of the *house of Aaron*, trust in the Lord (v. 10); they are most maligned and struck at by the enemies and therefore of them God takes particular care. They ought to be examples to others of a cheerful confidence in God, and a faithful adherence to him in the worst of times. 3. Let the proselytes, who are not of the seed of Israel, but *fear the Lord*, who worship him and make conscience of their duty to him, let them *trust in him*, for he will not fail nor forsake them, v. 11. Note, Wherever there is an awful fear of God, there may be a cheerful faith in him: those that reverence his word may rely upon it.

II. We are greatly encouraged to trust in God, and good reason is given us why we should stay ourselves upon him with an entire satisfaction. Consider, 1. What we have experienced (v. 12) *The Lord has been mind-*

ful of us, and never unmindful, has been so constantly, has been so remarkably upon special occasions. He has been mindful of our case, our wants and burdens, mindful of our prayers to him, his promises to us, and the covenant-relation between him and us. All our comforts are derived from God's *thoughts to us-ward*; he has been *mindful of us*, though we have forgotten him. Let this engage us to trust in him, that we have found him faithful. 2. What we may expect. From what he has done for us we may infer, *He will bless us*; he that has been our *help and our shield* will be so; he that has *remembered us in our low estate* will not forget us; for he is still the same, his power and goodness the same, and his promise inviolable; so that we have reason to hope that he who has delivered, and does, will yet deliver. Yet this is not all: *He will bless us*; he has promised that he will; he has pronounced a blessing upon all his people. God's blessing us is not only speaking good to us, but doing well for us; those whom he blesses are blessed indeed. It is particularly promised that *he will bless the house of Israel*, that is, he will bless the commonwealth, will bless his people in their civil interests. *He will bless the house of Aaron*, that is, the church, the ministry, will bless his people in their religious concerns. The priests were to bless the people; it was their office (Num. vi. 23); but God blessed them, and so blessed their blessing. Nay (v. 13), *he will bless those that fear the Lord*, though they be not of the house of Israel or the house of Aaron; for it was a truth, before Peter perceived it, *That in every nation he that fears God is accepted of him*, and blessed, Acts x. 34, 35. *He will bless them both small and great*, both young and old. God has blessings in store for those that are good betimes and for those that are old disciples, both those that are poor in the world and those that make a figure. The greatest need his blessing, and it shall not be denied to the meanest that fear him. Both the weak in grace and the strong shall be blessed of God, the lambs and the sheep of his flock. It is promised (v. 14), *The Lord shall increase you*. Whom God blesses he increases; that was one of the earliest and most ancient blessings, *Be fruitful and multiply*. God's blessing gives an increase—*increase in number*, building up the family—*increase in wealth*, adding to the estate and honour—*especially an increase in spiritual blessings*, with the *increasings of God*. He will bless you with the *increase of knowledge and wisdom*, of *grace, holiness, and joy*; those are blessed indeed whom God thus increases, who are made wiser and better, and fitter for God and heaven. It is promised that this shall be, (1.) A constant continual increase: "*He shall increase you more and more*"; so that, as long as you live, you shall be still increasing, till you come to perfection, as the shining light," Prov. iv. 18. (2.) An hereditary increase:

"You and your children; you in your children." It is a comfort to parents to see their children increasing in wisdom and strength. There is a blessing entailed upon the seed of those that fear God even in their infancy. For (v. 15), *You are blessed of the Lord, you and your children are so; all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord has blessed*, Isa. lix. 9. Those that are the blessed of the Lord have encouragement enough to *trust in the Lord*, as their *help and shield*, for it is he that *made heaven and earth*; therefore his blessings are free, for he needs not any thing himself; and therefore they are rich, for he has all things at command for us if we fear him and trust in him. He that *made heaven and earth* can doubtless make those happy that trust in him, and will do it.

III. We are stirred up to praise God by the psalmist's example, who concludes the psalm with a resolution to persevere in his praises. 1. God is to be praised, v. 16. He is greatly to be praised; for, (1.) His glory is high. See how stately his palace is, and the throne he has prepared in the heavens: *The heavens, even the heavens are the Lord's*; he is the rightful owner of all the treasures of right and bliss in the upper and better world, and is in the full possession of them, for he is himself infinitely bright and happy. (2.) His goodness is large, for *the earth he has given to the children of men*, having designed it, when he made it, for their use, to find them with meat, drink, and lodging. Not but that still he is proprietor in chief; *the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof*; but he has let out that vineyard to these unthankful husbandmen, and from them he expects the rents and services; for, though he has given them the earth, his eye is upon them, and he will call them to render an account how they use it. Calvin complains that profane wicked people, in his days, perverted this scripture, and made a jest of it, which some in our days do, arguing, in banter, that God, having given the earth to the children of men, will no more look after it, nor after them upon it, but they may do what they will with it, and make the best of it as their portion; it is as if we were thrown like a prey among them, Let him seize it that can. It is a pity that such an instance as this gives of God's bounty to man, and such a proof as arises from it of man's obligation to God, should be thus abused. From the highest heavens, it is certain, God beholds all the children of men; to them he has given the earth; but to the children of God heaven is given. 2. The dead are not capable of praising him (v. 17), nor any that go into silence. The soul indeed lives in a state of separation from the body and is capable of praising God; and the souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burdens of the flesh, do praise God, are still praising him; for they go up to the land of perfect light and constant busi-

ness. But the dead body cannot praise God; death puts an end to our glorifying God in this world of trial and conflict, to all our services in the field; the grave is a land of darkness and silence, where there is no work or device. This they plead with God for deliverance out of the hand of their enemies, "Lord, if they prevail to cut us off, the idols will carry the day, and there will be none to praise thee, to bear thy name, and to bear a testimony against the worshippers of idols." *The dead praise not the Lord*, so as we do in the business and for the comforts of this life." See Ps. xxx. 9; lxxxviii. 10. 3. Therefore it concerns us to praise him (v. 18): "*But we, we that are alive, will bless the Lord*; we and those that shall come after us, will do it, *from this time forth and for evermore*, to the end of time; we and those we shall remove to, *from this time forth and to eternity*. *The dead praise not the Lord*, therefore we will do it the more diligently." (1.) Others are dead, and an end is thereby put to their service, and therefore we will lay out ourselves to do so much the more for God, that we may fill up the gap. *Moses my servant is dead now therefore, Joshua, arise*. (2.) We ourselves must shortly go to the land of silence; but, while we do live, we will bless the Lord, will improve our time and work that work of him that sent us into the world to praise him before the night comes, and because *the night comes, wherein no man can work*. *The Lord will bless us* (v. 12); he will do well for us, and therefore we will bless him, we will speak well of him. Poor returns for such receivings! Nay, we will not only do it ourselves, but will engage others to do it. *Praise the Lord*; praise him with us; praise him in your places, as we in ours; praise him when we are gone, that he may be praised for evermore. *Hallelujah*.

PSALM CXVI.

This is a thanksgiving psalm; it is not certain whether David penned it upon any particular occasion or upon a general review of the many gracious deliverances God had wrought for him, out of six troubles and seven, which deliverances draw from him many very lively expressions of devotion, love, and gratitude; and with similar pious affections our souls should be lifted up to God in singing it. Observe, I. The great distress and danger that the psalmist was in, which almost drove him to despair, ver. 3, 10, 11. II. The application he made to God in that distress, ver. 4. III. The experience he had of God's goodness to him, in answer to prayer; God heard him (ver. 1, 2), pitied him (ver. 5, 6), delivered him, ver. 8. IV. His care respecting the acknowledgments he should make of the goodness of God to him, ver. 12. 1. He will love God, ver. 1. 2. He will continue to call upon him, ver. 2, 13, 17. 3. He will rest in him, ver. 7. 4. He will walk before him, ver. 9. 5. He will pay his vows of thanksgiving, in which he will own the tender regard God had to him, and this publicly, ver. 13—15, 17—19. Lastly, He will continue God's faithful servant to his life's end, ver. 16. These are such breathings of a holy soul as bespeak it very happy.

I LOVE the LORD, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. 2 Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live. 3 The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. 4 Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD,

I beseech thee, deliver my soul. 5 Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful. 6 The LORD preserveth the simple; I was brought low, and he helped me. 7 Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee. 8 For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. 9 I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.

In this part of the psalm we have,

I. A general account of David's experience, and his pious resolutions (v. 1, 2), which are as the contents of the whole psalm, and give an idea of it. 1. He had experienced God's goodness to him in answer to prayer: *He has heard my voice and my supplications*. David, in straits, had humbly and earnestly begged mercy of God, and God had heard him, that is, had graciously accepted his prayer, taken cognizance of his case, and granted him an answer of peace. *He has inclined his ear to me*. This intimates his readiness and willingness to hear prayer; he lays his ear, as it were, to the mouth of prayer, to hear it, though it be but whispered in groanings that cannot be uttered. *He hearkens and hears*, Jer. viii. 6. Yet it implies, also, that it is wonderful condescension in God to hear prayer; it is bowing his ear. Lord, what is man, that God should thus stoop to him!—2. He resolved, in consideration thereof, to devote himself entirely to God and to his honour. (1.) He will love God the better. He begins the psalm somewhat abruptly with a profession of that which his heart was full of: *I love the Lord* (as xviii. 1); and fitly does he begin with this, in compliance with the first and great commandment and with God's end in all the gifts of his bounty to us. "I love him only, and nothing besides him, but what I love for him." God's love of compassion towards us justly requires our love of complacency in him. (2.) He will love prayer the better: *Therefore I will call upon him*. The experiences we have had of God's goodness to us, in answer to prayer, are great encouragements to us to continue praying; we have sped well, notwithstanding our unworthiness and our infirmities in prayer, and therefore why may we not? God answers prayer, to make us love it, and expects this from us, in return for his favour. Why should we glean in any other field when we have been so well treated in this? Nay, *I will call upon him as long as I live* (Heb., *In my days*), every day, to the last day. Note, As long as we continue living we must continue praying. This breath we must breathe till we breathe our last, because then we shall take our leave of it, and till then we have continual occasion for it.

II A more particular narrative of God's

gracious dealings with him and the good impressions thereby made upon him.

1. God, in his dealings with him, showed himself a good God, and therefore he bears this testimony to him, and leaves it upon record (v. 5): "*Gracious is the Lord, and righteous*. He is righteous, and did me no wrong in afflicting me; he is gracious, and was very kind in supporting and delivering me." Let us all speak of God as we have found; and have we ever found him otherwise than just and good? No; *our God is merciful*, merciful to us and it is of his mercies that we are not consumed.

(1.) Let us review David's experiences.

[1.] He was in great distress and trouble (v. 3): *The sorrows of death compassed me*, that is, such sorrows as were likely to be his death, such as were thought to be the very pangs of death. Perhaps the extremity of bodily pain, or trouble of mind, is called here *the pains of hell*, terror of conscience arising from sense of guilt. Note, The sorrows of death are great sorrows, and the pains of hell great pains. Let us therefore give diligence to prepare for the former, that we may escape the latter. These compassed him on every side; they arrested him, *got hold upon him*, so that he could not escape. *Without were fightings, within were fears*. "I found trouble and sorrow; not only they found me, but I found them." Those that are melancholy have a great deal of sorrow of their own finding, a great deal of trouble which they create to themselves, by indulging fancy and passion; this has sometimes been the infirmity of good men. When God's providence makes our condition bad let us not by our own imprudence make it worse. [2.] In his trouble he had recourse to God by faithful and fervent prayer, v. 4. He tells us that he prayed: *Then called I upon the name of the Lord*; then, when he was brought to the last extremity, then he made use of this, not as the last remedy, but as the old and only remedy, which he had found a salve for every sore. He tells us what his prayer was; it was short, but to the purpose: "*O Lord! I beseech thee, deliver my soul*; save me from death, and save me from sin, for that is it that is killing to the soul." Both the humility and the fervency of his prayer are intimated in these words, *O Lord! I beseech thee*. When we come to the throne of grace we must come as beggars for an alms, for necessary food. The following words (v. 5), *Gracious is the Lord*, may be taken as part of his prayer, as a plea to enforce his request and encourage his faith and hope: "Lord, *deliver my soul*, for thou art *gracious and merciful*, and that only I depend upon for relief." [3.] God, in answer to his prayer, came in with seasonable and effectual relief. He found by experience that God is gracious and merciful, and in his compassion preserves the simple, v. 6. Because they are simple (that is, sincere, and upright, and without guile) therefore God preserves them, as he

preserved Paul, who had his conversation in the world *not with fleshly wisdom, but in simplicity and godly sincerity*. Though they are simple (that is, weak, and helpless, and unable to shift for themselves, men of no depth, no design) yet God preserves them, because they commit themselves to him and have no confidence in their own sufficiency. Those who by faith put themselves under God's protection shall be safe.

(2.) Let David speak his own experience.

[1.] God supported him under his troubles: "*I was brought low, was plunged into the depth of misery, and then he helped me, helped me both to bear the worst and to hope the best, helped me to pray, else desire had failed, helped me to wait, else faith had failed. I was one of the simple ones whom God preserved, the poor man who cried and the Lord heard him,*" xxxiv. 6. Note, God's people are never brought so low but that everlasting arms are under them, and those cannot sink who are thus sustained. Nay, it is in the time of need, at the dead lift, that God chooses to help, Deut. xxxii. 36. [2.] God saved him out of his troubles (v. 8): *Thou hast delivered, which means either the preventing of the distress he was ready to fall into or the recovering of him from the distress he was already in. God graciously delivered, First, His soul from death. Note, It is God's great mercy to us that we are alive; and the mercy is the more sensible if we have been at death's door and yet have been spared and raised up, just turned to destruction and yet ordered to return. That a life so often forfeited, and so often exposed, should yet be lengthened out, is a miracle of mercy. The deliverance of the soul from spiritual and eternal death is especially to be acknowledged by all those who are now sanctified and shall be shortly glorified. Secondly, His eyes from tears, that is, his heart from inordinate grief. It is a great mercy to be kept either from the occasions of sorrow, the evil that causes grief, or, at least, from being swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. When God comforts those that are cast down, looses the mourners' sackcloth and girds them with gladness, then he delivers their eyes from tears, which yet will not be perfectly done till we come to that world where God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes. Thirdly, His feet from falling, from falling into sin and so into misery. It is a great mercy, when our feet are almost gone, to have God hold us by the right hand (lxxii. 2, 23), so that though we enter into temptation we are not overcome and overthrown by the temptation. Or, "Thou hast delivered my feet from falling into the grave, when I had one foot there already."*

2. David, in his returns of gratitude to God, showed himself a good man. God had done all this for him, and therefore,

(1.) He will live a life of delight in God (v. 7): *Return unto thy rest, O my soul!* [1.] "Repose thyself and be easy, and do not

agitate thyself with distrustful disquieting fears as thou hast sometimes done. Quiet thyself, and then enjoy thyself. God has dealt kindly with thee, and therefore thou needest not fear that ever he will deal hardly with thee." [2.] "*Repose thyself in God. Return to him as thy rest, and seek not for that rest in the creature which is to be had in him only.*" God is the soul's rest; in him only it can dwell at ease; to him therefore it must retire, and rejoice in him. He has dealt bountifully with us; he has provided sufficiently for our comfort and refreshment, and encouraged us to come to him for the benefit of it, at all times, upon all occasions; let us therefore be satisfied with that. Return to that rest which Christ gives to the weary and heavy-laden, Matt. xi. 28. Return to thy Noah; his name signifies rest, as the dove, when she found no rest, returned to the ark. I know no word more proper to close our eyes with at night, when we go to sleep, nor to close them with at death, that long sleep, than this, *Return to thy rest, O my soul!*

(2.) He will live a life of devotedness to God (v. 9): *I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living, that is, in this world, as long as I continue to live in it. Note, [1.] It is our great duty to walk before the Lord, to do all we do as becomes us in his presence and under his eye, to approve ourselves to him as a holy God by conformity to his will, and, as a God all-sufficient, by a cheerful confidence in him. I am the almighty God; walk before me, Gen. xvii. 1. We must walk worthy of the Lord unto all well-pleasing.*

[2.] The consideration of this, that we are in the land of the living, should engage and quicken us to do so. We are spared and continued in the land of the living by the power, and patience, and tender mercy of our God, and therefore must make conscience of our duty to him. The land of the living is a land of mercy, which we ought to be thankful for; it is a land of opportunity, which we should improve. Canaan is called the land of the living (Ezek. xxvi. 20), and those whose lot is cast in such a valley of vision are in a special manner concerned to set the Lord always before them. If God has delivered our soul from death, we must walk before him. A new life must be a new life indeed.

10 I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted: 11 I said in my haste, All men are liars. 12 What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me? 13 I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. 14 I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people. 15 Precious in the sight of the LORD

is the death of his saints. 16 O LORD, truly I *am* thy servant; I *am* thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds. 17 I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD. 18 I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people, 19 In the courts of the LORD's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.

The Septuagint and some other ancient versions make these verses a distinct psalm separate from the former; and some have called it the *Martyr's psalm*, I suppose for the sake of v. 15. Three things David here makes confession of:—

I. His faith (v. 10): *I believed, therefore have I spoken*. This is quoted by the apostle (2 Cor. iv. 13) with application to himself and his fellow-ministers, who, though they suffered for Christ, were not ashamed to own him. David believed the being, providence, and promise of God, particularly the assurance God had given him by Samuel that he should exchange his crook for a sceptre: a great deal of hardship he went through in the belief of this, and therefore he spoke, spoke to God by prayer (v. 4), by praise, v. 12. Those that believe in God will address themselves to him. He spoke to himself; because he believed, he said to his soul, *Return to thy rest*. He spoke to others, told his friends what his hope was, and what the ground of it, though it exasperated Saul against him and he was greatly afflicted for it. Note, Those that believe with the heart must confess with the mouth, for the glory of God, the encouragement of others, and to evidence their own sincerity, Rom. x. 10; Acts ix. 19, 20. Those that live in hope of the kingdom of glory must neither be afraid nor ashamed to own their obligation to him that purchased it for them, Matt. x. 22.

II. His fear (v. 11): *I was greatly afflicted, and then I said in my haste* (somewhat rashly and inconsiderately—in my amazement (so some), when I was in a consternation—in my flight (so others), when Saul was in pursuit of me), *All men are liars*, all with whom he had to do, Saul and all his courtiers; his friends, who he thought would stand by him, deserted him and disowned him when he fell into disgrace at court. And some think it is especially a reflection on Samuel, who had promised him the kingdom, but deceived him; for, says he, *I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul*, 1 Sam. xxvii. 1. Observe, 1. The faith of the best of saints is not perfect, nor always alike strong and active. David believed and spoke well (v. 10), but now, through unbelief, he spoke amiss. 2. When we are under great and sore afflictions, especially if they continue long, we are apt

to grow weary, to despond, and almost to despair of a good issue. Let us not therefore be harsh in censuring others, but carefully watch over ourselves when we are in trouble, xxxix. 1—3. 3. If good men speak amiss, it is in their haste, through the surprise of a temptation, not deliberately and with premeditation, as the wicked man, who sits in the seat of the scornful (Ps. i. 1), sits and speaks against his brother, l. 19, 20. 4. What we speak amiss, in haste, we must buy by repentance unsay again (as David, xxxi. 22), and then it shall not be laid to our charge. Some make this to be no rash word of David's. He was greatly afflicted and forced to fly, but he did not trust in man, nor make flesh his arm. No: he said, "*All men are liars; as men of low degree are vanity, so men of high degree are a lie, and therefore my confidence was in God only, and in him I cannot be disappointed.*" In this sense the apostle seems to take it. Rom. iii. 4, *Let God be true and every man a liar* in comparison with God. All men are fickle and inconstant, and subject to change; and therefore let us cease from man and cleave to God.

III. His gratitude, v. 12, &c. God had been better to him than his fears, and had graciously delivered him out of his distresses; and, in consideration hereof,

1. He enquires what returns he shall make (v. 12): *What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?* Here he speaks, (1.) As one sensible of many mercies received from God—*all his benefits*. This psalm seems to have been penned upon occasion of some one particular benefit (v. 6, 7), but in that one he saw many and that one brought many to mind, and therefore now he thinks of all God's benefits towards him. Note, When we speak of God's mercies we should magnify them and speak highly of them. (2.) As one solicitous and studious how to express his gratitude: *What shall I render unto the Lord?* Not as if he thought he could render any thing proportionable, or as a valuable consideration for what he had received; we can no more pretend to give a recompence to God than we can to merit any favour from him; but he desired to render something acceptable, something that God would be pleased with as the acknowledgment of a grateful mind. He asks God, *What shall I render?* Asks the priest, asks his friends, or rather asks himself, and communes with his own heart about it. Note, Having received many benefits from God, we are concerned to enquire, *What shall we render?*

2. He resolves what returns he will make.

(1.) He will in the most devout and solemn manner offer up his praises and prayers to God, v. 13, 17. [1.] "*I will take the cup of salvation*, that is, I will offer the drink-offerings appointed by the law, in token of my thankfulness to God, and rejoice with my friends in God's goodness to me;" this is

called *the cup of deliverance* because drunk in memory of the deliverance. The pious Jews had sometimes a *cup of blessing*, at their private meals, which the master of the family drank first of, with thanksgiving to God, and all at his table drank with him. But some understand it not of the cup that he would present to God, but of the cup that God would put into his hand. *I will receive, First, The cup of affliction.* Many good interpreters understand it of that cup, that bitter cup, which is yet sanctified to the saints, so that to them it is a cup of salvation. Phil. i. 19, *This shall turn to my salvation*; it is a means of spiritual health. David's sufferings were typical of Christ's, and we, in ours, have communion with his, and his cup was indeed a cup of salvation. "God, having bestowed so many benefits upon me, whatever cup he shall put into my hands I will readily take it, and not dispute it; welcome his holy will." Herein David spoke the language of the Son of David. John xviii. 11, *The cup that my Father has given me, shall I not take it and drink it?* Secondly, The cup of consolation: "I will receive the benefits God bestows upon me as from his hand, and taste his love in them, as that which is the portion not only of my inheritance in the other world, but of my cup in this." [2.] *I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, the thank-offerings which God required,* Lev. vii. 11, 12, &c. Note, Those whose hearts are truly thankful will express their gratitude in thank-offerings. We must first give our ourselves to God as *living sacrifices* (Rom. xii. 1, 2 Cor. viii. 5), and then lay out of what we have for his honour in works of piety and charity. *Doing good and communicating are sacrifices with which God is well pleased* (Heb. xiii. 15, 16) and this must accompany our giving thanks to his name. If God has been bountiful to us, the least we can do in return is to be bountiful to the poor, Ps. xvi. 2, 3. Why should we offer that to God which costs us nothing? [3.] *I will call upon the name of the Lord.* This he had promised (v. 2) and here he repeats it, v. 13 and again v. 17. If we have received kindness from a man like ourselves, we tell him that we hope we shall never trouble him again; but God is pleased to reckon the prayers of his people an honour to him, and a delight, and no trouble; and therefore, in gratitude for former mercies, we must seek to him for further mercies, and continue to call upon him.

(2.) He will always entertain good thoughts of God, as very tender of the lives and comforts of his people (v. 15): *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints*, so precious that he will not gratify Saul, nor Absalom, nor any of David's enemies, with his death, how earnestly soever they desire it. This truth David had comforted himself with in the depth of his distress and danger; and, the event having confirmed it, he

comforts others with it who might be in like manner exposed. God has a people, even in this world, that are his saints, his merciful ones, or men of mercy, that have received mercy from him and show mercy for his sake. The saints of God are mortal and dying; nay, there are those that desire their death, and labour all they can to hasten it, and sometimes prevail to be the death of them; but it is *precious in the sight of the Lord*; their life is so (2 Kings i. 13); their blood is so, Ps. lxxii. 14. God often wonderfully prevents the death of his saints when there is but a step between them and it; he takes special care about their death, to order it for the best in all the circumstances of it; and whoever kills them, how light soever they may make of it, they shall be made to pay dearly for it when inquisition is made for the blood of the saints, Matt. xxiii. 35. Though no man lays it to heart when *the righteous perish*, God will make it to appear that he lays it to heart. This should make us willing to die, to die for Christ, if we are called to it, that our death shall be registered in heaven; and let that be precious to us which is so to God.

(3.) He will oblige himself to be God's servant all his days. Having asked, *What shall I render?* here he surrenders himself, which was more than all burnt-offerings and sacrifice (v. 16): *O Lord! truly I am thy servant.* Here is, [1.] The relation in which David professes to stand to God: "*I am thy servant*; I choose to be so; I resolve to be so; I will live and die in thy service." He had called God's people, who are dear to him, *his saints*; but, when he comes to apply it to himself, he does not say, *Truly I am thy saint* (that looked too high a title for himself), but, *I am thy servant.* David was a king, and yet he glories in this, that he was God's servant. It is no disparagement, but an honour, to the greatest kings on earth, to be the servants of the God of heaven. David does not here compliment God, as it is common among men to say, *I am your servant, Sir.* No; "Lord, I am truly thy servant; thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I am so." And he repeats it, as that which he took pleasure in the thoughts of and which he was resolved to abide by: "*I am thy servant, I am thy servant.* Let others serve what master they will, truly I am thy servant." [2.] The ground of that relation. Two ways men came to be servants:—First, By birth. "Lord, I was born in thy house; I am the son of thy handmaid, and therefore thine." It is a great mercy to be the children of godly parents, as it obliges us to duty and is pleasurable with God for mercy. Secondly, By redemption. He that procured the release of a captive took him for his servant. "Lord, thou hast loosed my bonds; those sorrows of death that compassed me, thou hast discharged me from them, and therefore I am thy servant, and entitled to thy protection as well as obliged to thy work." *The very bonds*

which thou hast loosed shall tie me faster unto thee. Patrick.

(4.) He will make conscience of paying his vows and making good what he had promised, not only that he would offer the sacrifices of praise, which he had vowed to bring, but perform all his other engagements to God, which he had laid himself under in the day of his affliction (v. 14): *I will pay my vows*; and again, (v. 18), *now in the presence of all his people*. Note, Vows are debts that must be paid, for it is better not to vow than to vow and not pay. He will pay his vows, [1.] Presently; he will not, like sorry debtors, delay the payment of them, or beg a day; but, "*I will pay them now*," Eccl. v. 4. [2.] Publicly; he will not huddle up his praises in a corner, but what service he has to do for God he will do it *in the presence of all his people*; not for ostentation, but to show that he was not ashamed of the service of God, and that others might be invited to join with him. He will pay his vows in the courts of the tabernacle, where there was a crowd of Israelites attending, *in the midst of Jerusalem*, that he might bring devotion into more reputation.

PSALM CXVII.

This psalm is short and sweet; I doubt the reason why we sing it so often as we do is for the shortness of it; but, if we rightly understood and considered it, we should sing it oftener for the sweetness of it, especially to us sinners of the Gentiles, on whom it casts a very favourable eye. Here is, I. A solemn call to all nations to praise God, ver. 1. II. Proper matter for that praise suggested, ver. 2. We are soon weary indeed of well-doing if, in singing this psalm, we keep not up those pious and devout affections with which the spiritual sacrifice of praise ought to be kindled and kept burning.

O PRAISE the LORD, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people. 2 For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD endureth for ever. Praise ye the LORD.

There is a great deal of gospel in this psalm. The apostle has furnished us with a key to it (Rom. xv. 11), where he quotes it as a proof that the gospel was to be preached to, and would be entertained by, the Gentile nations, which yet was so great a stumbling-block to the Jews. Why should that offend them when it is said, and they themselves had often sung it, *Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and laud him, all you people*. Some of the Jewish writers confess that this psalm refers to the kingdom of the Messiah; nay, one of them has a fancy that it consists of two verses to signify that in the days of the Messiah God should be glorified by two sorts of people, by the Jews, according to the law of Moses, and by the Gentiles, according to the seven precepts of the sons of Noah, which yet should make one church, as these two verses make one psalm. We have here,

I. The vast extent of the gospel church, v. 1. For many ages in Judah only was God known and his name praised. The sons of Levi and the seed of Israel praised him, but the rest of the nations *praised gods of wood*

and stone (Dan. v. 4), while there was no devotion at all paid, at least none openly, that we know of, to the living and true God. But here *all nations* are called to praise the Lord, which could not be applied to the Old-Testament times, both because this call was not then given to any of the Gentile nations, much less to all, in a language they understood, and because, unless the people of the land became Jews and were circumcised, they were not admitted to praise God with them. But the gospel of Christ is ordered to be preached to all nations, and by him the partition-wall is taken down, and those that were *afar off* are *made nigh*. This was the mystery which was hidden in prophecy for many ages, but was at length revealed in the accomplishment, *That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs*, Eph. iii. 3, 6. Observe here, 1. Who should be admitted into the church—all nations and all people. The original words are the same that are used for the heathen that rage and the people that imagine against Christ (ii. 1); those that had been enemies to his kingdom should become his willing subjects. The gospel of the kingdom was to be preached to *all the world, for a witness to all nations*, Matt. xxiv. 14; Mark xvi. 15. All nations shall be called and to some of all nations the call shall be effectual, and they shall be disciples. 2. How their admission into the church is foretold—by a repeated call to *praise him*. The tidings of the gospel, being sent to all nations, should give them cause to praise God; the institution of gospel-ordinances would give them leave and opportunity to praise God; and the power of gospel-grace would give them hearts to praise him. Those are highly favoured whom God invites to his word and inclines by his Spirit to praise him and so makes to be to him for a name and praise, Jer. xiii. 11. See Rev. vii. 9, 10.

II. The unsearchable riches of gospel-grace, which are to be the matter of our praise, v. 2. In the gospel, those celebrated attributes of God, his mercy and his truth, shine more brightly in themselves and most comfortably to us; and the apostle, where he quotes this psalm, takes notice of these as the two great things for which the Gentiles should glorify God (Rom. xv. 8, 9), *for the truth of God and for his mercy*. We that enjoy the gospel have reason to praise the Lord, 1. For the power of his mercy: *His merciful kindness is great towards us*; it is *strong* (so the word signifies); it is *mighty* for the pardon of *mighty sins* (Amos v. 12) and for the working out of a mighty salvation. 2. For the perpetuity of his truth: *The truth of the Lord endures for ever*. It was mercy, mere mercy to the Gentiles, that the gospel was sent among them. It was merciful kindness prevailing towards them above their deserts; and in it the *truth of the Lord*, of his promise made unto the fathers, *endures for ever*; for though the Jews were hardened and expelled, yet the promise took its effect in the belief

ing Gentiles, the spiritual seed of Abraham. God's mercy is the fountain of all our comforts and his truth the foundation of all our hopes, and therefore for both we must praise the Lord.

PSALM CXVIII.

It is probable that David penned this psalm when he had, after many a storm, weathered his point at last, and gained a full possession of the kingdom to which he had been anointed. He then invites and stirs up his friends to join with him, not only in a cheerful acknowledgment of God's goodness and a cheerful dependence upon that goodness for the future, but in a believing expectation of the promised Messiah, of whose kingdom and his exaltation to it his were typical. To him, it is certain, the prophet here bears witness, in the latter part of the psalm. Christ himself applies it to himself (Matt. xxi. 42), and the former part of the psalm may fairly, and without forcing, be accommodated to him and his undertaking. Some think it was first calculated for the solemnity of the bringing of the ark to the city of David, and was afterwards sung at the feast of tabernacles. In it, I. David calls upon all about him to give to God the glory of his goodness, ver. 1—4. II. He encourages himself and others to trust in God, from the experience he had had of God's power and pity in the great and kind things he had done for him, ver. 5—13. III. He gives thanks for his advancement to the throne, as it was a figure of the exaltation of Christ, ver. 19—23. IV. The people, the priests, and the psalmist himself, triumph in the prospect of the Redeemer's kingdom, ver. 24—29. 'In singing this psalm we must glorify God for his goodness, his goodness to us, and especially his goodness to us in Jesus Christ.

GIVE thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever. 2 Let Israel now say, that his mercy endureth for ever. 3 Let the house of Aaron now say, that his mercy endureth for ever. 4 Let them now that fear the LORD say, that his mercy endureth for ever. 5 I called upon the LORD in distress: the LORD answered me, and set me in a large place. 6 The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me? 7 The LORD taketh my part with them that help me: therefore shall I see my desire upon them that hate me. 8 It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man. 9 It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes. 10 All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD will I destroy them. 11 They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. 12 They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns: for in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. 13 Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall: but the LORD helped me. 14 The LORD is my strength and song, and is become my salvation. 15 The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly. 16 The right hand of the LORD is exalted: the

right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly. 17 I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD. 18 The LORD hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death.

It appears here, as often elsewhere, that David had his heart full of the goodness of God. He loved to think of it, loved to speak of it, and was very solicitous that God might have the praise of it and others the comfort of it. The more our hearts are impressed with a sense of God's goodness the more they will be enlarged in all manner of obedience. In these verses,

I. He celebrates God's mercy in general, and calls upon others to acknowledge it, from their own experience of it (v. 1): *O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is not only good in himself, but good to you, and his mercy endures for ever*, not only in the everlasting fountain, God himself, but in the never-failing streams of that mercy, which shall run parallel with the longest line of eternity, and in the chosen vessels of mercy, who will be everlasting monuments of it. Israel, and the house of Aaron, and all that fear God, were called upon to trust in God (cxv. 9—11); here they are called upon to confess that his mercy endures for ever, and so to encourage themselves to trust in him, v. 2—4. Priests and people, Jews and proselytes, must all own God's goodness, and all join in the same thankful song; if they can say no more, let them say this for him, that his mercy endures for ever, that they have had experience of it all their days, and confide in it for good things that shall last for ever. The praises and thanksgivings of all that truly fear the Lord shall be as pleasing to him as those of the house of Israel or the house of Aaron.

II. He preserves an account of God's gracious dealings with him in particular, which he communicates to others, that they might thence fetch both songs of praise and supports of faith, and both ways God would have the glory. David had, in his time, waded through a great deal of difficulty, which gave him great experience of God's goodness. Let us therefore observe here,

1. The great distress and danger that he had been in, which he reflects upon for the magnifying of God's goodness to him in his present advancement. There are many who, when they are lifted up, care not for hearing or speaking of their former depressions; but David takes all occasions to remember his own low estate. He was in distress (v. 5), greatly straitened and at a loss; there were many that hated him (v. 7), and this could not but be a great grief to one of an ingenuous spirit, that strove to gain the good affections of all. All nations compassed me about, v. 10. All the nations adjacent to Israel set themselves to give disturbance to David, when he had newly come to the throne, Philistines,

Moabites, Syrians, Ammonites, &c. We read of *his enemies round about*; they were confederate against him, and thought to cut off all succours from him. This endeavour of his enemies to surround him is repeated (v. 11): *They compassed me about, yea, they compassed me about*, which intimates that they were virulent and violent, and, for a time, prevalent, in their attempts against him, and when put into disorder they rallied again and pushed on their design. *They compassed me about like bees*, so numerous were they, so noisy, so vexatious; they came flying upon him, came upon him in swarms, set upon him with their malignant stings; but it was to their own destruction, as the bee, they say, loses her life with her sting, *Animamque in vulnere ponit—She lays down her life in the wound*. Lord, how are those increased that trouble me! Two ways David was brought into trouble:—(1.) By the injuries that men did him (v. 13): *Thou (O enemy!) hast thrust sore at me*, with many a desperate push, *that I might fall into sin and into ruin*. *Thrusting thou hast thrust at me* (so the word is), so that I was *ready to fall*. Satan is the great enemy that thrusts sorely at us by his temptations, to cast us down from our excellency, that we may fall from our God and from our comfort in him; and, if God had not upheld us by his grace, his thrusts would have been fatal to us. (2.) By the afflictions which God laid upon him (v. 18): *The Lord has chastened me sore*. Men thrust at him for his destruction; God chastened him for his instruction. They thrust at him with the malice of enemies; God chastened him with the love and tenderness of a Father. Perhaps he refers to the same trouble which God, the author of it, designed for his profit, that by it he *might partake of his holiness* (Heb. xii. 10, 11); howbeit, men, who were the instruments of it, meant not so, *neither did their heart think so, but it was in their heart to cut off and destroy*, Isa. x. 7. What men intend for the greatest mischief God intends for the greatest good, and it is easy to say whose counsel shall stand. God will sanctify the trouble to his people, as it is his chastening, and secure the good he designs; and he will guard them against the trouble, as it is the enemies' thrusting, and secure them from the evil they design, and then we need not fear.

This account which David gives of his troubles is very applicable to our Lord Jesus. Many there were that *hated him*, hated him without a cause. *They compassed him about*; Jews and Romans surrounded him. *They thrust sorely at him*; the devil did so when he tempted him; his persecutors did so when they reviled him; nay, the Lord himself *chastened him sorely*, bruised him, and put him to grief, that *by his stripes we might be healed*.

2. The favour God vouchsafed to him in his distress. (1.) God heard his prayer (v. 5): *“He answered me with enlargements; he did more for me than I was able to ask; he en-*

larged my heart in prayer and yet gave more largely than I desired.” He answered me and set me in a large place (so we read it where I had room to bestir myself, room to enjoy myself, and room to thrive; and this large place was the more comfortable because he was brought to it out of distress, iv. 1).

(2.) God baffled the designs of his enemies against him: They are *quenched as the fire of thorns* (v. 12), which burns furiously for a while, makes a great noise and a great blaze, but is presently out, and cannot do the mischief that it threatened. Such was the fury of David's enemies; such is *the laughter of the fool*, like the crackling of thorns under the pot (Eccl. vii. 6), and such is the anger of the fool, which therefore is not to be feared, but more than his laughter is to be envied, but both to be pitied. They thrust sorely at him, but *the Lord helped him* (v. 13), helped him to keep his feet and maintain his ground. Our spiritual enemies would, long before this, have been our ruin if God had not been our helper. (3.) God preserved his life when there was but a step between him and death (v. 18): *“He has chastened me, but he has not given me over unto death, for he has not given me over to the will of my enemies.”* To this St. Paul seems to refer in 2 Cor. vi. 9: *As dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed*. We ought not therefore, when we are chastened sorely, immediately to despair of life; for God sometimes, in appearance, turns men to destruction, and yet says *Return; says unto them, Live*.

This also is applicable to Jesus Christ. God answered him, and set him in a large place. He quenched the fire of his enemies' rage, which did but consume themselves; for *through death he destroyed him that had the power of death*. He helped him through his undertaking; and thus far he did not give him over unto death that he did not leave him in the grave, nor suffer him to see corruption. Death had no dominion over him.

3. The improvement he made of this favour. (1.) It encouraged him to trust in God; from his own experience he can say, *It is better more wise, more comfortable, and more safe, there is more reason for it, and it will speed better, to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man*, yea, though it be in princes (v. 8, 9). He that devotes himself to God's guidance and government, with an entire dependence upon God's wisdom, power, and goodness, has a better security to make him easy than if all the kings and potentates of the earth should undertake to protect him. (2.) It enabled him to triumph in that trust [1.] He triumphs in God, and in his relation to him and interest in him (v. 6): *“The Lord is on my side.”* He is a righteous God, and therefore espouses my righteous cause and will plead it.” If we are on God's side, he is on ours; if we be for him and with him, he will be for us and with us (v. 7): *“The Lord takes my part, and stands up for me, with*

those that help me. He is to me among my helpers, and so one of them that he is all in all both to them and me, and without him I could not help myself nor could any friend I have in the world help me." Thus (v. 14), "*The Lord is my strength and my song*; that is, I make him so (without him I am weak and sad, but on him I stay myself as my strength, both for doing and suffering, and in him I solace myself as my song, by which I both express my joy and ease my grief), and, making him so, I find him so: he strengthens my heart with his graces and gladdens my heart with his comforts." If God be our strength, he must be our song; if he work all our works in us, he must have all praise and glory from us. God is sometimes the strength of his people when he is not their song; they have spiritual supports when they want spiritual delights. But, if he be both to us, we have abundant reason to triumph in him; for, if he be our strength and our song, he has become not only our Saviour, but our salvation; for his being our strength is our protection to the salvation, and his being our song is an earnest and foretaste of the salvation. [2.] He triumphs over his enemies. Now shall his head be lifted up above them; for, *First*, He is sure they cannot hurt him: "God is for me, and then *I will not fear what man can do against me*," v. 6. He can set them all at defiance, and is not disturbed at any of their attempts. "They can do nothing to me but what God permits them to do; they can do me no real damage, for they cannot separate between me and God; they cannot do any thing but what God can make to work for my good. The enemy is a man, a depending creature, whose power is limited, and subordinate to a higher power, and therefore I will not fear him." *Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die?* Isa. li. 12. The apostle quotes this, with application to all Christians, Heb. xiii. 6. They may boldly say, as boldly as David himself, *The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me*; let him do his worst. *Secondly*, He is sure that he shall be too hard for them at last: "*I shall see my desire upon those that hate me* (v. 7); I shall see them defeated in their designs against me; nay, *In the name of the Lord I will destroy them* (v. 10—12); I trust in the name of the Lord that I shall destroy them, and in his name I will go forth against them, depending on his strength, by warrant from him, and with an eye to his glory, not confiding in myself nor taking vengeance for myself." Thus he went forth against Goliath, *in the name of the God of Israel*, 1 Sam. xvii. 45. David says this as a type of Christ, who triumphed over the powers of darkness, destroyed them, and made a show of them openly. [3.] He triumphs in an assurance of the continuance of his comfort, his victory, and his life. *First*, Of his comfort (v. 15): *The voice of rejoicing and*

salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous, and in mine particularly, in my family. The dwellings of the righteous in this world are but tabernacles, mean and movable; here we have no city, *no continuing city*. But these tabernacles are more comfortable to them than the palaces of the wicked are to them; for in the house where religion rules, 1. There is salvation; safety from evil, earnest of eternal salvation, which *has come to this house*, Luke xix. 9. 2. Where there is salvation there is cause for rejoicing, for continual joy in God. Holy joy is called *the joy of salvation*, for in that there is abundant matter for joy. 3. Where there is rejoicing there ought to be *the voice of rejoicing*, that is, praise and thanksgiving. Let God be served with joyfulness and gladness of heart, and let the voice of that rejoicing be heard daily in our families, to the glory of God and the encouragement of others. *Secondly*, Of his victory: *The right hand of the Lord does valiantly* (v. 15) and *is exalted*; for (as some read it) *it has exalted me*. The right hand of God's power is engaged for his people, and it acts vigorously for them and therefore victoriously. For what difficulty can stand before the divine valour? We are weak, and act but cowardly for ourselves; but God is mighty, and acts valiantly for us, with jealousy and resolution, Isa. lxiii. 5, 6. There is spirit, as well as strength, in all God's operations for his people. And, when God's right hand does valiantly for our salvation, it ought to be exalted in our praises. *Thirdly*, Of his life (v. 17): "*I shall not die* by the hands of my enemies that seek my life, *but live and declare the works of the Lord*; I shall live a monument of God's mercy and power; his works shall be declared in me, and I will make it the business of my life to praise and magnify God, looking upon that as the end of my preservation." Note, It is not worth while to live for any other purpose than to *declare the works of God*, for his honour and the encouragement of others to serve him and trust in him. Such as these were the triumphs of the Son of David in the assurance he had of the success of his undertaking and that the *good pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hand*.

19 Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the LORD: 20 This gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter. 21 I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. 22 The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. 23 This is the LORD's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes. 24 This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. 25 Save now, I beseech

thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. 26 Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD. 27 God is the LORD, which hath showed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, *even* unto the horns of the altar. 28 Thou art my God, and I will praise thee: *thou art* my God, I will exalt thee. 29 O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he is* good; for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

We have here an illustrious prophecy of the humiliation and exaltation of our Lord Jesus, his sufferings, and the glory that should follow. Peter thus applies it directly to the chief priests and scribes, and none of them could charge him with misapplying it, Acts iv. 11. Now observe here,

I. The preface with which this precious prophecy is introduced, v. 19—21. 1. The psalmist desires admission into the sanctuary of God, there to celebrate the glory of him *that cometh in the name of the Lord: Open to me the gates of righteousness.* So the temples-gates are called, because they were shut against the uncircumcised, and forbade the stranger to come nigh, as the sacrifices there offered are called *sacrifices of righteousness.* Those that would enter into communion with God in holy ordinances must become humble suitors to God for admission. And when the gates of righteousness are opened to us we must *go into them*, must enter into the holiest, as far as we have leave, *and praise the Lord.* Our business within God's gates is to praise God; *therefore* we should long till the gates of heaven be opened to us, that we may go into them to dwell in God's house above, where we shall be still praising him. 2. He sees admission granted him (v. 20): *This is the gate of the Lord*, the gate of his appointing, *into which the righteous shall enter*; as if he had said, "The gate you knocked at is opened, and you are welcome. *Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*" Some by this gate understand Christ, by whom we are taken into fellowship with God and our praises are accepted; he is *the way*; there is no coming to the Father but by him (John xiv. 6), he is *the door of the sheep* (John x. 9); he is the gate of the temple, by whom, and by whom only, the righteous, and they only, shall enter, and *come into God's righteousness*, as the expression is, lxi. 27. The psalmist triumphs in the discovery that the gate of righteousness, which had been so long shut, and so long knocked at, was now at length opened. 3. He promises to give thanks to God for this favour (v. 21): *I will praise thee.* Those that saw Christ's day at so great a distance saw cause to praise God for the prospect; for in him they saw that God had heard them, had heard the prayers

of the Old-Testament saints for the coming of the Messiah, and would be their salvation.

II. The prophecy itself, v. 22, 23. This may have some reference to David's preference; he was the stone which Saul and his courtiers rejected, but was by the wonderful providence of God advanced to be the head-stone of the building. But its principal reference is to Christ; and here we have, His humiliation. He is *the stone which the builders refused*; he is *the stone cut out of the mountain without hands*, Dan. ii. 34. He is a stone, not only for strength, and firmness, and duration, but for life, in the building of the spiritual temple; and yet a *precious stone* (1 Pet. ii. 6), for the foundation of the gospel-church must be *sapphires*, Isa. liv. 11. This stone was *rejected by the builders*, by the rulers and people of the Jews (Acts iv. 8, 10, 11); they refused to own him as the stone, the Messiah promised; they would not build their faith upon him nor join themselves to him; they would make no use of him, but go on in their building without him; they *denied him in the presence of Pilate* (Acts iii. 13) when they said, *We have no king but Caesar.* They trampled upon this stone, threw it among the rubbish out of the city; nay, they stumbled at it. This was a disgrace to Christ, but it proved the ruin of those that thus made light of him. Rejecters of Christ are rejected of God. 2. His exaltation. He *has become the head-stone of the corner*; he is advanced to the highest degree both of honour and usefulness, to be above all, and all in all. He is the chief corner-stone in the foundation, in whom Jew and Gentile are united, that they may be built up one holy house. He is the chief top-stone in the corner, in whom the building is completed, and who must in all things have the pre-eminence, as the *author and finisher of our faith.* Thus highly has God exalted him, because he humbled himself; and we, in compliance with God's design, must make him the foundation of our hope, the centre of our unity, and the end of our living. *To me to live is Christ.* 3. The hand of God in all this: *This is the Lord's doing*; it is from the Lord; it is with the Lord; it is the product of his counsel; it is his contrivance. Both the humiliation and the exaltation of the Lord Jesus were his work, Acts ii. 23; iv. 27, 29. He sent him, sealed him; his hand went with him throughout his whole undertaking, and from first to last he did his Father's will; and this ought to be *marvellous in our eyes.* Christ's name is *Wonderful*; and the redemption he wrought out is the most amazing of all God's works of wonder; it is what the angels *desire to look into*, and will be admiring to eternity; much more ought we to admire it, who owe our all to it. *Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness.*

III. The joy wherewith it is entertained

and the acclamations which attend this prediction.

1. Let the day be solemnized to the honour of God with great joy (*v. 24*): *This is the day the Lord has made*. The whole time of the gospel-dispensation, that *accepted time*, that *day of salvation*, is what the Lord has made so; it is a continual feast, which ought to be kept with joy. Or it may very fitly be understood of the Christian sabbath, which we sanctify in remembrance of Christ's resurrection, when the rejected stone began to be exalted; and so, (1.) Here is the doctrine of the Christian sabbath: *It is the day which the Lord has made*, has made remarkable, made holy, has distinguished from other days; he has made it for man: it is therefore called *the Lord's day*, for it bears his image and superscription. (2.) The duty of the sabbath, the work of the day that is to be done in his day: *We will rejoice and be glad in it*, not only in the institution of the day, that there is such a day appointed, but in the occasion of it, Christ's becoming the *head of the corner*. This we ought to rejoice in both as his honour and our advantage. Sabbath days must be rejoicing days, and then they are to us as the days of heaven. See what a good Master we serve, who, having instituted a day for his service, appoints it to be spent in holy joy.

2. Let the exalted Redeemer be met, and attended, with joyful hosannas, *v. 25, 26*.

(1.) Let him have the acclamations of the people, as is usual at the inauguration of a prince. Let every one of his loyal subjects shout for joy, *Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord!* This is like *Vivat rex—Long live the king*, and expresses a hearty joy for his accession to the crown, an entire satisfaction in his government, and a zealous affection to the interests and honour of it. *Hosanna* signifies, *Save now, I beseech thee*. [1.] "Lord, save me, I beseech thee; let this Saviour be my Saviour, and, in order to that, my ruler; let me be taken under his protection and owned as one of his willing subjects. His enemies are my enemies; Lord, I beseech thee, save me from them. Send me an interest in that prosperity which his kingdom brings with it to all those that entertain it. Let my soul prosper and be in health, in that peace and righteousness which his government brings, lxxii. 3. Let me have victory over those lusts that war against my soul, and let divine grace go on in my heart conquering and to conquer." [2.] "Lord, preserve him, I beseech thee, even the Saviour himself, and send him prosperity in all his undertakings; give success to his gospel, and let it be mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong-holds and reducing souls to their allegiance to him. Let his name be sanctified, his kingdom come, his will be done." Thus let prayer be made for him continually, lxxii. 15. On the Lord's day, when we rejoice and are glad in his kingdom, we must

pray for the advancement of it more and more, and its establishment upon the ruins of the devil's kingdom. When Christ made his public entry into Jerusalem he was thus met by his well-wishers (Matt. xxi. 9): *Hosanna to the Son of David*; long live King Jesus; let him reign for ever.

(2.) Let the priests, the Lord's ministers do their part in this great solemnity, *v. 26*. [1.] Let them bless the prince with their praises: *Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord*. Jesus Christ is *he that cometh*—ὁ ἔρχόμενος, he that was to come and is yet to come again, Rev. i. 8. He comes in the name of the Lord, with a commission from him, to act for him, to do his will and to seek his glory; and therefore we must say, *Blessed be he that cometh*; we must rejoice that he has come; we must speak well of him, admire him, and esteem him highly, as one we are eternally obliged to, call him blessed Jesus, blessed for ever, xlv. 2. We must bid him welcome into our hearts, saying, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; come in by thy grace and Spirit, and take possession of me for thy own." We must bless his faithful ministers that come in his name, and receive them for his sake, Isa. lii. 7; John xiii. 20. We must pray for the enlargement and edification of his church, for the ripening of things for his second coming, and then that he who has said, *Surely I come quickly, would even so come*. [2.] Let them bless the people with their prayers: *We have blessed you out of the house of the Lord*. Christ's ministers are not only warranted, but appointed to pronounce a blessing, in his name, upon all his loyal subjects that love him and his government in sincerity, Eph. vi. 24. We assure you that in and through Jesus Christ you are blessed; for he came to bless you. "You are blessed out of the house of the Lord, that is, with spiritual blessings in heavenly places (Eph. i. 3), and therefore have reason to bless him who has thus blessed you."

3. Let sacrifices of thanksgiving be offered to his honour who offered for us the great atoning sacrifice, *v. 27*. Here is, (1.) The privilege we enjoy by Jesus Christ: *God is the Lord who has shown us light*. God is Jehovah, is known by that name, a God performing what he has promised and perfecting what he has begun, Exod. vi. 3. He has shown us light, that is, he has given us the knowledge of himself and his will. He has shined upon us (so some); he has favoured us, and lifted up upon us the light of his countenance; he has given us occasion for joy and rejoicing, which is light to the soul, by giving us a prospect of everlasting light in heaven. The day which the Lord has made brings light with it, true light. (2.) The duty which this privilege calls for: *Bind the sacrifice with cords*, that, being killed, the blood of it may be sprinkled upon the horns of the altar, according to the law; or perhaps it was the custom (though we read not of it

elsewhere) to bind the sacrifice to the horns of the altar while things were getting ready for the slaying of it. Or this may have a peculiar significance here; the sacrifice we are to offer to God, in gratitude for redeeming love, is ourselves, not to be slain upon the altar, but living sacrifices (Rom. xii. 1), to be bound to the altar, spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, in which our hearts must be fixed and engaged, as the sacrifice was bound with cords to the horns of the altar, not to start back.

4. The psalmist concludes with his own thankful acknowledgments of divine grace, in which he calls upon others to join with him, v. 28, 29. (1.) He will praise God himself, and endeavour to exalt him in his own heart and in the hearts of others, and this because of his covenant-relation to him and interest in him: "*Thou art my God, on whom I depend, and to whom I am devoted, who ownest me and art owned by me; and therefore I will praise thee.*" (2.) He will have all about him to give thanks to God for these glad tidings of great joy to all people, that there is a Redeemer, even Christ the Lord. In him it is that God is good to man and that his mercy endures for ever; in him the covenant of grace is made, and in him it is made sure, made good, and made an everlasting covenant. He concludes this psalm as he began it (v. 1), for God's glory must be the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, of all our addresses to him. *Hallowed be thy name, and thine is the glory.* And this fitly closes a prophecy of Christ. The angels give thanks for man's redemption. *Glory to God in the highest* (Luke ii. 14), for there is on earth peace, to which we must echo with our hosannas, as they did, Luke xix. 38. *Peace in heaven to us through Christ, and therefore glory in the highest.*

PSALM CXIX.

This is a psalm by itself, like none of the rest; it excels them all, and shines brightest in this constellation. It is much longer than any of them more than twice as any of them. It is not making long prayers that Christ censures, but making them for a pretence, which intimates that they are in themselves good and commendable. It seems to me to be a collection of David's pious and devout ejaculations, the short and sudden breathings and elevations of his soul to God, which he wrote down as they occurred, and, towards the latter end of his time, gathered out of his day-book where they lay scattered, added to them many like words, and digested them into this psalm, in which there is seldom any coherence between the verses, but, like Solomon's proverbs, it is a chest of gold rings, not a chain of gold links. And we may not only learn, by the psalmist's example, to accustom ourselves to such pious ejaculations, which are an excellent means of maintaining constant communion with God, and keeping the heart in frame for the more solemn exercises of religion; but we must make use of the psalmist's words, both for the exciting and for the expressing of our devout affections: what some have said of this psalm is true, "He that shall read it considerately, it will either warm him or shame him." The composition of it is singular and very exact. It is divided into twenty-two parts, according to the number of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and each part consists of eight verses, all the verses of the first part beginning with Aleph, all the verses of the second with Beth, and so on, without any flaw throughout the whole psalm. Archbishop Tillotson says, it seems to have more of poetical skill and number in it than we at this distance can easily understand. Some have called it the saint's alphabet; and it were to be wished we had it as ready in our memories as the very letters of our alphabet, as ready as our A B C. Perhaps the penman found it of use to himself to observe this method, as it obliged him to seek for thoughts, and search for them, that he might fill up the quota of every part; and the letter he was to begin with might lead him to a word which might suggest a good sentence; and all little enough to raise any thing that is good in the barren soil of our hearts. However, it would be of use to the learners, a help to them both in committing it to memory and in calling it to mind upon occasion;

by the letter the first word would be got, and that would bring in the whole verse; thus young people would the more easily learn it by heart and retain it the better even in old age. If any censure it as childish and trifling, because acrostics are now quite out of fashion, let them know that the royal psalmist despises their censure; he is a teacher of babes, and, if this method may be beneficial to them, he can easily stoop to it; if this be to be vile, he will be yet more vile.

11. The general scope and design of it is to magnify the law, and make it honourable; to set forth the excellency and usefulness of divine revelation, and to recommend it to us, not only for the entertainment, but for the government, of ourselves, by the psalmist's own example, who speaks by experience of the benefit of it, and of the good impressions made upon him by it, for which he praises God, and earnestly prays, from first to last, for the continuance of God's grace with him, to direct and quicken him in the way of his duty. There are ten different words by which divine revelation is called in this psalm, and they are synonymous, each of them expressive of the whole compass of it (both that which tells us what God expects from us and that which tells us what we may expect from him) and of the system of religion which is founded upon it and guided by it. The things contained in the scripture, and drawn from it, are here called, 1. God's law, because they are enacted by him as our Sovereign. 2. His way, because they are the rule both of his providence and of our obedience. 3. His testimonies, because they are solemnly declared to the world and attested beyond contradiction. 4. His commandments, because given with authority, and (as the word signifies) lodged with us as a trust. 5. His precepts, because prescribed to us and not left indifferent. 6. His word, or saying, because it is the declaration of his mind, and Christ, the essential eternal Word, is all in all in it. 7. His judgments, because framed in infinite wisdom, and because by them we must both judge and be judged. 8. His righteousness, because it is all holy, just, and good, and the rule and standard of righteousness. 9. His statutes, because they are fixed and determined, and of perpetual obligation. His truth, or faithfulness, because the principles upon which the divine law is built are eternal truths. And I think there is but one verse (it is ver. 122) in all this long psalm in which there is not one or other of these ten words; only in three or four as we used concerning God's providence or David's practice (as ver. 76, 84, 121), and ver. 132 they are called God's name. The great esteem and affection David had for the word of God is the more admirable considering how little he had of it, in comparison with what we have, no more perhaps in writing than the first books of Moses, which were but the dawning of this day, which may shame us who enjoy the full discoveries of divine revelation and yet are so cold towards it. In singing this psalm there is work for all the devout affections of a sanctified soul, so copious, so various, is the matter of it. We here find that in which we must give glory to God both as our ruler and great benefactor, that in which we are to teach and admonish ourselves and one another (so many are the instructions which we here find about a religious life), and that in which we are to comfort and encourage ourselves and one another, so many are the sweet experiences of one that lived such a life. Here is something or other to suit the case of every Christian. Is any afflicted? Is any merry? Each will find that here which is proper for him. And it is so far from being a tedious repetition of the same thing, as may seem to those who look over it cursorily, that, if we duly meditate upon it, we shall find almost every verse has a new thought and something in it very lively. And this, as many other of David's psalms, teaches us to be sententious in our devotions, both alone and when others join with us; for, ordinarily, the affections, especially of weaker Christians, are more likely to be raised and kept by short expressions, the sense of which lies in a little compass, than by long and laboured periods.

1. ALEPH.

BLESSED are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. 2 Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart. 3 They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.

The psalmist here shows that godly people are happy people; they are, and shall be, blessed indeed. Felicity is the thing we all pretend to aim at and pursue. He does not say here wherein it consists; it is enough for us to know what we must do and be that we may attain to it, and that we are here told. All men would be happy, but few take the right way; God has here laid before us the right way, which we may be sure will end in happiness, though it be strait and narrow. Blessednesses are to the righteous; all manner of blessedness. Now observe the charac-

ters of the happy people. 'Those are happy, 1. Who make the will of God the rule of all their actions, and govern themselves, in their whole conversation, by that rule: *They walk in the law of the Lord, v. 1.* God's word is a law to them, not only in this or that instance, but in the whole course of their conversation; they walk within the hedges of that law, which they dare not break through by doing any thing it forbids; and they walk in the paths of that law, which they will not trifle in, but *press forward* in them *towards the mark*, taking every step by rule and never walking at all adventures. This is *walking in God's ways* (v. 3), the ways which he has marked out to us and has appointed us to walk in. It will not serve us to make religion the subject of our discourse; but we must make it the rule of our walk; we must walk *in his ways*, not in the way of the world, or of our own hearts, Job xxiii. 10, 11; xxxi. 7. 2. Who are upright and honest in their religion—*undefiled in the way*, not only who keep themselves pure from the pollutions of actual sin, *unspotted from the world*, but who are habitually sincere in their intentions, *in whose spirit there is no guile*, who are really as good as they seem to be and row the same way as they look. 3. Who are true to the trust reposed in them as God's professing people. It was the honour of the Jews that *to them were committed the oracles of God*; and blessed are those who preserve pure and entire that sacred deposit, *who keep his testimonies* as a treasure of inestimable value, keep them as the apple of their eye, so keep them as to carry the comfort of them themselves to another world and leave the knowledge and profession of them to those who shall come after them in this world. Those who would *walk in the law of the Lord* must *keep his testimonies*, that is, his truths. Those will not long make conscience of good practices who do not adhere to good principles. Or *his testimonies* may denote his covenant; the ark of the covenant is called *the ark of the testimony*. Those do not keep covenant with God who do not keep the commandments of God. 4. Who have a single eye to God as their chief good and highest end in all they do in religion (v. 2): *They seek him with their whole heart*. They do not seek themselves and their own things, but God only; this is that which they aim at, that God may be glorified in their obedience and that they may be happy in God's acceptance. He is, and will be, the rewarder, the reward, of all those who thus *seek him diligently, seek him with the heart*, for that is it that God looks at and requires; and *with the whole heart*, for if the heart be divided between him and the world it is faulty. 5. Who carefully avoid all sin (v. 3): *They do no iniquity*; they do not allow themselves in any sin; they do not commit it as those do who are the servants of sin; they do not make a practice of it, do not make a trade of

it. They are conscious to themselves of much iniquity that clogs them in the ways of God, but not of that iniquity which draws them out of those ways. Blessed and holy are those who thus exercise themselves to *have always consciences void of offence*.

4 Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently. 5 O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! 6 Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.

We are here taught, 1. To own ourselves under the highest obligations to walk in God's law. The tempter would possess men with an opinion that they are at their liberty whether they will make the word of God their rule or no, that, though it may be good, yet it is not so necessary as they are made to believe it is. He taught our first parents to question the command: *Hath God said, You shall not eat?* And therefore we are concerned to be well established in this (v. 4): *Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts*, to make religion our rule; and *to keep them diligently*, to make religion our business and to mind it carefully and constantly. We are bound, and must obey at our peril. 2. To look up to God for wisdom and grace to do so (v. 5): *O that my ways were directed accordingly!* not only that all events concerning us may be so ordered and disposed by the providence of God as not to be in any thing a hindrance to us, but a furtherance rather, in the service of God, but that our hearts may be so guided and influenced by the Spirit of God that we may not in any thing transgress God's commandments—not only that our eyes may be directed to behold God's statutes, but our hearts directed to keep them. See how the desire and prayer of a good man exactly agree with the will and command of a good God: "Thou wouldest have me keep thy precepts, and, Lord, I fain would keep them." *This is the will of God, even our sanctification*; and it should be our will. 3. To encourage ourselves in the way of our duty with a prospect of the comfort we shall find in it, v. 6. Note, (1.) It is the undoubted character of every good man that he has a *respect to all God's commandments*. He has a respect to the command, eyes it as his copy, aims to conform to it, is sorry wherein he comes short; and what he does in religion he does with a conscientious regard to the command, because it is his duty. He has *respect to all the commandments*, one as well as another, because they are all backed with the same authority (Jam. ii. 10, 11) and all levelled at the same end, the glorifying of God in our happiness. Those who have a sincere respect to any command will have a general respect to every command, to the commands of both testaments and both tables, to the prohibitions and the precepts, to

those that concern both the inward and the outward man, both the head and the heart, to those that forbid the most pleasant and gainful sins and to those that require the most difficult and hazardous duties (2.) Those who have a sincere respect to all God's commandments shall not be ashamed, not only they will thereby be kept from doing that which will turn to their shame, but they shall have confidence towards God and boldness of access to the throne of his grace, 1 John iii. 21. They shall have credit before men; their honesty will be their honour. And they shall have clearness and courage in their own souls; they shall not be ashamed to retire into themselves, nor to reflect upon themselves, for their hearts shall not condemn them. David speaks this with application to himself. Those that are upright may take the comfort of their uprightness. "As, if I be wicked, woe to me; so, if I be sincere, it is well with me."

7 I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments. 8 I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.

Here is, I. David's endeavour to perfect himself in his religion, and to make himself (as we say) master of his business. He hopes to learn God's righteous judgments. He knew much, but he was still pressing forward and desired to know more, as knowing this, that he had not yet attained; but as far as perfection is attainable in this life he reached towards it, and would not take upshort of it. As long as we live we must be scholars in Christ's school, and sit at his feet; but we should aim to be head-scholars, and to get into the highest form. God's judgments are all righteous, and therefore it is desirable not only to learn them, but to be learned in them, mighty in the scriptures.

II. The use he would make of his divine learning. He coveted to be learned in the laws of God, not that he might make himself a name and interest among men, or fill his own head with entertaining speculations, but, 1. That he might give God the glory of his learning: *I will praise thee when I have learned thy judgments*, intimating that he could not learn unless God taught him, and that divine instructions are special blessings, which we have reason to be thankful for. Though Christ keeps a free-school, and teaches without money and without price, yet he expects his scholars should give him thanks both for his word and for his Spirit; surely it is a mercy worth thanks to be taught so gainful a calling as religion is. Those have learned a good lesson who have learned to praise God, for that is the work of angels, the work of heaven. It is an easy thing to praise God in word and tongue; but those only are well learned in this mystery who have learned to praise him with uprightness of heart, that is, are inward with him in

praising him, and sincerely aim at his glory in the course of their conversation as well as in the exercises of devotion. God accepts only the praises of the upright. 2. That he might himself come under the government of that learning: *When I shall have learned thy righteous judgments I will keep thy statutes*. We cannot keep them unless we learn them; but we learn them in vain if we do not keep them. Those have well learned God's statutes who have come up to a full resolution in the strength of his grace, to keep them.

III. His prayer to God not to leave him. "O forsake me not! that is, leave me not to myself, withdraw not thy Spirit and grace from me, for then I shall not keep thy statutes." Good men see themselves undone if God forsakes them; for then the tempter will be too hard for them. "Though thou seem to forsake me, and threaten to forsake me, and dost, for a time, withdraw from me yet let not the desertion be total and final for that is hell. O forsake me not utterly for woe unto me if God departs from me."

2. BETH.

9 Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.

Here is, 1. A weighty question asked. By what means may the next generation be made better than this? *Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?* Cleansing implies that it is polluted. Besides the original corruption we all brought into the world with us (from which we are not cleansed unto this day), there are many particular sins which young people are subject to, by which they defile their way, *youthful lusts* (2 Tim. ii. 22); these render their way offensive to God and disgraceful to themselves. Young men are concerned to cleanse their way—to get their hearts renewed and their lives reformed, to make clean, and keep clean, from the corruption that is in the world through lust, that they may have both a good conscience and a good name. Few young people do themselves enquire by what means they may recover and preserve their purity; and therefore David asks the question for them. 2. A satisfactory answer given to this question. Young men may effectually cleanse their way by taking heed thereto according to the word of God; and it is the honour of the word of God that it has such power and is of such use both to particular persons and to communities, whose happiness lies much in the virtue of their youth. (1.) Young men must make the word of God their rule, must acquaint themselves with it and resolve to conform themselves to it; that will do more towards the cleansing of young men than the laws of princes or the morals of philosophers. (2.) They must carefully apply that rule and make use of it; they must take heed to their way, must examine it by the word of God, as a touchstone and standard, must rectify

what is amiss in it by that regulator and steer by that chart and compass. God's word will not do without our watchfulness, and a constant regard both to it and to our way, that we may compare them together. The ruin of young men is either living at large (or by no rule at all) or choosing to themselves false rules: let them ponder the path of their feet, and walk by scripture-rules; so their way shall be clean, and they shall have the comfort and credit of it here and for ever.

10 With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.

Here is, 1. David's experience of a good work God had wrought in him, which he takes the comfort of and pleads with God: "*I have sought thee, sought to thee as my oracle, sought after thee as my happiness, sought thee as my God; for should not a people seek unto their God? If I have not yet found thee, I have sought thee, and thou never saidst, Seek in vain, nor wilt say so to me, for I have sought thee with my heart, with my whole heart, sought thee only, sought thee diligently.*" 2. His prayer for the preservation of that work: "Thou that hast inclined me to seek thy precepts, never suffer me to wander from them." The best are sensible of their aptness to wander; and the more we have found of the pleasure there is in keeping God's commandments the more afraid we shall be of wandering from them and the more earnest we shall be in prayer to God for his grace to prevent our wanderings.

11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

Here is, 1. The close application which David made of the word of God to himself: *He hid it in his heart*, laid it up there, that it might be ready to him whenever he had occasion to use it; he laid it up as that which he valued highly, and had a warm regard for, and which he was afraid of losing and being robbed of. God's word is a treasure worth laying up, and there is no laying it up safely but in our hearts; if we have it only in our houses and hands, enemies may take it from us; if only in our heads, our memories may fail us: but if our hearts be delivered into the mould of it, and the impressions of it remain on our souls, it is safe. 2. The good uses he designed to make of it: *That I might not sin against thee*. Good men are afraid of sin, and are in care to prevent it; and the most effectual way to prevent it is to hide God's word in our hearts, that we may answer every temptation, as our Master said, with, *It is written*, may oppose God's precepts to the dominion of sin, his promises to its allurements, and his threatenings to its menaces.

12 Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes.

Here, 1. David gives glory to God: "*Blessed art thou, O Lord! Thou art infinitely happy in the enjoyment of thyself and hast no need of me or my services; yet thou art pleased to reckon thyself honoured by them; assist me therefore, and then accept me.*" In all our prayers we should intermix praises. 2. He asks grace from God: *Teach me thy statutes*; give me to know and do my duty in every thing. Thou art the fountain of all blessedness; O let me have this drop from that fountain, this blessing from that blessedness: *Teach me thy statutes*, that I may know how to bless thee, who art a blessed God, and that I may be blessed in thee."

13 With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth. 14 I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. 15 I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways. 16 I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.

Here, 1. David looks back with comfort upon the respect he had paid to the word of God. He had the testimony of his conscience for him, 1. That he had edified others with what he had been taught out of the word of God (v. 13): *With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth*. This he did, not only as a king in making orders, and giving judgment, according to the word of God, nor only as a prophet by his psalms, but in his common discourse. Thus he showed how full he was of the word of God, and what a holy delight he took in his acquaintance with it; for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks. Thus he did good with his knowledge; he did not hide God's word from others, but hid it for them; and, out of that good treasure in his heart, brought forth good things, as the householder out of his store things new and old. Those whose hearts are fed with the bread of life should with their lips feed many. He had prayed (v. 12) that God would teach him; and here he pleads, "Lord, I have endeavoured to make a good use of the knowledge thou hast given me, therefore increase it;" for to him that has shall be given. 2. That he had entertained himself with it: "*Lord, teach me thy statutes*; for I desire no greater pleasure than to know and do them (v. 14): *I have rejoiced in the way of thy commandments*, in a constant even course of obedience to thee; not only in the speculations and histories of thy word, but in the precepts of it, and in that path of serious godliness which they chalk out to me. *I have rejoiced in this as much as in all riches*, as much as ever any worldling rejoiced in the increase of his wealth. In the way of God's commandments I can truly say, *Soul, take thy ease*;" in true religion there is all riches, the unsearchable riches of Christ.

II. He looks forward with a holy resolu-

tion never to cool in his affection to the word of God; what he *does that he will do*, 2 Cor. xi. 12. Those that have found pleasure in the ways of God are likely to proceed and persevere in them. 1. He will dwell much upon them in his thoughts (v. 15): *I will meditate in thy precepts*. He not only discoursed of them to others (many do that only to show their knowledge and authority), but he communed with his own heart about them, and took pains to digest in his own thoughts what he had declared, or had to declare, to others. Note, God's words ought to be very much the subject of our thoughts. 2. He will have them always in his eye: *I will have respect unto thy ways*, as the traveller has to his road, which he is in care not to miss and always aims and endeavours to hit. We do not meditate on God's precepts to good purpose unless we have respect to them as our rule and our good thoughts produce good works and good intentions in them. 3. He will take a constant pleasure in communion with God and obedience to him. It is not for a season that he rejoices in this light, but "*I will still, I will for ever, delight myself in thy statutes*, not only think of them, but do them with delight," v. 16. David took more delight in God's statutes than in the pleasures of his court or the honours of his camp, more than in his sword or in his harp. When the law is written in the heart duty becomes a delight. 4. He will never forget what he has learned of the things of God: "*I will not forget thy word*, not only I will not quite forget it, but I will be mindful of it when I have occasion to use it." Those that meditate in God's word, and delight in it, are in no great danger of forgetting it

3. GIMEL.

17 Deal bountifully with thy servant, *that I may live, and keep thy word*.

We are here taught, 1. That we owe our lives to God's mercy. David prays, *Deal bountifully with me, that I may live*. It was God's bounty that gave us life, that gave us this life; and the same bounty that gave it continues it, and gives all the supports and comforts of it; if these be withheld, we die, or, which is equivalent, our lives are embittered and we become weary of them. If God deals in strict justice with us, we die, we perish, we all perish; if these forfeited lives be preserved and prolonged, it is because God deals bountifully with us, according to his mercy, not according to our deserts. The continuance of the most useful life is owing to God's bounty, and on that we must have a continual dependence. 2. That therefore we ought to spend our lives in God's service. Life is *therefore* a choice mercy, because it is an opportunity of obeying God in this world, where there are so few that do glorify him; and this David had in his eye: "*Not that I may live and grow rich, live and be merry,*

but that I may live and keep thy word, may observe it myself and transmit it to those that shall come after, which the longer I live the better I shall do."

18 Open thou mine eyes, *that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law*.

Observe here, 1. That there are *wondrous things* in God's law, which we are all concerned, and should covet, to *behold*, not only strange things, which are very surprising and unexpected, but excellent things, which are to be highly esteemed and valued, and things which were long *hidden from the wise and prudent*, but are now *revealed unto babes*. In the law there were wonders in the law, much more in the gospel, where Christ is all in all, whose name is *Wonderful*. Well may we, who are so nearly interested, desire to behold these wondrous things, when the angels themselves reach to *look into them*, 1 Pet. i. 12. 2. Those that would see the wondrous things of God's law and gospel must beg of him to *open their eyes* and to give them an understanding. We are by nature blind to the things of God, till his grace cause the scales to fall from our eyes; and even those in whose hearts God has said, *Let there be light*, have yet need to be further enlightened, and must still pray to God to open their eyes yet more and more, that those who at first *saw men as trees walking* may come to see all things clearly; and the more God opens our eyes the more wonders we see in the word of God, which we saw not before.

19 *I am a stranger in the earth; hide not thy commandments from me*.

Here we have, 1. The acknowledgment which David makes of his own condition: *I am a stranger in the earth*. We all are so, and all good people confess themselves to be so; for heaven is their home, and the world is but their inn, the land of their pilgrimage. David was a man that knew as much of the world, and was as well known in it, as most men. God built him a house, established his throne; strangers submitted to him, and people that he had not known served him; he had a name like the names of the great men, and yet he calls himself a stranger. We are all strangers on earth and must so account ourselves. 2. The request he makes to God thereupon: *Hide not thy commandments from me*. He means more: "Lord, show thy commandments to me; let me never know the want of the word of God, but, as long as I live, give me to be growing in my acquaintance with it. *I am a stranger* and therefore stand in need of a guide, guard, a companion, a comforter; let me have thy commandments always in view, for they will be all this to me, all that a poor stranger can desire. *I am a stranger here* and must be gone shortly; by thy commandments let me be prepared for my removal hence."

20 My soul breaketh for the longing *that it hath* unto thy judgments at all times.

David had prayed that God would open his eyes (v. 18) and open the law (v. 19); now here he pleads the earnestness of his desire for knowledge and grace, for it is the fervent prayer that avails much. 1. His desire was importunate: *My soul breaketh for the longing it hath to thy judgments*, or (as some read it) "*It is taken up, and wholly employed, in longing for thy judgments*"; the whole stream of its desires runs in this channel. I shall think myself quite broken and undone if I want the word of God, the direction, converse, and comfort of it." 2. It was constant—at all times. It was not now and then, in a good humour, that he was so fond of the word of God; but it is the habitual temper of every sanctified soul to hunger after the word of God as its necessary food, which there is no living without.

21 Thou hast rebuked the proud *that are cursed*, which do err from thy commandments.

Here is, 1. The wretched character of wicked people. The temper of their minds is bad. They are *proud*; they magnify themselves above others. And yet that is not all: they magnify themselves against God, and set up their wills in competition with and opposition to the will of God, as if their hearts, and tongues, and all, were their own. There is something of pride at the bottom of every wilful sin, and the tenour of their lives is no better: *They do err from thy commandments*, as Israel, that did *always err in their hearts*; they err in judgment, and embrace principles contrary to thy commandments, and then no wonder that they err in practice, and wilfully turn aside out of the good way. This is the effect of their pride; for they say, *What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?* As Pharaoh, *Who is the Lord?* 2. The wretched case of such. They are certainly cursed, for *God resists the proud*; and those that throw off the commands of the law lay themselves under its curse (Gal. iii. 10), and he that now *beholds them afar off* will shortly say to them, *Go, you cursed*. The proud sinners bless themselves; God curses them; and, though the most direful effects of this curse are reserved for the other world, yet they are often severely rebuked in this world: Providence crosses them, vexes them, and, wherein they dealt proudly, God shows himself above them; and these rebukes are earnestness of worse. David took notice of the rebukes proud men were under, and it made him cleave the more closely to the word of God and pray the more earnestly that he might not *err from God's commandments*. Thus saints get good by God's judgments on sinners.

22 Remove from me reproach and

contempt; for I have kept thy testimonies.

Here, 1. David prays against the reproach and contempt of men, that they might be removed, or (as the word is) *rolled, from off him*. This intimates that they lay upon him, and that neither his greatness nor his goodness could secure him from being libelled and lampooned. Some despised him and endeavoured to make him mean; others reproached him and endeavoured to make him odious. It has often been the lot of those that do well to be ill-spoken of. It intimates that they lay heavily upon him. Hard and foul words indeed break no bones, and yet they are very grievous to a tender and ingenuous spirit; therefore David prays, "*Lord, remove them from me, that I may not be thereby either driven from my duty or discouraged in it*." God has all men's hearts and tongues in his hand, and can silence lying lips, and raise up a good name that is trodden in the dust. To him we may appeal as the assertor of right and avenger of wrong, and may depend on his promise that he will clear up our *righteousness as the light*, xxxvii. 6. Reproach and contempt may humble us and do us good and then it shall be removed. 2. He pleads his constant adherence to the word and way of God: *For I have kept thy testimonies*. He not only pleads his innocency, that he was unjustly censured, but, (1.) That he was jeered for well-doing. He was despised and abused for his strictness and zeal in religion; so that it was for God's name's sake that he suffered reproach, and therefore he could with the more assurance beg of God to appear for him. The reproach of God's people, if it be not removed now, will be turned into the greater honour shortly. (2.) That he was not jeered out of well-doing: "*Lord, remove it from me, for I have kept thy testimonies notwithstanding*." If in a day of trial we still retain our integrity, we may be sure it will end well.

23 Princes also did sit *and speak* against me: *but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes*.

See here, 1. How David was abused even by great men, who should have known better his character and his case, and have been more generous: *Princes did sit*, sit in council, sit in judgment, and *speak against me*. What even princes say is not always right; but it is sad when judgment is thus turned to wormwood, when those that should be the protectors of the innocent are their betrayers. Herein David was a type of Christ, for they were the princes of this world that vilified and crucified the Lord of glory, 1 Cor. ii. 8. 2. What method he took to make himself easy under these abuses: he *meditated in God's statutes*, went on in his duty, and did not regard them; as a deaf man, he heard not. When they spoke against him, he found that in the word of God which spoke for him,

and spoke comfort to him, and then none of these things moved him. Those that have pleasure in communion with God may easily despise the censures of men, even of princes.

24 Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors.

Here David explains his meditating in God's statutes (v. 23), which was of such use to him when princes sat and spoke against him. 1. Did the affliction make him sad? The word of God comforted him, and was his delight, more his delight than any of the pleasures either of court or camp, of city or country. Sometimes it proves that the comforts of the word of God are most pleasant to a gracious soul when other comforts are embittered. 2. Did it perplex him? Was he at a loss what to do when the princes spoke against him? God's statutes were his counsellors, and they counselled him to bear it patiently and commit his cause to God. God's testimonies will be the best counsellors both to princes and private persons. *They are the men of my counsel*; so the word is. There will be found more safety and satisfaction in consulting them than in the multitude of other counsellors. Observe here, Those that would have God's testimonies to be their delight must take them for their counsellors and be advised by them; and let those that take them for their counsellors in close walking take them for their delight in comfortable walking.

4. DALETH.

25 My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word.

Here is, I. David's complaint. We should have thought his soul soaring to heaven; but he says himself, *My soul not only rolls in the dust, but cleaves to the dust*, which is a complaint either, 1. Of his corruptions, his inclination to the world and the body (both which are dust), and that which follows upon it, a deadness to holy duties. When he would *do good evil was present with him*. God intimated that Adam was not only mortal, but sinful, when he said, *Dust thou art*, Gen. iii. 19. David's complaint here is like St. Paul's of a body of death that he carried about with him. The remainders of in-dwelling corruption are a very grievous burden to a gracious soul. Or, 2. Of his afflictions, either trouble of mind or outward trouble. *Without were fightings, within were fears*, and both together brought him even to the *dust of death* (xxii. 15), and his soul clave inseparably to it.

II. His petition for relief, and his plea to enforce that petition: "*Quicken thou me according to thy word*. By thy providence put life into my affairs, by thy grace put life into my affections; cure me of my spiritual deadness and make me lively in my devotion." Note, When we find ourselves dull we must go to God and beg of him to quicken us; he has an eye to God's word as a means of

quickenings (for the words which God speaks, *they are spirit and they are life* to those that receive them), and as an encouragement to hope that God would quicken him, having promised grace and comfort to all the saints, and to David in particular. God's word must be our guide and plea in every prayer.

26 I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes. 27 Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.

We have here, 1. The great intimacy and freedom that had been between David and his God. David had opened his case, opened his very heart to God: "*I have declared my ways*, and acknowledged thee in them all, have taken thee along with me in all my designs and enterprises." Thus *Jephthah uttered all his words*, and Hezekiah spread his letters, *before the Lord*. "*I have declared my ways*, my wants; and burdens, and troubles, that I meet with in my way, or my sins, my by-ways (I have made an ingenuous confession of them), and *thou heardest me*, heardest patiently all I had to say, and tookest cognizance of my case." It is an unspeakable comfort to a gracious soul to think with what tenderness all its complaints are received by a gracious God, 1 John v. 14, 15. 2. David's earnest desire of the continuance of that intimacy, not by visions and voices from heaven, but by the word and Spirit in an ordinary way: *Teach me thy statutes*, that is, *Make me to understand the way of thy precepts*. When he knew God had heard his declaration of his ways he did not say, "Now, Lord, tell me my lot, and let me know what the event will be;" but, "Now, Lord, tell me my duty; let me know what thou wouldst have me to do as the case stands." Note, Those who in all their ways acknowledge God may pray in faith that he will *direct their steps* in the right way. And the surest way of keeping up our communion with God is by learning his statutes and walking intelligently in the way of his precepts. See 1 John i. 6, 7. 3. The good use he would make of this for the honour of God and the edification of others: "*Let me have a good understanding of the way of thy precepts*; give me a clear, distinct, and methodical knowledge of divine things; so shall I talk with the more assurance, and the more to the purpose, of thy wondrous works." We can talk with a better grace of God's wondrous works, the wonders of providence, and especially the wonders of redeeming love, when we understand the way of God's precepts and walk in that way.

28 My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word. 29 Remove from me the way of lying and grant me thy law graciously.

Here is, 1. David's representation of his own griefs: *My soul melteth for heaviness, which is to the same purport with v. 25, My soul cleaveth to the dust.* Heaviness in the heart of man makes it to melt, to drop away like a candle that wastes. The penitent soul melts in sorrow for sin, and even the patient soul may melt in the sense of affliction, and it is then its interest to pour out its supplication before God. 2. His request for God's grace.

(1.) That God would enable him to bear his affliction well and graciously support him under it: "*Strengthen thou me with strength in my soul, according to thy word,* which, as the bread of life, strengthens man's heart to undergo whatever God is pleased to inflict. Strengthen me to do the duties, resist the temptations, and bear up under the burdens, of an afflicted state, that the spirit may not fail. *Strengthen me according to that word* (Deut. xxxiii. 25), *As thy days so shall thy strength be.*" (2.) That God would keep him from using any unlawful indirect means for the extricating of himself out of his troubles (v. 29): *Remove from me the way of lying.* David was conscious to himself of a proneness to this sin; he had, in a strait, cheated Ahimelech (1 Sam. xxi. 2), and Achish, v. 13 and ch. xxvii. 10. Great difficulties are great temptations to palliate a lie with the colour of a pious fraud and a necessary self-defence; therefore David prays that God would prevent him from falling into this sin any more, lest he should settle in the way of it. A course of lying, of deceit and dissimulation, is that which every good man dreads and which we are all concerned to beg of God by his grace to keep us from. (3.) That he might always be under the guidance and protection of God's government: *Grant me thy law graciously;* grant me that to keep me from the way of lying. David had the law written with his own hand, for the king was obliged to transcribe a copy of it for his own use (Deut. xvi. 18); but he prays that he might have it written in his heart; for then, and then only, we have it indeed, and to good purpose. "Grant it me more and more." Those that know and love the law of God cannot but desire to know it more and love it better. "Grant it me graciously," he begs it as a special token of God's favour. Note, We ought to reckon God's law a grant, a gift, an unspeakable gift, to value it, and pray for it, and to give thanks for it accordingly. The divine code of institutes and precepts is indeed a charter of privileges; and God is truly gracious to those whom he makes gracious by giving them his law.

30 I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me. 31 I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O LORD, put me not to shame. 32 I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.

Observe, I. That those who will make anything to purpose of their religion must first make it their serious and deliberate choice; so David did: *I have chosen the way of truth.* Note, 1. The way of serious godliness is the way of truth; the principles it is founded on are principles of eternal truth, and it is the only true way to happiness. 2. We must choose to walk in this way, not because we know no other way, but because we know no better; nay, we know no other safe and good way. Let us choose that way for our way, which we will walk in, though it be narrow.

II. That those who have chosen the way of truth must have a constant regard to the word of God as the rule of their walking: *Thy judgments have I laid before me,* as he who learns to write lays his copy before him, that he may write according to it, as the workman lays his model and platform before him, that he may do his work exactly. As we must have the word in our heart by an habitual conformity to it, so we must have it in our eye by an actual regard to it upon all occasions, that we may walk accurately and by rule.

III. That those who make religion their choice and rule are likely to adhere to it faithfully: *I have stuck to thy testimonies* with an unchanged affection and an unshaken resolution, stuck to them at all times, through all trials. *I have chosen them,* and therefore *I have stuck to them.*" Note, The choosing Christian is likely to be the steady Christian; while those that are Christians by chance tack about if the wind turn.

IV. That those who stick to the word of God may in faith expect and pray for acceptance with God; for David means this when he begs, "*Lord, put me not to shame;* that is, never leave me to do that by which I shall shame myself, and do thou not reject my services, which will put me to the greatest confusion."

V. That the more comfort God gives us the more duty he expects from us, v. 32. Here we have, 1. His resolution to go on vigorously in religion: *I will run the way of thy commandments.* Those that are going to heaven should make haste thither and be still pressing forward. It concerns us to redeem time and take pains, and to go on in our business with cheerfulness. We then run the way of our duty, when we are ready to it, and pleasant in it, and *lay aside every weight,* Heb. xii. 1. 2. His dependence upon God for grace to do so: "*I shall then abound in thy work, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.*" God, by his Spirit, enlarges the hearts of his people when he gives them wisdom (for that is called largeness of heart, 1 Kings iv. 29), when he sheds abroad the love of God in the heart, and puts gladness there. The joy of our Lord should be wheels to our obedience.

5. HE.

33 Teach me, O LORD. the way of

thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end. 34 Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.

Here, I. David prays earnestly that God himself would be his teacher; he had prophets, and wise men, and priests, about him, and was himself well instructed in the law of God, yet he begs to be taught of God, as knowing that *none teaches like him*, Job xxxvi. 22. Observe here, 1. What he desires to be taught, not the notions or language of God's statutes, but *the way of them*—"the way of applying them to myself and governing myself by them; teach me the way of my duty which thy statutes prescribe, and in every doubtful case let me know what thou wouldst have me to do, let me near the word behind me, saying, *This is the way, walk in it*," Isa. xxx. 21. 2. How he desires to be taught, in such a way as no man could teach him: *Lord, give me understanding*. As the God of nature, he has given us intellectual powers and faculties; but here we are taught to pray that, as the God of grace, he would give us understanding to use those powers and faculties about the great things which belong to our peace, which, through the corruption of nature, we are averse to: *Give me understanding*, an enlightened understanding; for it is as good to have no understanding at all as not to have it sanctified. Nor will the spirit of revelation in the word answer the end unless we have the spirit of wisdom in the heart. This is that which we are indebted to Christ for; for the *Son of God has come and has given us understanding*, 1 John v. 20.

II. He promises faithfully that he would be a good scholar. If God would teach him, he was sure he should learn to good purpose: "*I shall keep thy law*, which I shall never do unless I be taught of God, and therefore I earnestly desire that I may be taught." If God, by his Spirit, give us a right and good understanding, we shall be, 1. Constant in our obedience: "*I shall keep it to the end*, to the end of my life, which will be the surest proof of sincerity." It will not avail the traveller to keep the way for a while, if he do not keep it to the end of his journey. 2. Cordial in our obedience: *I shall observe it with my whole heart*, with pleasure and delight, and with vigour and resolution. That way which the whole heart goes the whole man goes; and that should be the way of God's commandments, for the keeping of them is the whole of man.

35 Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight. 36 Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.

He had before prayed to God to enlighten his understanding, that he might know his duty, and not mistake concerning it; here he prays to God to bow his will, and quicken

the active powers of his soul, that he might do his duty; for *it is God that works in us both to will and to do*, as well as to understand, what is good, Phil. ii. 13. Both the good head and the good heart are from the good grace of God, and both are necessary to every good work. Observe here,

I. The grace he prays for. 1. That God would make him able to do his duty: "*Make me to go*; strengthen me for every good work." Since we are not sufficient of ourselves, our dependence must be upon the grace of God, for from him all our sufficiency is. God puts his Spirit within us, and so causes us to *walk in his statutes* (Ezek. xxxvi. 27), and this is that which David here begs. 2. That God would make him willing to do it, and would, by his grace, subdue the aversion he naturally had to it: "*Incline my heart to thy testimonies*, to those things which thy testimonies prescribe; not only make me willing to do my duty, as that which I must do and therefore am concerned to make the best of, but make me desirous to do my duty as that which is agreeable to the new nature and really advantageous to me." Duty is then done with delight when the heart is inclined to it: it is God's grace that inclines us, and the more backward we find ourselves to it the more earnest we must be for that grace.

II. The sin he prays against, and that is covetousness: "*Incline my heart to keep thy testimonies*, and restrain and mortify the inclination there is in me to covetousness." That is a sin which stands opposed to all God's testimonies; for the love of money is such a sin as is the root of much sin, of all sin. Those therefore that would have the love of God rooted in them must get the love of the world rooted out of them; for *the friendship of the world is enmity with God*. See in what way God deals with men, not by compulsion, but he draws with the cords of a man, working in them an inclination to that which is good and an aversion to that which is evil.

III. His plea to enforce this prayer: "Lord, bring me to, and keep me in, the way of thy commandments, for therein do I delight; and therefore I pray thus earnestly for grace to walk in that way. Thou hast wrought in me this delight in the way of thy commandments; wilt thou not work in me an ability to walk in them, and so crown thy own work?"

37 Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.

Here, I. David prays for restraining grace, that he might be prevented and kept back from that which would hinder him in the way of his duty: *Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity*. The honours, pleasures, and profits of the world are the vanities, the aspect and prospect of which draw multitudes away from the paths of religion and godliness. The eye, when fastened on these, infects the heart with the love of them, and

so it is alienated from God and divine things; and therefore, as we ought to *make a covenant with our eyes*, and lay a charge upon them, that they shall not wander after, much less fix upon, that which is dangerous (Job xxxi. 1), so we ought to pray that God by his providence would keep vanity out of our sight and that by his grace he would keep us from being enamoured with the sight of it. 2. He prays for constraining grace, that he might not only be kept from every thing that would obstruct his progress heaven-ward, but might have that grace which was necessary to forward him in that progress: "*Quicken thou me in thy way; quicken me to redeem time, to improve opportunity, to press forward, and to do every duty with liveliness and fervency of spirit.*" Beholding vanity deadens us and slackens our pace; a traveller that stands gazing upon every object that presents itself to his view will not rid ground; but, if our eyes be kept from that which would divert us, our hearts will be kept to that which will excite us.

38 Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who is *devoted* to thy fear.

Here is, 1. The character of a good man, which is the work of God's grace in him; he is *God's servant*, subject to his law and employed in his work, that is, *devoted to his fear*, given up to his direction and disposal, and taken up with high thoughts of him and all those acts of devotion which have a tendency to his glory. Those are truly God's servants who, though they have their infirmities and defects, are sincerely *devoted to the fear of God* and have all their affections and motions governed by that fear; they are engaged and addicted to religion. 2. The confidence that a good man has towards God, in dependence upon the word of his grace to him. Those that are God's servants may, in faith and with humble boldness, pray that God would *establish his word to them*, that is, that he would fulfil his promises to them in due time, and in the mean time give them an assurance that they shall be fulfilled. What God has promised we must pray for; we need not be so aspiring as to ask more; we need not be so modest as to ask less.

39 Turn away my reproach which I fear: for thy judgments are good.

Here, 1. David prays against *reproach*, as before, v. 22. David was conscious to himself that he had done that which might give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, which would blemish his own reputation and turn to the dishonour of his family; now he prays that God, who has all men's hearts and tongues in his hands, would be pleased to prevent this, to *deliver him from all his transgressions*, that he might not be the reproach of the foolish, which he feared (xxxix. 8); or he means that reproach which his enemies unjustly loaded him with. Let their *lying lips be put to silence*. 2. He

pleads the goodness of God's judgments: "Lord, thou sittest in the throne, and thy judgments are right and good, just and kind, to those that are wronged, and therefore to thee I appeal from the unjust and unkind censures of men." It is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment, while *he that judges us is the Lord*. Or thus: "Thy word, and ways, and thy holy religion, are very good, but the reproaches cast on me will fall on them; therefore, *Lord, turn them away*; let not religion be wounded through my side."

40 Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness.

Here, 1. David professes the ardent affection he had to the word of God: "*I have longed after thy precepts*, not only loved them, and delighted in what I have already attained, but I have earnestly desired to know them more and do them better, and am still pressing forward towards perfection." Tastes of the sweetness of God's precepts will but set us a longing after a more intimate acquaintance with them. He appeals to God concerning this passionate desire after his precepts: "*Behold, I have thus loved, thus longed*; thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I am thus affected." 2. He prays for grace to enable him to answer this profession. "Thou hast wrought in me this languishing desire, put life into me, that I may prosecute it; *quicken me in thy righteousness*, in thy righteous ways, according to thy righteous promise." Where God has wrought to will he will work to do, and where he has wrought to desire he will satisfy the desire.

6. VAU.

41 Let thy mercies come also unto me, O LORD, *even* thy salvation, according to thy word. 42 So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in thy word.

Here is, 1. David's prayer for the salvation of the Lord. "Lord, thou art my Saviour; I am miserable in myself, and thou only canst make me happy; *let thy salvation come to me*. Hasten temporal salvation to me from my present distresses, and hasten me to the eternal salvation, by giving me the necessary qualifications for it and the comfortable pledges and foretastes of it." 2. David's dependence upon the grace and promise of God for that salvation. These are the two pillars on which our hope is built, and they will not fail us:—(1.) The grace of God: *Let thy mercies come, even thy salvation*. Our salvation must be attributed purely to God's mercy, and not to any merit of our own. Eternal life must be expected as the *mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ*, Jude 21. "Lord, I have by faith thy mercies in view; let me by prayer prevail to have them come to me." (2.) The promise of God: "*Let it*

come according to thy word, thy word of promise. *I trust in thy word, and therefore may expect the performance of the promise.*" We are not only allowed to trust in God's word, but our trusting in it is the condition of our benefit by it. 3. David's expectation of the good assurance which that grace and promise of God would give him: "*So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproaches me for my confidence in God, as if it would deceive me.*" When God saves those out of their troubles who trusted in him he effectually silences those who would have shamed that counsel of the poor (xiv. 6), and their reproaches will be for ever silenced when the salvation of the saints is completed; then it will appear, beyond dispute, that it was not in vain to trust in God.

43 And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in thy judgments. 44 So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever.

Here is, 1. David's humble petition for the tongue of the learned, that he might know how to *speak a word in season* for the glory of God. *Take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth.* He means, "Lord, let the word of truth be always in my mouth; let me have the wisdom and courage which are necessary to enable me both to use my knowledge for the instruction of others, and, like the good householder, to bring out of my treasury *things new and old*, and to make profession of my faith whenever I am called to it." We have need to pray to God that we may never be afraid or ashamed to own his truths and ways, nor deny him before men. David found that he was sometimes at a loss, that the *word of truth* was not so ready to him as it should have been, but he prays, "Lord, let it not be taken utterly from me; let me always have so much of it at hand as will be necessary to the due discharge of my duty." 2. His humble profession of the heart of the upright, without which the tongue of the learned, however it may be serviceable to others, will stand us in no stead. (1.) David professes his confidence in God: "Lord, make me ready and mighty in the scriptures, for *I have hoped in those judgments of thy mouth*, and, if they be not at hand, my support and defence have departed from me." (2.) He professes his resolution to adhere to his duty in the strength of God's grace: "*So shall I keep thy law continually.* If I have thy word not only in my heart, but in my mouth, I shall do all I should do, stand complete in thy whole will." Thus shall the man of God be perfect, thoroughly furnished for every good word and work, 2 Tim. iii. 17; Col. iii. 16. Observe how he resolves to keep God's law, [1.] Continually, without trifling. God must be served in a constant course of obedience every day, and all the day long. [2.] For ever and ever, without backsliding. We must

never be weary of well-doing. If we serve him to the end of our time on earth, we shall be serving him in heaven to the endless ages of eternity; so shall we *keep his law for ever and ever*. Or thus: "Lord, let me have the word of truth in my mouth, that I may commit that sacred deposit to the rising generation (2 Tim. ii. 2) and by them it may be transmitted to succeeding ages; so shall thy law be kept *for ever and ever*," that is, from one generation to another, according to that promise (Isa. lix. 21), *My word in thy mouth shall not depart out of the mouth of thy seed, nor thy seed's seed.*

45 And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts. 46 I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed. 47 And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved. 48 My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in thy statutes.

We may observe in these verses, 1. What David experienced of an affection to the law of God: "*I seek thy precepts*, v. 45. I desire to know and do my duty, and consult thy word accordingly; I do all I can to understand what the will of the Lord is and to discover the intimations of his mind. *I seek thy precepts*, for *I have loved them*, v. 47, 48. I not only give consent to them as good, but take complacency in them as good for me." All that love God love his government and therefore love all his commandments. 2. What he expected from this. Five things he promises himself herein the strength of God's grace:—(1.) That he should be free and easy in his duty: "*I will walk at liberty*, freed from that which is evil, not hampered with the fetters of my own corruptions, and free to that which is good, doing it not by constraint, but willingly." The service of sin is perfect slavery; the service of God is perfect liberty. Licentiousness is bondage to the greatest of tyrants; conscientiousness is freedom to the meekest of prisoners, John viii. 32, 36; Luke i. 74, 75. (2.) That he should be bold and courageous in his duty: *I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings*. Before David came to the crown kings were sometimes his judges, as Saul, and Achish; but, if he were called before them to give a reason of the hope that was in him, he would speak of God's testimonies, and profess to build his hope upon them and make them his council, his guards, his crown, his all. We must never be afraid to own our religion though it should expose us to the wrath of kings, but speak of it as that which we will live and die by, like the three children before Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. iii. 16; Acts iv. 20. After David came to the crown kings were sometimes his companions; they visited him and he returned their visits; but he did not in complaisance to them, talk of every thing

but religion, for fear of affronting them and making his conversation uneasy to them. No; God's testimonies shall be the principal subject of his discourse with the kings, not only to show that he was not ashamed of his religion, but to instruct them in it and bring them over to it. It is good for kings to hear of God's testimonies, and it will adorn the conversation of princes themselves to speak of them. (3.) That he should be cheerful and pleasant in his duty (v. 47): "*I will delight myself in thy commandments, in conversing with them, in conforming to them. I will never be so well pleased with myself as when I do that which is pleasing to God.*" The more delight we take in the service of God the nearer we come to the perfection we aim at. (4.) That he should be diligent and vigorous in his duty: *I will lift up my hands to thy commandments*, which denotes not only a vehement desire towards them (cxliii. 6)—"*I will lay hold of them as one afraid of missing them, or letting them go;*" but a close application of mind to the observance of them—"I will lay my hands to the command, not only to praise it, but practise it; nay, I will lift up my hands to it, that is, I will put forth all the strength I have to do it." The hands that hang down, through sloth and discouragement, shall be lifted up, Heb. xii. 12. (5.) That he should be thoughtful and considerate in his duty (v. 48): "*I will meditate in thy statutes*, not only entertain myself with thinking of them as matters of speculation, but contrive how I may observe them in the best manner." By this it will appear that we truly love God's commandments, if we apply both our minds and our hands to them.

7. ZAIN.

49 Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.

Two things David here pleads with God in prayer for that mercy and grace which he hoped for, according to the word, by which his requests were guided:—1. That God had given him the promise on which he hoped: "Lord, I desire no more than that thou shouldst remember thy word unto thy servant, and do as thou hast said;" see 1 Chron. xvii. 23. "Thou art wise, and therefore wilt perfect what thou hast purposed, and not change thy counsel. Thou art faithful, and therefore wilt perform what thou hast promised, and not break thy word." Those that make God's promises their portion may with humble boldness make them their plea. "Lord, is not that the word which thou hast spoken; and wilt thou not make it good?" Gen. xxii. 9; Exod. xxxiii. 12. 2. That God, who had given him the promise in the word, had by his grace wrought in him a hope in that promise and enabled him to depend upon it, and had raised his expectations of great things from it. Has God kindled in

us desires towards spiritual blessings more than towards any temporal good things, and will he not be so kind as to satisfy those desires? Has he filled us with hopes of those blessings, and will he not be so just as to accomplish these hopes? He that did by his Spirit work faith in us will, according to our faith, work for us, and will not disappoint us.

50 This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.

Here is David's experience of benefit by the word. 1. As a means of his sanctification: "*Thy word has quickened me.*" It made me alive when I was dead in sin; it has many a time made me lively when I was dead in duty; it has quickened me to that which is good when I was backward and averse to it, and it has quickened me in that which is good when I was cold and indifferent." 2. Therefore as a means of his consolation when he was in affliction and needed something to support him: "Because thy word has quickened me at other times, it has comforted me then." The word of God has much in it that speaks *comfort in affliction*; but those only may apply it to themselves who have experienced in some measure the quickening power of the word. If through grace it make us holy, there is enough in it to make us easy, in all conditions, under all events.

51 The proud have had me greatly in derision: yet have I not declined from thy law.

David here tells us, and it will be of use to us to know it, 1. That he had been jeered for his religion. Though he was a man of honour, a man of great prudence, and had done eminent services to his country, yet, because he was a devout conscientious man, *the proud had him greatly in derision*; they ridiculed him, bantered him, and did all they could to expose him to contempt; they laughed at him for his praying, and called it *cant*, for his seriousness, and called it *mopishness*, for his strictness, and called it *needless preciseness*. They were the proud that sat in the scorner's seat and valued themselves on so doing. 2. That yet he had not been jeered out of his religion: "They have done all they could to make me quit it for shame, but none of these things move me: *I have not declined from thy law* for all this; but, *if this be to be vile*" (as he said when Michal had him greatly in derision), "*I will be yet more vile.*" He not only had not quite forsaken the law, but had not so much as declined from it. We must never shrink from any duty, nor let slip an opportunity of doing good, for fear of the reproach of men, or their revilings. The traveller goes on his way though the dogs bark at him. Those can bear but little for Christ that cannot bear a hard word for him.

52 I remembered thy judgments of

old, O LORD; and have comforted myself.

When David was derided for his godliness he not only held fast his integrity, but, 1. He comforted himself. He not only bore reproach, but bore it cheerfully. It did not disturb his peace, nor break in upon the repose of his spirit in God. It was a comfort to him to think that it was for God's sake that he bore reproach, and that his worst enemies could find no occasion against him, *save only in the matter of his God*, Dan. vi. 5. Those that are derided for their adherence to God's law may comfort themselves with this, that *the reproach of Christ will prove, in the end, greater riches to them than the treasures of Egypt*. 2. That which he comforted himself with was the remembrance of God's judgments of old, the providences of God concerning his people formerly, both in mercy to them and in justice against their persecutors. God's judgments of old, in our own early days and in the days of our fathers, are to be remembered by us for our comfort and encouragement in the way of God, for he is still the same.

53 Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law.

Here is, 1. The character of wicked people; he means those that are openly and grossly wicked: *They forsake thy law*. Every sin is a transgression of the law, but a course and way of wilful and avowed sin is downright forsaking it and throwing it off. 2. The impression which the wickedness of the wicked made upon David; it frightened him, it put him into an amazement. He trembled to think of the dishonour thereby done to God, the gratification thereby given to Satan, and the mischiefs thereby done to the souls of men. He dreaded the consequences of it both to the sinners themselves (and cried out, *O gather not my soul with sinners! let my enemy be as the wicked*) and to the interests of God's kingdom among men, which he was afraid would be thereby sunk and ruined. He does not say, "*Horror has taken hold on me because of their cruel designs against me,*" but "*because of the contempt they put on God and his law.*" Sin is a monstrous horrible thing in the eyes of all that are sanctified, Jer. v. 30; xxiii. 14; Hos. vi. 10; Jer. ii. 12.

54 Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.

Here is, 1. David's state and condition; he was in *the house of his pilgrimage*, which may be understood either as his peculiar trouble (he was often tossed and hurried, and forced to fly) or as his lot in common with all. This world is the house of our pilgrimage, the house in which we are pilgrims; it is our tabernacle; it is our inn. We must confess ourselves *strangers and pilgrims upon*

earth, who are not at home here, nor must be here long. Even David's palace is but the house of his pilgrimage. 2. His comfort in this state: "*Thy statutes have been my songs, with which I here entertain myself,*" as travellers are wont to divert the thoughts of their weariness, and take off something of the tediousness of their journey, by singing a pleasant song now and then. David was the sweet singer of Israel, and here we are told whence he fetched his songs; they were all borrowed from the word of God. God's statutes were as familiar to him as the songs which a man is accustomed to sing; and he conversed with them in his pilgrimage-solitudes. They were as pleasant to him as songs, and *put gladness into his heart* more than those have that *chant to the sound of the viol*, Amos vi. 5. *Is any afflicted then?* Let him sing over God's statutes, and try if he cannot so *ing away sorrow*, cxxxviii. 5.

55 I have remembered thy name, O LORD, in the night, and have kept thy law. 56 This I had, because I kept thy precepts.

Here is, 1. The converse David had with the word of God; he kept it in mind, and upon every occasion he called it to mind. God's name is the discovery he has made of himself to us in and by his word. *This is his memorial unto all generations*, and therefore we should always keep it in memory—remember it *in the night*, upon a waking bed, when we are communing with our own hearts. When others were sleeping David was remembering God's name, and, by repeating that lesson, increasing his acquaintance with it; in the night of affliction this he called to mind. 2. The conscience he made of conforming to it. The due remembrance of God's name, which is prefixed to his law, will have a great influence upon our observance of the law: *I remembered thy name in the night*, and therefore was careful to keep thy law all day. How comfortable will it be in the reflection if our own hearts can witness for us that we have thus remembered God's name, and kept his law! 3. The advantage he got by it (v. 56): *This I had because I kept thy precepts*. Some understand this indefinitely: *This I had* (that is I had that which satisfied me; I had every thing that is comfortable) *because I kept thy precepts*. Note, All that have made a business of religion will own that it has turned to a good account, and that they have been unspeakable gainers by it. Others refer it to what goes immediately before: "*I had the comfort of keeping thy law because I kept it.*" Note, God's work is its own wages. A heart to obey the will of God is a most valuable reward of obedience; and the more we do the more we may do, and shall do, in the service of God; the branch that bears fruit is made *more fruitful*, John xv. 2.

8. CHETH.

57 *Thou art my portion, O LORD:*

I have said that I would keep thy words.

We may hence gather the character of a godly man. 1. He makes the favour of God his felicity: *Thou art my portion, O Lord!* Others place their happiness in the wealth and honours of this world. Their portion is in this life; they look no further; they desire no more; these are *their good things*, Luke xvi. 25. But all that are sanctified take the Lord for the portion of their inheritance and their cup, and nothing less will satisfy them. David can appeal to God in this matter: "Lord, thou knowest that I have chosen thee for my portion, and depend upon thee to make me happy." 2. He makes the law of God his rule: *I have said that I would keep thy words*; and what I have said by thy grace I will do, and will abide by it to the end." Note, Those that take God for their portion must take him for their prince, and swear allegiance to him; and, having promised to *keep his word*, we must often put ourselves in mind of our promise, xxxix. 1.

58 I intreated thy favour with *my* whole heart: be merciful unto me according to thy word.

David, having in the foregoing verse reflected upon his covenants with God, here reflects upon his prayers to God, and renews his petition. Observe, 1. What he prayed for. Having taken God for his portion, he *entreated his favour*, as one that knew he had forfeited it, was unworthy of it, and yet undone without it, but for ever happy if he could obtain it. We cannot demand God's favour as a debt, but must be humble suppliants for it, that God will not only be reconciled to us, but accept us and smile upon us. He prays, "*Be merciful to me*, in the forgiveness of what I have done amiss, and in giving me grace to do better for the future." 2. How he prayed—*with his whole heart*, as one that knew how to value the blessing he prayed for. The gracious soul is entirely set upon the favour of God, and is therefore importunate for it. *I will not let thee go except thou bless me*. 3. What he pleaded—the promise of God: "*Be merciful to me, according to thy word*. I desire the mercy promised, and depend upon the promise for it." Those that are governed by the precepts of the word and are resolved to keep them (v. 57) may plead the promises of the word and take the comfort of them.

59 I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. 60 I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.

David had said he *would keep God's word* (v. 57), and it was well said; now here he tells us how and in what method he pursued

that resolution. 1. He *thought on his ways*. He thought beforehand what he should do, pondering the path of his feet (Prov. iv. 26) that he might walk surely, and not at all adventures. He thought after what he had done, reflected upon his life past, and recollected the paths he had walked in and the steps he had taken. The word signifies a fixed abiding thought. Some make it an allusion to those who work embroidery, who are very exact and careful to cover the least flaw, or to those who cast up their accounts, who reckon with themselves, What do I owe? What am I worth? "*I thought not on my wealth* (as the covetous man, xlix. 11) but *on my ways*, not on what I have, but what I do:" for what we do will follow us into another world when what we have must be left behind. Many are critical enough in their remarks upon other people's ways who never think of their own; but *let every man prove his own work*. 2. He *turned his feet to God's testimonies*. He determined to make the word of God his rule, and to walk by that rule. He turned from the by-paths to which he had turned aside, and returned to God's testimonies. He turned not only his eye to them, but his feet, his affections to the love of God's word and his conversation to the practice of it. The bent and inclinations of his soul were towards God's testimonies and his conversation was governed by them. Penitent reflections must produce pious resolutions. 3. He did this immediately and without demur (v. 60): *I made haste and delayed not*. When we are under convictions of sin we must strike while the iron is hot, and not think to defer the prosecution of them, as Felix did, to a *more convenient season*. When we are called to duty we must lose no time, but set about it *to-day*, while it is called *to-day*. Now this account which David here gives of himself may refer either to his constant practice every day (he reflected on his ways at night, directed his feet to God's testimonies in the morning, and what his hand found to do that was good he did it without delay), or it may refer to his first acquaintance with God and religion, when he began to throw off the vanity of childhood and youth, and to remember his Creator; that blessed change was, by the grace of God, thus wrought. Note, (1.) Conversion begins in serious consideration, Ezek. xviii. 28; Luke xv. 17. (2.) Consideration must end in a sound conversion. To what purpose have we thought on our ways if we do not turn our feet with all speed to God's testimonies?

61 The bands of the wicked have robbed me: *but* I have not forgotten thy law.

Here is, 1. The malice of David's enemies against him. They were wicked men, who hated him for his godliness. There were bands or troops of them confederate against him. They did him all the mischief they

could; they robbed him. having endeavoured to take away his good name (v. 51), they set upon his goods, and spoiled him of them, either by plunder in time of war or by fines and confiscations under colour of law. Saul (it is likely) seized his effects, Absalom his palace, and the Amalekites rifled Ziklag. Worldly wealth is what we may be robbed of. David, though a man of war, could not keep his own. *Thieves break through and steal.* 2. The testimony of David's conscience for him that he had held fast his religion when he was stripped of every thing else, as Job did when the bands of the Chaldeans and Sabeans had robbed him. *But I have not forgotten thy law.* No care nor grief should drive God's word out of our minds, or hinder our comfortable relish of it and converse with it. Nor must we ever think the worse of the ways of God for any trouble we meet with in those ways, nor fear being losers by our religion at last, however we may be losers for it now.

62 At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments.

Though David is, in this psalm, much in prayer, yet he did not neglect the duty of thanksgiving; for those that pray much will have much to give thanks for. See, 1. How much God's hand was eyed in his thanksgivings. He does not say, "*I will give thanks*" because of thy favours to me, which I have the comfort of," but, "*Because of thy righteous judgments*," all the disposals of thy providence in wisdom and equity, which thou hast the glory of." We must give thanks for the asserting of God's honour and the accomplishing of his word in all he does in the government of the world. 2. How much David's heart was set upon his thanksgivings. He would *rise at midnight to give thanks* to God. Great and good thoughts kept him awake, and refreshed him, instead of sleep; and so zealous was he for the honour of God that when others were in their beds he was upon his knees at his devotions. He did not affect to be seen of men in it, but gave thanks in secret, where our heavenly Father sees. He had praised God *in the courts of the Lord's house*, and yet he will do it in his bed-chamber. Public worship will not excuse us from secret worship. When David found his heart affected with God's judgments, he immediately offered up those affections to God, in actual adorations, not deferring, lest they should cool. Yet observe his reverence; he did not lie still and give thanks, but rose out of his bed, perhaps in the cold and in the dark, to do it the more solemnly. And see what a good husband he was of time; when he could not lie and sleep, he would rise and pray.

63 I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.

David had often expressed the great love

he had to God; here he expresses the great love he had to the people of God; and observe, 1. Why he loved them; not so much because they were his best friends, most firm to his interest and most forward to serve him, but because they were such as *feared God and kept his precepts*, and so did him honour and helped to support his kingdom among men. Our love to the saints is then sincere when we love them for the sake of what we see of God in them and the service they do to him. 2. How he showed his love to them: He was a *companion of them*. He had not only a spiritual communion with them in the same faith and hope, but he joined with them in holy ordinances in the courts of the Lord, where rich and poor, prince and peasant, meet together. He sympathized with them in their joys and sorrows (Heb. x. 33); he conversed familiarly with them, communicated his experiences to them, and consulted theirs. He not only took such to be his companions as did fear God, but he vouchsafed himself to be a companion with all, with any, that did so, wherever he met with them. Though he was a king, he would associate with the poorest of his subjects that feared God, Ps. xv. 4; Jam. ii. 1.

64 The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy: teach me thy statutes.

Here, 1. David pleads that God is good to all the creatures according to their necessities and capacities; as the heaven is full of God's glory, so the earth is full of his mercy, full of the instances of his pity and bounty. Not only the land of Canaan, where God is known and worshipped, but the whole earth, in many parts of which he has no homage paid him, is full of his mercy. Not only the children of men upon the earth, but even the inferior creatures, taste of God's goodness. *His tender mercies are over all his works.* 2. He therefore prays that God would be good to him according to his necessity and capacity: "*Teach me thy statutes.*" Thou feedest the young ravens that cry, with food proper for them; and wilt thou not feed me with spiritual food, the bread of life, which my soul needs and craves, and cannot subsist without? *The earth is full of thy mercy; and is not heaven too? Wilt thou not then give me spiritual blessings in heavenly places?*" A gracious heart will fetch an argument from any thing to enforce a petition for divine teaching. Surely he that will not let his birds be unfed will not let his children be untaught.

9. TETH.

65 Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according unto thy word. 66 Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments.

Here, 1. David makes a thankful acknowledgment of God's gracious dealings with

him all along. *Thou hast dealt well with thy servant.* However God has dealt with us, we must own he has dealt well with us, better than we deserve, and all in love and with design to work for our good. In many instances God has done well for us beyond our expectations. He has done well for all his servants; never any of them complained that he had used them hardly. *Thou hast dealt well with me,* not only according to thy mercy, but according to thy word. God's favours look best when they are compared with the promise and are seen flowing from that fountain. 2. Upon these experiences he grounds a petition for divine instruction: "*Teach me good judgment and knowledge,* that, by thy grace, I may render again, in some measure, according to the benefit done unto me." *Teach me a good taste* (so the word signifies), a good relish, to discern things that differ, to distinguish between truth and falsehood, good and evil; *for the ear tries words, as the mouth tastes meat.* We should pray to God for a sound mind, that we may have *spiritual senses exercised*, Heb. v. 14. Many have knowledge who have little judgment; those who have both are well fortified against the snares of Satan and well furnished for the service of God and their generation. 3. This petition is backed with a plea: "*For I have believed thy commandments,* received them, and consented to them that they are good, and submitted to their government; therefore, Lord, *teach me.*" Where God has given a good heart a good head too may in faith be prayed for.

67 *Before I was afflicted I went astray:* but now have I kept thy word.

David here tells us what he had experienced, 1. Of the temptations of a prosperous condition: "*Before I was afflicted,* while I lived in peace and plenty, and knew no sorrow, *I went astray from God and my duty.*" Sin is going astray; and we are most apt to wander from God when we are easy and think ourselves at home in the world. Prosperity is the unhappy occasion of much iniquity; it makes people conceited of themselves, indulgent of the flesh, forgetful of God, in love with the world, and deaf to the reproofs of the word. See xxx. 6. It is good for us, when we are afflicted, to remember how and wherein we went astray *before we were afflicted*, that we may answer the end of the affliction. 2. Of the benefit of an afflicted state: "*Now have I kept thy word,* and so have been recovered from my wanderings." God often makes use of afflictions as a means to reduce those to himself who have wandered from him. Sanctified afflictions humble us for sin and show us the vanity of the world; they soften the heart, and open the ear to discipline. The prodigal's distress brought him to himself first and then to his father.

68 *Thou art good, and doest good;* teach me thy statutes.

Here, 1. David praises God's goodness and gives him the glory of it: *Thou art good and doest good.* All who have any knowledge of God and dealings with him will own that he does good, and therefore will conclude that he is good. The streams of God's goodness are so numerous, and run so full, so strong, to all the creatures, that we must conclude the fountain that is in himself to be inexhaustible. We cannot conceive how much good our God does every day, much less can we conceive how good he is. Let us acknowledge it with admiration and with holy love and thankfulness. 2. He prays for God's grace, and begs to be under the guidance and influence of it: *Teach me thy statutes.* "Lord, thou doest good to all, art the bountiful benefactor of all the creatures; this is the good I beg thou wilt do to me,—Instruct me in my duty, incline me to it, and enable me to do it. *Thou art good, and doest good;* Lord, *teach me thy statutes,* that I may be good and do good, may have a good heart and live a good life." It is an encouragement to poor sinners to hope that God will teach them his way because he is good and upright, xxv. 8.

69 *The proud have forged a lie against me:* but I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart. 70 *Their heart is as fat as grease;* but I delight in thy law.

David here tells us how he was affected as to the proud and wicked people that were about him. 1. He did not fear their malice, nor was he by it deterred from his duty: *They have forged a lie against me.* Thus they aimed to take away his good name. Nay, all we have in the world, even life itself, may be brought into danger by those who make no conscience of forging a lie. Those that were proud envied David's reputation, because it eclipsed them, and therefore did all they could to blemish him. They took a pride in trampling upon him. They therefore persuaded themselves it was no sin to tell a deliberate lie if it might but expose him to contempt. Their wicked wit forged lies, invented stories which there was not the least colour for, to serve their wicked designs. And what did David do when he was thus belied? He will bear it patiently; he will keep that precept which forbids him to render railing for railing, and will with all his heart sit down silently. He will go on in his duty with constancy and resolution: "Let them say what they will, *I will keep thy precepts,* and not dread their reproach." 2. He did not envy their prosperity, nor was he by it allured from his duty. *Their heart is as fat as grease.* The proud are at ease (cxliii. 4); they are full of the world, and the wealth and pleasures of it; and this makes them, (1.) Senseless, secure, and stupid; they are past feeling: thus the phrase is used, Isa. vi. 10. *Make the heart of this people fat.* They are not sensible of the touch of the word of God or his rod. (2.)

Sensual and voluptuous: "*Their eyes stand out with fatness* (Ps. lxxiii. 7); they roll themselves in the pleasures of sense, and take up with them as their chief good; and much good may it do them. I would not change conditions with them. *I delight in thy law*; I build my security upon the promises of God's word and have pleasure enough in communion with God, infinitely preferable to all their delights." The children of God, who are acquainted with spiritual pleasures, need not envy the children of this world their carnal pleasures.

71 *It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.*

See here, 1. That it has been the lot of the best saints to be afflicted. The proud and the wicked lived in pomp and pleasure, while David, though he kept close to God and his duty, was still in affliction. *Waters of a full cup are wrung out to God's people*, lxxiii. 10. 2. That it has been the advantage of God's people to be afflicted. David could speak experimentally: *It was good for me*; many a good lesson he had learnt by his afflictions, and many a good duty he had been brought to which otherwise would have been unlearned and undone. Therefore God visited him with affliction, that he might learn God's statutes; and the intention was answered: the afflictions had contributed to the improvement of his knowledge and grace. He that chastened him taught him. *The rod and reproof give wisdom.*

72 *The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.*

This is a reason why David reckoned that when by his afflictions he learned God's statutes, and the profit did so much counterbalance the loss, he was really a gainer by them; for God's law, which he got acquaintance with by his affliction, was better to him than all the gold and silver which he lost by his affliction. 1. David had but a little of the word of God in comparison with what we have, yet see how highly he valued it; how inexcusable then are we, who have both the Old and New Testament complete, and yet account them as a strange thing! Observe, Therefore he valued the law, because it is *the law of God's mouth*, the revelation of his will, and ratified by his authority. 2. He had a great deal of gold and silver in comparison with what we have, yet see how little he valued it. His riches increased, and yet he did not set his heart upon them, but upon the word of God. That was better to him, yielded him better pleasures, and better maintenance, and a better inheritance, than all the treasures he was master of. Those that have read, and believe, David's *Psalms* and Solomon's *Ecclesiastes*, cannot but prefer the word of God far before the wealth of this world.

10. JOD.

73 *Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.*

Here, 1. David adores God as the God of nature and the author of his being: *Thy hands have made me and fashioned me*, Job x. 8. Every man is as truly the work of God's hands as the first man was, Ps. cxxxix. 15, 16. "*Thy hands have not only made me*, and given me a being, otherwise I should never have been, but *fashioned me*, and given me this being, this noble and excellent being, endued with these powers and faculties;" and we must own that we are *fearfully and wonderfully made*. 2. He addresses himself to God as the God of grace, and begs he will be the author of his new and better being. God made us to serve him and enjoy him; but by sin we have made ourselves unable for his service and indisposed for the enjoyment of him; and we must have a new and divine nature, otherwise we had the human nature in vain; therefore David prays, "Lord, since thou hast made me by thy power for thy glory, make me anew by thy grace, that I may answer the ends of my creation and live to some purpose: *Give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.*" The way in which God recovers and secures his interest in men is by giving them an understanding; for by that door he enters into the soul and gains possession of it.

74 *They that fear thee will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in thy word.*

Here is, 1. The confidence of this good man in the hope of God's salvation: "*I have hoped in thy word*; and I have not found it in vain to do so; it has not failed me, nor have I been disappointed in my expectations from it. It is a hope that *maketh not ashamed*; but is present satisfaction, and fruition at last." 2. The concurrence of other good men with him in the joy of that salvation: "*Those that fear thee will be glad when they see me relieved by my hope in thy word and delivered according to my hope.*" The comforts which some of God's children have in God, and the favours they have received from him, should be matter of joy to others of them. Paul often expressed the hope that for God's grace to him thanks would be rendered by many, 2 Cor. i. 11; iv. 15. Or it may be taken more generally; good people are glad to see one another; they are especially pleased with those who are eminent for their hope in God's word.

75 *I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.*

Still David is in affliction, and being so he owns, 1. That his sin was justly corrected: *I know, O Lord! that thy judgments are*

right, are righteousness itself. However God is pleased to afflict us, he does us no wrong, nor can we charge him with any iniquity, but must acknowledge that it is less than we have deserved. We know that God is holy in his nature and wise and just in all the acts of his government, and therefore we cannot but know, in the general, that his *judgments are right*, though, in some particular instances, there may be difficulties which we cannot easily resolve. 2. That God's promise was graciously performed. The former may silence us under our afflictions, and forbid us to repine, but this may satisfy us, and enable us to rejoice; for afflictions are in the covenant, and therefore they are not only not meant for our hurt, but they are really intended for our good: "*In faithfulness thou hast afflicted me*, pursuant to the great design of my salvation." It is easier to own, in general, that God's *judgments are right*, than to own it when it comes to be our own case; but David subscribes to it with application, "Even my afflictions are just and kind."

76 Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant. 77 Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law is my delight.

Here is, 1. An earnest petition to God for his favour. Those that own the justice of God in their afflictions (as David had done, v. 75) may, in faith, and with humble boldness, be earnest for the mercy of God, and the tokens and fruits of that mercy, in their affliction. He prays for God's *merciful kindness* (v. 76), his *tender mercies*, v. 77. He can claim nothing as his due, but all his supports under his affliction must come from mere mercy and compassion to one in misery, one who wants. "Let these come to me," that is, the evidence of them (clear it up to me that thou hast a kindness for me, and mercy in store), and the effects of them; let them work my relief and deliverance." 2. The benefit he promised himself from God's lovingkindness: "Let it come to me for my comfort" (v. 76); that will comfort me when nothing else will; that will comfort me whatever grieves me." Gracious souls fetch all their comfort from a gracious God, as the fountain of all happiness and joy: "Let it come to me, that I may live, that is, that I may be revived, and my life may be made sweet to me, for I have no joy of it while I am under God's displeasure. *In his favour is life*; in his frowns is death." A good man cannot live with any satisfaction any longer than he has some tokens of God's favour to him. 3. His pleas for the benefits of God's favour. He pleads, (1.) God's promise: "Let me have thy kindness, according to thy word unto thy servant, the kindness which thou hast promised and because thou hast promised it." Our Master

has passed his word to all his servants that he will be kind to them, and they may plead it with him. (2.) His own confidence and complacency in that promise: "*Thy law is my delight*; I hope in thy word and rejoice in that hope." Note, Those that delight in the law of God may depend upon the favour of God, for it shall certainly make them happy.

78 Let the proud be ashamed; for they dealt perversely with me without a cause: but I will meditate in thy precepts. 79 Let those that fear thee turn unto me, and those that have known thy testimonies.

Here David shows,

I. How little he valued the ill-will of sinners. There were those that dealt perversely with him, that were peevish and ill-conditioned towards him, that sought advantages against him, and misconstrued all he said and did. Even those that deal most fairly may meet with those that deal perversely. But David regarded it not, for, 1. He knew it was *without cause*, and that for his love they were his adversaries. The causeless reproach, like the curse causeless, may be easily slighted; it does not hurt us, and therefore should not move us. 2. He could pray, in faith, that they might be *ashamed* of it; God's dealing favourably with him might make them ashamed to think that they had dealt perversely with him. "*Let them be ashamed*, that is, let them be brought either to repentance or to ruin." 3. He could go on in the way of his duty, and find comfort in that. "However they deal with me, *I will meditate in thy precepts*, and entertain myself with them."

II. How much he valued the good-will of saints, and how desirous he was to stand right in their opinion, and keep up his interest in them and communion with them: *Let those that fear thee turn to me*. He does not mean so much that they might side with him, and take up arms in his cause, as that they might love him, and pray for him, and associate with him. Good men desire the friendship and society of those that are good. Some think it intimates that when David had been guilty of that foul sin in the murder of Uriah, though he was a king, those that feared God grew strange to him and turned from him, for they were ashamed of him; this troubled him, and therefore he prays, Lord, let them *turn to me* again. He desires especially the company of those that were not only honest, but intelligent, *that have known thy testimonies*, have good heads as well as good hearts, and whose conversation will be edifying. It is desirable to have an intimacy with such.

80 Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed.

Here is, 1. David's prayer for sincerity, that his heart might be brought to God's *statutes*, and that it might be *sound* in them, not

rotten and deceitful, that he might not rest in the form of godliness, but be acquainted with and subject to the power of it,—that he might be hearty and constant in religion, and that his soul might be in health. 2. His dread of the consequences of hypocrisy: *That I be not ashamed.* Shame is the portion of hypocrites, either here, if it be repented of, or hereafter, if it be not: “*Let my heart be sound, that I fall not into scandalous sin, that I fall not quite off from the ways of God, and so shame myself. Let my heart be sound, that I may come boldly to the throne of grace, and may lift up my face without spot at the great day.*”

11. CAPH.

81 My soul fainteth for thy salvation: but I hope in thy word. 82 Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me?

Here we have the psalmist,

1. Longing for help from heaven: *My soul faints; my eyes fail.* He longs for the salvation of the Lord and for his word, that is, salvation according to the word. He is not thus eager for the creatures of fancy, but for the objects of faith, salvation from the present calamities under which he was groaning and the doubts and fears which he was oppressed with. It may be understood of the coming of the Messiah, and so he speaks in the name of the Old-Testament church; the souls of the faithful even *fainted to see that salvation of which the prophets testified.* (1 Pet. i. 10); their eyes failed for it. Abraham saw it at a distance, and so did others, but at such a distance that it put their eyes to the stretch and they could not stedfastly see it. David was now under prevailing dejections, and, having been long so, his eyes cried out, “*When wilt thou comfort me? Comfort me with thy salvation, comfort me with thy word.*” Observe, 1. The salvation and consolation of God’s people are secured to them by the word, which will certainly be fulfilled in its season. 2. The promised salvation and comfort may be, and often are, long deferred, so that they are ready to faint and fall in the expectation of them. 3. Though we think the time long ere the promised salvation and comfort come, yet we must still keep our eye upon that salvation, and resolve to take up with nothing short of it. “*Thy salvation, thy word, thy comfort, are what my heart is still upon.*”

II. Waiting for that help, assured that it will come, and tarrying till it come: *But I hope in thy word;* and but for hope the heart would break. When the eyes fail yet the faith must not; for the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak and shall not lie.

83 For I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget thy statutes.

David begs God would make haste to comfort him, 1. Because his affliction was great and therefore he was an object of God’s pity. Lord, make haste to help me, for *I have become like a bottle in the smoke, a leathern bottle, which, if it hung any while in the smoke, was not only blackened with soot, but dried and parched, and shrivelled up.* David was thus wasted by age, and sickness, and sorrow. See how affliction will mortify the strong and stoutest of men! David had been of a ruddy countenance, as fresh as a rose; but now he is withered, his colour is gone, his cheeks are furrowed. Thus does man’s beauty consume under God’s rebukes, as a moth fretting a garment. A bottle, when it is thus wrinkled with the smoke, is thrown by, and there is no more use of it. Who will put wine into such old bottles? Thus was David in his low estate, looked upon as a despicable broken vessel, and as a vessel in which there was no pleasure. Good men, when they are drooping and melancholy, sometimes think themselves more slighted than really they are. 2. Because, though his affliction was great yet it had not driven him from his duty, and therefore he was within the reach of God’s promise: *Yet do I not forget thy statutes.* Whatever our outward condition is we must not cool in our affection to the word of God, nor let that slip out of our minds; no care, no grief, must crowd that out. As some drink and forget the law (Prov. xxxi. 5), so others weep and forget the law; but we must in every condition, both prosperous and adverse have the things of God in remembrance: and if we be mindful of God’s statutes, we may pray and hope that he will be mindful of our sorrows, though for a time he seems to forget us.

84 How many are the days of thy servant? when wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?

Here, I. David prays against the instruments of his troubles, that God would make haste to execute judgment on those that persecuted him. He prays not for power to avenge himself (he bore no malice to any) but that God would take to himself the vengeance that belonged to him, and would repay (Rom. xii. 19), as the God that sits in the throne judging right. There is a day coming, and a great and terrible day it will be when God will execute judgment on all the proud persecutors of his people, *tribulation to those that troubled them; Enoch foretold it* (Jude 14), whose prophecy perhaps David here had an eye to; and that day we are to look for and pray for the hastening of. *Come Lord Jesus, come quickly.* 2. He pleads the long continuance of his trouble: “*How many are the days of thy servant? The days of my life are but few*” (so some); “therefore let them not all be miserable, and therefore make haste to appear for me against my enemies before I go hence and shall be seen no more.”

Or rather, "The days of my affliction are many; thou seest, Lord, how many they be; when wilt thou return in mercy to me? Sometimes, for the elect's sake, the days of trouble are shortened. O let the days of my trouble be shortened; I am thy servant; and therefore, as the eyes of a servant are to the hand of his master, so are mine to thee, until thou have mercy on me."

85 The proud have digged pits for me, which are not after thy law. 86 All thy commandments are faithful: they persecute me wrongfully; help thou me. 87 They had almost consumed me upon earth; but I forsook not thy precepts.

David's state was *herein* a type and figure of the state both of Christ and Christians that were grievously persecuted; as there are many of his psalms, so there are many of the verses of this psalm, which complain of this, as there are here. Here observe,

I. The account he gives of his persecutors and their malice against him. 1. They were proud, and in their pride they persecuted him, glorying in this, that they could trample upon one who was so much cried up, and hoping to raise themselves on his ruins. 2. They were unjust: They persecuted him wrongfully; so far was he from giving them any provocation that he had studied to oblige them; but for his love they were his adversaries. 3. They were spiteful: They dug pits for him, which intimates that they were deliberate in their designs against him and that what they did was of malice prepense; it intimates likewise that they were subtle and crafty, and had the serpent's head as well as the serpent's venom, that they were industrious and would refuse no pains to do him a mischief, and treacherous, laying snares in secret for him, as hunters do to take wild beasts, xxxv. 7. Such has been the enmity of the serpent's seed to the seed of the woman. 4. They herein showed their enmity to God himself. The pits they dug for him were not after God's law; he means they were very much against his law, which forbids to devise evil to our neighbour, and has particularly said, Touch not my anointed. The Lord appointed that, if a man dug a pit which occasioned any mischief, he should answer for the mischief (Exod. xxi. 33, 34), much more when it was dug with a mischievous design. 5. They carried on their designs against him so far that they had almost consumed him upon earth; they went near to ruin him and all his interests. It is possible that those who shall shortly be consummated in heaven may be, for the present, almost consumed on earth; and it is of the Lord's mercies (and, considering the malice of their enemies, it is a miracle of mercy) that they be not quite consumed. But the bush in

which God is, though it burns, shall not be burnt up.

II. His application to God in his persecuted state. 1. He acknowledges the truth and goodness of his religion, though he suffered: "However it be, all thy commandments are faithful, and therefore, whatever I lose for my observance of them, I know I shall not lose by it." True religion, if it be worth any thing, is worth every thing, and therefore worth suffering for. "Men are false; I find them so; men of low degree, men of high degree, are so, there is no trusting them. But all thy commandments are faithful; on them I may rely." 2. He begs that God would stand by him, and succour him: "They persecute me; help thou me; help me under my troubles, that I may bear them patiently, and as becomes me, and may still hold fast my integrity, and in due time help me out of my troubles." God help me is an excellent comprehensive prayer; it is a pity that it should ever be used lightly and as a by-word.

III. His adherence to his duty notwithstanding all the malice of his persecutors (v. 87): But I forsook not thy precepts. That which they aimed at was to frighten him from the ways of God, but they could not prevail; he would sooner forsake all that was dear to him in this world than forsake the word of God, would sooner lose his life than lose the comfort of doing his duty.

88 Quicken me after thy loving-kindness; so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.

Here is, 1. David in care to be found in the way of his duty. His constant desire and design are to keep the testimony of God's mouth, to keep to it as his rule and to keep hold of it as his confidence and portion for ever. This we must keep, whatever we lose. 2. David at prayer for divine grace to assist him therein: "Quicken me after thy loving-kindness (make me alive and make me lively), so shall I keep thy testimonies," implying that otherwise he should not keep them. We cannot proceed, nor persevere, in the good way, unless God quicken us and put life into us; we are therefore here taught to depend upon the grace of God for strength to do every good work, and to depend upon it as grace, as purely the fruit of God's favour. He had prayed before, Quicken me in thy righteousness (v. 40); but here, Quicken me after thy lovingkindness. The surest token of God's good-will toward us is his good work in us.

12. LAMED.

89 For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven. 90 Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth. 91 They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants.

Here, 1. The psalmist acknowledges the unchangeableness of the word of God and of all his counsels: "*For ever, O Lord! thy word is settled. Thou art for ever thyself* (so some read it); thou art the same, and with thee there is no variableness, and this is a proof of it. *Thy word*, by which the heavens were made, *is settled* there in the abiding products of it;" or the settling of God's word in heaven is opposed to the changes and revolutions that are here upon earth. *All flesh is grass*; but *the word of the Lord endures for ever*. It is settled in heaven, that is, in the secret counsel of God, which is hidden in himself and is far above out of our sight, and is immovable, *as mountains of brass*. And his revealed will is as firm as his secret will; as he will fulfil the thoughts of his heart, so no word of his shall fall to the ground; for it follows here, *Thy faithfulness is unto all generations*, that is, the promise is sure to every age of the church and it cannot be antiquated by lapse of time. The promises that look ever so far forward shall be performed in their season. 2. He produces, for proof of it, the constancy of the course of nature: *Thou hast established the earth for ever and it abides*; it is what it was at first made, and where it was at first placed, poised with its own weight, and notwithstanding the convulsions in its own bowels, the agitations of the sea that is interwoven with it, and the violent concussions of the atmosphere that surrounds it, it remains unmoved. "*They*" (the heavens and the earth and all the hosts of both) "*continue to this day according to thy ordinances*"; they remain in the posts wherein thou hast set them; they fill up the place assigned them, and answer the purposes for which they were intended." The stability of the ordinances of day and night, of heaven and earth, is produced to prove the perpetuity of God's covenant, Jer. xxxi. 35, 36; xxxiii. 20, 21. It is by virtue of God's promise to Noah (Gen. viii. 22) that *day and night, summer and winter*, observe a steady course. "They have continued to this day, and shall still continue to the end of time, acting according to the ordinances which were at first given them; for all are thy servants; they do thy will, and set forth thy glory, and in both *are thy servants*." All the creatures are, in their places, and according to their capacities, serviceable to their Creator, and answer the ends of their creation; and shall man be the only rebel, the only revolter from his allegiance, and the only unprofitable burden of the earth?

92 Unless thy law *had been* my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction.

Here is, 1. The great distress that David was in. He was in affliction, and ready to *perish in his affliction*, not likely to die, so much as likely to despair; he was ready to give up all for gone, and to look upon him-

self as cut off from God's sight; he therefore admires the goodness of God to him, that he had not perished, that he kept the possession of his own soul, and was not driven out of his wits by his troubles, but especially that he was enabled to keep close to his God and was not driven off from his religion by them. Though we are not kept from affliction, yet if we are kept from perishing in our affliction, we have no reason to say, *We have cleansed our hands in vain*; or, *What profit is it that we have served God?* 2. His support in this distress. God's law was his delight, (1.) It had been so formerly, and the remembrance of that was a comfort to him, as it afforded him a good evidence of his integrity. (2.) It was so now in his affliction; it afforded him abundant matter of comfort, and from these fountains of life he drew living waters, when the cisterns of the creature were broken or dried up. His converse with God's law, and his meditations on it, were his delightful entertainment in solitude and sorrow. A Bible is a pleasant companion at any time if we please.

93 I will never forget thy precepts for with them thou hast quickened me.

Here is, 1. A very good resolution: "*I will never forget thy precepts*, but will always retain a remembrance of and regard to thy word as my rule." It is a resolution for perpetuity, never to be altered. Note, The best evidence of our love to the word of God is never to forget it. We must resolve that we will never, at any time, cast off our religion and never, upon any occasion, lay aside our religion, but that we will be constant to it and persevere in it. 2. A very good reason for it: "*For by them thou hast quickened me*; not only they are quickening, but," (1.) "They have been so to me; I have found them so." Those speak best of the things of God who speak by experience, who can say that by the word the spiritual life has been begun in them, maintained and strengthened in them, excited and comforted in them. (2.) "Thou hast made them so;" the word of itself, without the grace of God, would not quicken us. Ministers can but prophesy upon the dry bones, they cannot put life into them; but, ordinarily, the grace of God works by the word and makes use of it as a means of quickening, and this is a good reason why we should never forget it, but should highly value what God has put such honour upon and dearly love what we have found and hope still to find such benefit by. See here what is the best help for bad memories, namely, good affections. If we are quickened by the word, we shall never forget it; nay that word that does really quicken us to and in our duty is not forgotten; though the expressions be lost, if the impressions remain it is well.

94 I am thine, save me; for I have sought thy precepts.

Here, 1. David claims relation to God: "*I am thine*, devoted to thee and owned by thee, thine in covenant." He does not say, *Thou art mine* (as Dr. Manton observes), though that follows of course, because that were a higher challenge; but, *I am thine*, expressing himself in a more humble and dutiful way of resignation; nor does he say, *I am thus*, but, *I am thine*, not pleading his own good property or qualification, but God's propriety in him: "*I am thine*, not my own, not the world's." 2. He proves his claim: "*I have sought thy precepts*; I have carefully endeavoured concerning my duty and diligently endeavoured to do it." This will be the best evidence that we belong to God; all that are his, though they have not found perfection, are seeking it. 3. He improves his claim: "*I am thine*; save me; save me from sin, save me from ruin." Those that have in sincerity given up themselves to God to be his may be sure that he will protect them and preserve them to his heavenly kingdom, Mal. iii. 18.

95 The wicked have waited for me to destroy me: *but I will consider thy testimonies.*

Here, 1. David complains of the malice of his enemies: *The wicked* (and none but such would be enemies to so good a man) *have waited for me to destroy me.* They were very cruel, and aimed at no less than his destruction; they were very crafty, and sought all opportunities to do him a mischief; and they were confident (they expected, so some read it), that they should destroy him; they thought themselves sure of their prey. 2. He comforts himself in the word of God as his protection. "*While they are contriving my destruction, I consider thy testimonies*, which secure to me my salvation." God's testimonies are then likely to be our support, when we consider them, and dwell in our thoughts upon them.

96 I have seen an end of all perfection: *but thy commandment is exceeding broad.*

Here we have David's testimony from his own experience, 1. Of the vanity of the world and its insufficiency to make us happy: *I have seen an end of all perfection.* Poor perfection which one sees an end of! Yet such are all those things in this world which pass for perfections. David, in his time, had seen Goliath, the strongest, overcome, Asahel, the swiftest, overtaken, Ahithophel, the wisest, befooled, Absalom, the fairest, deformed; and, in short, he had seen an end of perfection, of all perfection. He saw it by faith; he saw it by observation; he saw an end of the perfection of the creature both in respect of sufficiency (it was scanty and defective; there is that to be done for us which the creature cannot do) and in respect of continuance; it will not last our time, for it will not last to eternity as we must. The glory of

man is but as the flower of the grass. 2. Of the fulness of the word of God, and its sufficiency for our satisfaction: *But thy commandment is broad, exceedingly broad.* The word of God reaches to all cases, to all times. The divine law lays a restraint upon the whole man, is designed to sanctify us wholly. There is a great deal required and forbidden in every commandment. The divine promise (for that also is commanded) extends itself to all our burdens, wants, and grievances, and has that in it which will make a portion and happiness for us when we have seen an end of all perfection.

13. MEM.

97 O how love I thy law! *it is my meditation all the day.*

Here is, 1. David's inexpressible love to the word of God: *O how love I thy law!* He protests his affection to the word of God with a holy vehemency; he found that love to it in his heart which, considering the corruption of his nature and the temptations of the world, he could not but wonder at, and at that grace which had wrought it in him. He not only loved the promises, but loved the law, and delighted in it after the inner man. 2. An unexceptionable evidence of this. What we love we love to think of; by *this* it appeared that David loved the word of God that it was his meditation. He not only read the book of the law, but digested what he read in his thoughts, and was delivered into it as into a mould: it was his meditation not only in the night, when he was silent and solitary, and had nothing else to do, but in the day, when he was full of business and company; nay, and *all the day*; some good thoughts were interwoven with his common thoughts, so full was he of the word of God.

98 Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: *for they are ever with me.* 99 I have more understanding than all my teachers: *for thy testimonies are my meditation.* 100 I understand more than the ancients, *because I keep thy precepts.*

We have here an account of David's learning, not that of the Egyptians, but of the Israelites indeed.

I. The good method by which he got it. In his youth he minded business in the country as a shepherd; from his youth he minded business in the court and camp. Which way then could he get any great stock of learning? He tells us here how he came by it; he had it from God as the author: *Thou hast made me wise.* All true wisdom is from God. He had it by the word of God as the means, by *his commandments and his testimonies.* These are able to make us wise to salvation and to furnish the man of God for every good work. 1. These David took for his constant companions: "*They are ever*

with me, ever in my mind, ever in my eye." A good man, wherever he goes, carries his Bible along with him, if not in his hands, yet in his head and in his heart. 2. These he took for the delightful subject of his thoughts; they were his *meditation*, not only as matters of speculation for his entertainment, as scholars meditate on their notions, but as matters of concern, for his right management, as men of business think of their business, that they may do it in the best manner. 3. These he took for the commanding rules of all his actions: *I keep thy precepts*, that is, I make conscience of doing my duty in every thing. The best way to improve in knowledge is to abide and abound in all the instances of serious godliness; for, *if any man do his will, he shall know of the doctrine of Christ*, shall know more and more of it, John vii. 17. The love of the truth prepares for the light of it; *the pure in heart shall see God* here.

II. The great eminency he attained to in it. By studying and practising God's commandments, and making them his rule, he learnt to *behave himself wisely in all his ways*, 1 Sam. xviii. 14. 1. He outwitted his enemies; God, by these means, made him wiser to baffle and defeat their designs against him than they were to lay them. Heavenly wisdom will carry the point, at last, against carnal policy. By keeping the commandments we secure God on our side and make him our friend, and therein are certainly wiser than those that make him their enemy. By keeping the commandments we preserve in ourselves that peace and quiet of mind which our enemies would rob us of, and so are wise for ourselves, wiser than they are for themselves, for this world as well as for the other. 2. He outstripped his teachers, and had more understanding than all of them. He means either those who would have been his teachers, who blamed his conduct and undertook to prescribe to him (by keeping God's commandments he managed his matters so that it appeared, in the event, he had taken the right measures and they had taken the wrong), or those who should have been his teachers, the priests and Levites, who sat in Moses's chair, and whose lips ought to have kept knowledge, but who neglected the study of the law, and minded their honours and revenues, and the formalities only of their religion; and so David, who conversed much with the scriptures, by that means became more intelligent than they. Or he may mean those who had been his teachers when he was young; he built so well upon the foundation which they had laid that, with the help of his Bible, he became able to teach them, to teach them all. He was not now a babe that needed milk, but had *spiritual senses exercised*, Heb. v. 14. It is no reflection upon our teachers, but rather an honour to them, to improve so as really to excel them, and not to need them. By meditation we preach to ourselves, and so we come to un-

derstand more than our teachers, for we come to understand our own hearts, which they cannot. 3. He outdid the ancients, either those of his day (he was young, like Elihu, and they were very old, but his keeping God's precepts taught more wisdom than the multitude of their years, Job xxxii. 7, 8) or those of former days; he himself quotes the proverb of the ancients (1 Sam. xxiv. 13), but the word of God gave him to understand things better than he could do by tradition and all the learning that was handed down from preceding ages. In short, the written word is a surer guide to heaven than all the doctors and fathers, the teachers and ancients, of the church; and the sacred writings kept, and kept to, will teach us more wisdom than all their writings.

101 I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word.

Here is, 1. David's care to avoid the ways of sin: "*I have refrained my feet from the evil ways* they were ready to step aside into. I checked myself and drew back as soon as I was aware that I was entering into temptation." Though it was a broad way, a green way, a pleasant way, and a way that many walked in, yet, being a sinful way, it was an evil way, and he refrained his feet from it, foreseeing the end of that way. And his care was universal; he shunned every evil way. *By the words of thy lips I have kept myself from the paths of the destroyer*, xvii. 4. 2. His care to be found in the way of duty: *That I might keep thy word*, and never transgress it. His abstaining from sin was, (1.) An evidence that he did conscientiously aim to keep God's word and had made that his rule. (2.) It was a means of his keeping God's word in the exercises of religion; for we cannot with any comfort or boldness attend on God in holy duties, so as in them to keep his word, while we are under guilt or in any by-way.

102 I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me.

Here is, 1. David's constancy in his religion. He had *not departed from God's judgments*; he had not chosen any other rule than the word of God, nor had he wilfully deviated from that rule. A constant adherence to the ways of God in trying times will be a good evidence of our integrity. 2. The cause of his constancy: "*For thou hast taught me*"; that is, they were divine instructions that I learned; I was satisfied that the doctrine was of God, and therefore I stuck to it." Or, rather, "It was divine grace in my heart that enabled me to receive those instructions." All the saints are taught of God, for he it is that gives the understanding; and those, and those only, that are taught of God, will continue to the end in the things that they have learned.

103 How sweet are thy words unto my taste! *yea, sweeter* than honey to my mouth. 104 Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.

Here is, 1. The wonderful pleasure and delight which David took in the word of God; *was sweet to his taste, sweeter than honey.* here is such a thing as a spiritual taste, an inward savour and relish of divine things, such an evidence of them to ourselves, by experience, as we cannot give to others. We have *heard him ourselves*, John iv. 42. To this scripture-taste the word of God is sweet, very sweet, sweeter than any of the gratifications of sense, even those that are most delicious. David speaks as if he wanted words to express the satisfaction he took in the discoveries of the divine will and grace; no pleasure was comparable to it. 2. The unspeakable profit and advantage he gained by the word of God. (1.) It helped him to a good head: "*Through thy precepts I get understanding* to discern between truth and falsehood, good and evil, so as not to mistake either in the conduct of my own life or in advising others." (2.) It helped him to a good heart: "*Therefore, because I have got understanding of the truth, I hate every false way, and am stedfastly resolved not to turn aside into it.*" Observe here, [1.] The way of sin is a false way; deceives, and will ruin, all that walk in it; is the wrong way, and yet it seems to a man right, Prov. xiv. 12. [2.] It is the character of every good man that he hates the way of sin, and hates it because it is a false way; he not only refrains his feet from it (v. 101), but he *hates it*, has an antipathy to it, and a dread of it. [3.] Those who hate sin as sin will hate all sin, hate every false way, because every false way leads to destruction. And, [4.] The more understanding we get by the word of God the more rooted will our hatred of sin be (*for to depart from evil, that is understanding*, Job xxviii. 28), and the more ready we are in the scriptures the better furnished we are with answers to temptation.

14. NUN.

105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Observe here, 1. The nature of the word of God, and the great intention of giving it to the world; it is a *lamp and a light*. It discovers to us, concerning God and ourselves, that which otherwise we could not have known; it shows us what is amiss, and will be dangerous; it directs us in our work and way, and a dark place indeed the world would be without it. It is a lamp which we may set up by us, and take into our hands for our own particular use, Jer. vi. 23. The commandment is a lamp keeping us from turning with the oil of the Spirit; it is like the lamps in the sanctuary, and the pillar of fire to Israel. 2

The use we should make of it. It must be not only a *light to our eyes*, to gratify them, and fill our heads with speculations, but a *light to our feet and to our path*, to direct us in the right ordering of our conversation, both in the choice of our way in general and in the particular steps we take in that way, that we may not take a false way nor a false step in the right way. We are then truly sensible of God's goodness to us in giving us such a lamp and light when we make it a guide to our feet, our path

106 I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.

Here is, 1. The notion David had of religion; it is *keeping God's righteous judgments*. God's commands are his judgments, the dictates of infinite wisdom. They are righteous judgments, consonant to the eternal rules of equity, and it is our duty to keep them carefully. 2. The obligation he here laid upon himself to be religious, binding himself, by his own promise, to that which he was already bound to by the divine precept, and all little enough. "*I have sworn (I have lifted up my hand to the Lord, and I cannot go back)* and therefore must go forward: *I will perform it.*" Note, (1.) It is good for us to bind ourselves with a solemn oath to be religious. We must swear to the Lord as subjects swear allegiance to their sovereign, promising fealty, appealing to God concerning our sincerity in this promise, and owning ourselves liable to the curse if we do not perform it. (2.) We must often call to mind the vows of God that are upon us, and remember that we have sworn. (3.) We must make conscience of performing unto the Lord our oaths (an honest man will be as good as his word); nor have we sworn to our own hurt, but it will be unspeakably to our hurt if we do not perform.

107 I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O LORD, according unto thy word.

Here is, 1. The representation David makes of the sorrowful condition he was in: *I am afflicted very much*, afflicted in spirit; he seems to mean that especially. He laboured under many discouragements; without were fightings, within were fears. This is often the lot of the best saints; therefore think it not strange if sometimes it be ours. 2. The recourse he has to God in this condition; he prays for his grace: "*Quicken me, O Lord!* make me lively, make me cheerful; quicken me by afflictions to greater diligence in my work. *Quicken me*, that is, deliver me out of my afflictions, which will be as life from the dead." He pleads the promise of God, guides his desires by it, and grounds his hopes upon it: *Quicken me according to thy word*. David resolved to perform his promises to God (v. 106) and therefore could,

with humble boldness, beg of God to make good his word to him.

108 Accept, I beseech thee, the free-will offerings of my mouth, O LORD, and teach me thy judgments.

Two things we are here taught to pray for, in reference to our religious performances:—

1. Acceptance of them. This we must aim at in all we do in religion, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of the Lord. What David here earnestly prays for the acceptance of are the *free-will-offerings*, not of his purse, but of his mouth, his prayers and praises. *The calves of our lips* (Hos. xiv. 2), *the fruit of our lips* (Heb. i. 15), these are the spiritual offerings which all Christians, as spiritual priests, must offer to God; and they must be *free-will-offerings*, for we must offer them abundantly and cheerfully, and it is this willing mind that is accepted. The more there is of freeness and willingness in the service of God the more pleasing it is to him. 2. Assistance in them: *Teach me thy judgments*. We cannot offer any thing to God which we have reason to think he will accept of, but what he is pleased to instruct us in the doing of; and we must be as earnest for the grace of God in us as for the favour of God towards us.

109 My soul is continually in my hand: yet do I not forget thy law.
110 The wicked have laid a snare for me: yet I erred not from thy precepts.

Here is, 1. David in danger of losing his life. There is but a step between him and death, for the *wicked have laid a snare* for him; Saul did so many a time, because he hated him for his piety. Wherever he was he found some design or other laid against him to take away his life, for it was that they aimed at. What they could not effect by open force they hoped to compass by treachery, which made him say, *My soul is continually in my hand*. It was so with him, not only as a *man* (so it is true of us all; wherever we are we lie exposed to the strokes of death; what we carry in our hands is easily snatched away from us by violence, or if sandy, as our life is, it easily of itself slips through our fingers), but as a *man of war*, a soldier, who often jeopardied his life in the high places of the field, and especially as a *man after God's own heart*, and, as such, hated and persecuted, and *always delivered to death* (2 Cor. iv. 11), *killed all the day long*. 2. David in no danger of losing his religion, notwithstanding this, thus in jeopardy every hour and yet constant to God and his duty. None of these things move him; for, (1.) He does not forget the law, and therefore he is likely to persevere. In the multitude of his cares for his own safety he finds room in his head and heart for the word of God, and has that in his mind as fresh as ever; and where

that dwells richly it will be a well of living water. (2.) He has not yet erred from God's precepts, and therefore it is to be hoped will not. He had stood many a shock and kept his ground, and surely that grace which had helped him hitherto would not fail him but would still prevent his wanderings.

111 Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart. 112 I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes always, even unto the end.

The psalmist here in a most affectionate manner, like an Israelite indeed, resolves to stick to the word of God and to live and die by it.

I. He resolves to portion himself in God and there to seek his happiness, nay, to enjoy it: "*Thy testimonies* (the truths, the promises, of thy word) *have I taken as a heritage for ever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart*." The present delight he took in them was an evidence that the good things contained in them were in his account the best things, and the treasure which he set his heart upon. 1. He expected an eternal happiness in God's testimonies. The covenant God had made with him was an everlasting covenant, and therefore he took it as a *heritage for ever*. If he could not yet say, "*They are my heritage*," yet he could say, "*I have made choice of them for my heritage*; and will never take up with a portion in this life," xvii. 14, 15. God's testimonies are a heritage to all that have received the Spirit of adoption; for, *if children, then heirs*. They are a *heritage for ever*, and that earthly heritage is (1 Pet. i. 4); all the saints accept them as such, take up with them, live upon them, and can therefore be content with but little of this world. 2. He enjoyed a present satisfaction in them: *They are the rejoicing of my heart*, because they will be a *heritage for ever*. It requires the heart of good man to see his portion in the promises of God and not in the possessions of this world.

II. He resolves to govern himself by God and thence to take his measures: *I have inclined my heart to do thy statutes*. Those that would have the blessings of God's testimonies must come under the bonds of his statutes. We must look for comfort only in the way of duty, and that duty must be done, not with full consent and complacency: "*I have by the grace of God, inclined my heart to do thy law*" and conquered the aversion I had to it." A good man brings his heart to his work and then it is done well. A gracious disposition to do the will of God is the acceptable principle of all obedience. 2. With constancy and perseverance. He would perform God's statutes always, in all instances, in the duty of every day, in a constant course of holy walking, and this to the end, without weariness. This is following the Lord fully.

15. SAMECH.

113 I hate *vain* thoughts : but thy word do I love.

Here we have, 1. David's dread of the risings of sin, and the first beginnings of it : *I hate vain thoughts*. He does not mean that he hated them in others, for there he could not discern them, but he hated them in his own heart. Every good man makes conscience of his thoughts for they are words to God. *Vain thoughts* how light soever most make them, *the* sinful and hurtful, and therefore he should account them hateful and dreadful for they not only divert the mind from that which is good, but open the door to all evil, Jer. iv. 14. Though David could not say that he was free from vain thoughts, yet he could say that he hated them ; he did not countenance them, nor give them any entertainment, but did what he could to keep them out, at least to keep them under. *The will I do I allow not*. 2. David's delight in the rule of duty. *But thy law do I love*, which rebids those vain thoughts, and threatens them. The more we love the law of God the more we shall get the mastery of our vain thoughts, the more hateful they will be to us, being contrary to the whole law, and the more watchful we shall be against them, lest they draw us from that which we love.

114 Thou *art* my hiding place and my shield : I hope in thy word.

Here is, 1. God's care of David to protect and defend him, which he comforted himself with when his enemies were very malicious against him : *Thou art my hiding-place and my shield*. David, when Saul pursued him, then betook himself to close places for shelter ; in war he guarded himself with his shield. Now God was both these to him, a hiding-place to preserve him from danger and a shield to preserve him in danger, his shield from death and his soul from sin. Good people are safe under God's protection. He *their strength and their shield*, their *help and their shield*, their *sun and their shield*, their *shield and their great reward*, and here *their hiding-place and their shield*. They may by faith retire to him, and repose in him as their hiding-place, where they are kept in secret. They may by faith oppose his power to all the might and malice of their enemies, and their shield to quench every fiery dart. 2. David's confidence in God. He is safe, and therefore he is easy, under the divine protection : *"I hope in thy word*, which has acquainted me with thee and assured me of thy kindness to me."

Those who depend on God's promise shall have the benefit of his power and be taken under his special protection.

115 Depart from me, ye evildoers : for I will keep the commandments of my God.

Here is, 1. David's firm and fixed resolu-

tion to live a holy life : *I will keep the commandments of my God*. Bravely resolved : like a saint, like a soldier ; for true courage consists in a steady resolution against all sin and for all duty. Those that would keep God's commandments must be often renewing their resolutions to do so : *"I will keep them*. Whatever others do, this I will do ; though I be singular, though all about me be evil-doers, and desert me ; whatever I have done hitherto, I will for the future walk closely with God. They are the commandments of God, of my God, and therefore I will keep them. He is God and may command me, my God and will command me nothing but what is for my good."

2. His farewell to bad company, pursuant to this resolution : *Depart from me, ye evil-doers*. Though David, as a good magistrate, was a terror to evil-doers, yet there were many such, even about court, intruding near his person ; these he here abdicates, and resolves to have no conversation with them. Note, Those that resolve to keep the commandments of God must have no society with evil-doers ; for bad company is a great hindrance to a holy life. We must not choose wicked people for our companions, nor be intimate with them ; we must not do as they do nor do as they would have us do, Ps. i. 1 ; Eph. v. 11.

116 Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live : and let me not be ashamed of my hope. 117 Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe : and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually.

Here, 1. David prays for sustaining grace for this grace sufficient he besought the Lord twice : *Uphold me* ; and again, *Hold thou me up*. He sees himself not only unable to go on in his duty by any strength of his own, but in danger of falling into sin unless he was prevented by divine grace ; and therefore he is thus earnest for that grace to uphold him in his integrity (xli. 12), to keep him from falling and to keep him from tiring, that he might neither turn aside to evil-doing nor be weary of well-doing. We stand no longer than God holds us and go no further than he carries us. 2. He pleads earnestly for this grace. (1.) He pleads the promise of God, his dependence upon the promise, and his expectation from it : *"Uphold me, according to thy word*, which word I hope in ; and, if it be not performed, I shall be made *ashamed of my hope*, and be called a fool for my credulity."

But those that hope in God's word may be sure that the word will not fail them, and therefore their hope will not make them ashamed. (2.) He pleads the great need he had of God's grace and the great advantage it would be of to him : *Uphold me, that I may live*, intimating that he could not live without the grace of God ; he should fall into sin,

into death, into hell, if God did not hold him up; but, supported by his hand, he shall live; his spiritual life shall be maintained and be an earnest of eternal life. *Hold me up, and I shall be safe*, out of danger and out of the fear of danger. Our holy security is grounded on divine supports. (3.) He pleads his resolution, in the strength of this grace, to proceed in his duty: "*Hold me up, and then I will have respect unto thy statutes continually and never turn my eyes or feet aside from them.*" *I will employ myself* (so some), *I will delight myself* (so others) *in thy statutes*. If God's right hand uphold us, we must, in his strength, go on in our duty both with diligence and pleasure.

118 Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes: for their deceit is falsehood. 119 Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross: therefore I love thy testimonies. 120 My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments.

Here is, I. God's judgment on wicked people, on those that *wander from his statutes*, that take their measures from other rules and will not have God to reign over them. All departure from God's statutes is certainly an error, and will prove a fatal one. These are the wicked of the earth; they mind earthly things, lay up their treasures in the earth, live in pleasure on the earth, and are strangers and enemies to heaven and heavenly things. Now see how God deals with them, that you may neither fear them nor envy them. 1. He *treads them all down*. He brings them to ruin, to utter ruin, to shameful ruin; he makes them his footstool. Though they are ever so high, he can bring them low (Amos. ii. 9); he has done it many a time, and he will do it, for he resists the proud and will triumph over those that oppose his kingdom. Proud persecutors trample upon his people, but, sooner or later, he will trample upon them. 2. He *puts them all away like dross*. Wicked people are as dross, which, though it be mingled with the good metal in the ore, and seems to be of the same substance with it, must be separated from it. And in God's account they are worthless things, the scum and refuse of the earth, and no more to be compared with the righteous than dross with fine gold. There is a day coming which will put them away from among the righteous (Matt. xiii. 49), so that they shall have no place in their congregation (Ps. i. 5), which will put them away into everlasting fire, the fittest place for the dross. Sometimes, in this world, the wicked are, by the censures of the church, or the sword of the magistrate, or the judgments of God, *put away as dross*, Prov. xxv. 4, 5.

II. The reasons of these judgments. God casts them off because they *err from his sta-*

tutes (those that will not submit to the commands of the word shall feel the curses of it) and because *their deceit is falsehood*, that is, because they deceive themselves by setting up false rules, in opposition to God's statutes which they err from, and because they go about to deceive others with their hypocritical pretences of good and their crafty projects of mischief. *Their cunning is falsehood*, so Dr. Hammond. The utmost of their policy is treachery and perfidiousness; this the God of truth hates and will punish.

III. The improvement David made of these judgments. He took notice of them and received instruction from them. The ruin of the wicked helped to increase, 1. His love to the word of God. "I see what comes of sin; therefore I love thy testimonies, which warn me to take heed of those dangerous courses and keep me from the paths of the destroyer." We see the word of God fulfilled in his judgments on sin and sinners, and therefore we should love it. 2. His fear of the wrath of God: *My flesh trembles for fear of thee*. Instead of insulting over those who fell under God's displeasure, he humbled himself. What we read and hear of the judgments of God upon wicked people should make us, (1.) To reverence his terrible majesty, and to stand in awe of him: *Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?* (Ysa. vi. 3.) (2.) To fear lest we offend him and become obnoxious to his wrath. God's men have need to be restrained from sin by the terrors of the Lord, especially when judgment begins at the house of God and hypocrites are discovered and put away as dross.

16. AIN.

121 I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to mine oppressors. 122 Be surety for thy servant for good, lest not the proud oppress me.

David here appeals to God, 1. As his witness that he had not done wrong; he could truly say, "*I have done judgment and justice*" that is, I have made conscience of rendering to all their due, and have not by force or fraud hindered any of their right." Take him as a king, he executed judgment and justice to all his people, 2 Sam. viii. 15. Take him in a private capacity, he could appeal to God himself that there was no evil or transgression in his hand, 1 Sam. xxiv. 11. Note, Honesty is the best policy and will be our rejoicing in the day of evil. 2. As his Judge, that he might not be wronged. Having done justice for others that were oppressed, he begs that God would do him justice and avenge him of his adversaries: "*Be surety for thy servant, for good*," undertake for me against those that would run me down and ruin me. He is sensible that he cannot make his peace with himself, and therefore begs that God would appear for him. Christ is our surety with God; and, if he be so, Providence shall be our surety against all the world. Who

that shall harm us if God's power and goodness be engaged for our protection and rescue? He does not prescribe to God what he could do for him; only let it be *for good*, such way and manner as Infinite Wisdom sees best; "*only let me not be left to my oppressors.*" Though David had *done judgment and justice*, yet he had many enemies; but, trusting God for his friend, he hoped they could not have their will against him; and that hope he prayed again, *Let not the proud oppress me.* David, one of the best of men, was oppressed by the proud, whom God beholds afar off; the condition therefore of the persecuted is better than that of the persecutors, and will appear so at last.

123 Mine eyes fail for thy salvation, and for the word of thy righteousness.

David, being oppressed, is here waiting and wishing for the salvation of the Lord, which would make him easy. 1. He cannot think that it comes slowly: *My eyes fail for thy salvation.* His eyes were towards it and had been long so. He looked for help from heaven (and we deceive ourselves if we look for it any other way), but it did not come so soon as he expected, so that his eyes began to fail, and he was sometimes ready to despair, and to think that, because the salvation did not come when he looked for it, it could never come. It is often the infirmity of good men to be weary of waiting for their time when *their time* has elapsed. 2. He cannot but hope that it comes surely; he expects the word of God's righteousness, and no other salvation than what is secured by that word, which cannot fail to the pound because it is a word of righteousness. Though our eyes fail, yet God's word does it, and therefore those that build upon it, though now discouraged, shall in due time see his salvation.

124 Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy, and teach me thy statutes. 125 I am thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies.

Here is, 1. David's petition for divine instruction: "*Teach me thy statutes; give me know all my duty; when I am in doubt, I do not know not for certain what is my duty, direct me, and make it plain to me; now that I am afflicted, oppressed, and my eyes are ready to fail for thy salvation, let me know what my duty is in this condition.*" In difficult times we should desire more to be told than we must do than what we may expect, and should pray more to be led into the knowledge of scripture-precepts than of scripture-prophecies. If God, who gave us his statutes, do not teach us, we shall never learn them. Now God teaches is implied in the next petition: *Give me understanding* (a renewed understanding, apt to receive divine light), *that*

I may know thy testimonies. It is God's prerogative to give an understanding, that understanding without which we cannot know God's testimonies. Those who know most of God's testimonies desire to know more, and are still earnest with God to teach them, never thinking they know enough. 2. His pleas to enforce this petition. (1.) He pleads God's goodness to him: *Deal with me according to thy mercy.* The best saints count this their best plea for any blessing, "*Let me have it according to thy mercy;*" for we deserve no favour from God, nor can we claim any as a debt, but we are most likely to be easy when we cast ourselves upon God's mercy and refer ourselves to it. Particularly, when we come to him for instruction, we must beg it as a mercy, and reckon that in being taught we are well dealt with. (2.) He pleads his relation to God: "*I am thy servant,* and have work to do for thee; therefore *teach me* to do it and to do it well." The servant has reason to expect that, if he be at a loss about his work, his master should teach him, and, if it were in his power, give him an understanding. "Lord," says David, "I desire to serve thee; show me how." If any man resolve to do God's will as his servant, he shall be made to know his testimonies, John vii. 17; Ps. xxv. 14.

126 *It is time for thee, Lord, to work: for they have made void thy law.*

Here is, 1. A complaint of the daring impiety of the wicked. David, having in himself a holy indignation at it, humbly represents it to God: "Lord, there are those that *have made void thy law*, have set thee and thy government at defiance, and have done what in them lay to cancel and vacate the obligation of thy commands." Those that sin through infirmity transgress the law, but presumptuous sinners do in effect make void the law, saying, *Who is the Lord? What is the Almighty, that we should fear him?* It is possible a godly man may sin against the commandment, but a wicked man would sin away the commandment, would repeal God's laws and enact his own lusts. This is the sinfulness of sin and the malignity of the carnal mind. 2. A desire that God would appear, for the vindication of his own honour: "*It is time for thee, Lord, to work,* to do something for the effectual confutation of atheists and infidels, and the silencing of those that set their mouth against the heavens." God's time to work is when vice has become most daring and the measure of iniquity is full. *Now will I arise, saith the Lord.* Some read it, and the original will bear it, *It is time to work for thee, O Lord!* It is time for every one in his place to appear on the Lord's side—against the threatening growth of profaneness and immorality. We must do what we can for the support of the sinking interests of religion, and, after all, we must

beg of God to take the work into his own hands.

127 Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold. 128 Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way.

David here, as often in this psalm, professes the great love he had to the word and law of God; and, to evidence the sincerity of it, observe, 1. The degree of his love. He loved his Bible better than he loved his money—*above gold, yea, above fine gold*. Gold, fine gold, is what most men set their hearts upon; nothing charms them and dazzles their eyes so much as gold does. It is fine gold, a fine thing in their eyes; they will venture their souls, their God, their all, to get and keep it. But David saw that the word of God answers all purposes better than money does, for it enriches the soul towards God; and therefore he loved it better than gold, for it had done that for him which gold could not do, and would stand him in stead when the wealth of the world would fail him. 2. The ground of his love. He loved all God's commandments because he esteemed them to be right, all reasonable and just, and suited to the end for which they were made. They are all as they should be, and no fault can be found with them; and we must love them because they bear God's image and are the revelations of his will. If we thus *consent to the law that it is good*, we shall delight in it after the inner man. 3. The fruit and evidence of this love: *He hated every false way*. The way of sin being directly contrary to God's precepts, which are right, is a false way, and therefore those that have a love and esteem for God's law hate it and will not be reconciled to it.

17. PE

129 Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them.

See here how David was affected towards the word of God. 1. He admired it, as most excellent in itself: *Thy testimonies are wonderful*. The word of God gives us admirable discoveries of God, and Christ, and another world; admirable proofs of divine love and grace. The majesty of the style, the purity of the matter, the harmony of the parts, are all wonderful. Its effects upon the consciences of men, both for conviction and comfort, are wonderful; and it is a sign that we are not acquainted with God's testimonies, or do not understand them, if we do not admire them. 2. He adhered to it as of constant use to him: *"Therefore doth my soul keep them*, as a treasure of inestimable value, which I cannot be without." We do not keep them to any purpose unless our souls keep them. There they must be deposited, as the tables of testimony in the ark;

there they must have the innermost and dearest place. Those that see God's word to be admirable will prize it highly and preserve it carefully, as that which they prize themselves great things from.

130 The entrance of thy word giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.

Here is, 1. The great use for which the word of God was intended, to give light, to give understanding, to give us to understand that which will be of use to us in our travels through this world; and it is outward and ordinary means by which the Spirit of God enlightens the understanding of all that are sanctified. God's testimonies are not only wonderful for the greatness of them, but useful, as a light in a dark place. 2. Its efficacy for this purpose. It admirably answers the end; for, (1.) *Even the entrance of God's word gives light*. If we begin at the beginning, and take it before us, we shall find that the very first verses of the Bible give us surprising and yet satisfying discoveries of the origin of the universe, about which, without that, the world is utterly in the dark. As soon as the word of God enters into us, and has a place in us, it enlightens us; we find we begin to see when we begin to study the word of God. The very first principles of the oracles of God, the plain truths, the milk appointed for the babes, bring a great light into the soul, much more than the soul be illuminated by the sublime mysteries that are found there. "The explication or explication of thy word gives light; then it is most profitable when ministers their part in giving the sense, Neh. viii. Some understand it of the New Testament, which is the opening or unfolding of the Old, which would give light concerning life and immortality. (2.) *It would give understanding even to the simple*, to the weakest capacities; for it shows us a way to heaven so plain that the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.

131 I opened my mouth, and said: for I longed for thy commandments.

Here is, 1. The desire David had towards the word of God: *I longed for thy commandments*. When he was under a forced absence from God's ordinances he longed to be restored to them again; when he enjoyed ordinances he greedily sucked in the word of God, as new-born babes desire the milk. When Christ is formed in the soul there are glorious longings, unaccountable to one that is stranger to the work. 2. The degree of the desire appearing in the expressions of it: *I opened my mouth and panted*, as one overcome with heat, or almost stifled, pants for mouthful of fresh air. Thus strong, earnest, should our desires be towards God.

and the remembrance of his name, xlii. 1, 2. Luke xii. 50.

132 Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.

Here is, 1. David's request for God's favour to himself: "*Look graciously upon me; let me have thy smiles, and the light of thy countenance. Take cognizance of me and my affairs, and be merciful to me; let me taste the sweetness of thy mercy and receive the gifts of thy mercy.*" See how humble his petition is. He asks not for the operations of God's hand, only for the smiles of his face; a good look is enough; and for that he does not plead merit, but implores mercy. 2. His acknowledgment of his favour to all his people: *As thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.* This is either, (1.) A plea for mercy: "Lord, I am one of those that love thy name, love thee and thy word, and thou usest to be kind to those that so; and wilt thou be worse to me than to others of thy people?" Or, (2.) A description of the favour and mercy he desired—that which thou usest to bestow on those that love thy name, which *thou bearest to thy chosen,*" cvi. 4, 5. He desires no more, no better, than neighbour's fare, and he will make up with no less; common looks and common mercies will not serve, but such as are reserved for those that love him, which are such as *eye has not seen*, 1 Cor. ii. 9. Note, The dealings of God with those that love him are such that a man needs not desire to be any better dealt with, for he will make them truly and eternally happy. And as long as God deals with us no otherwise than as he uses to deal with those that love him we have no reason to complain, 1 Cor. x. 13.

133 Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.

Here David prays for two great spiritual blessings, and is, in this verse, as earnest for the good work of God in him as, in the verse before, for the good-will of God towards him. He prays, 1. For direction in the paths of duty: "*Order my steps in thy word;*" having led me into the right way, let every step I take in that way be under the guidance of thy grace." We ought to walk by rule; all the motions of the soul must not only be kept within the bounds prescribed by the word, so as not to transgress them, but carried in the paths prescribed by the word, so as not to trifle in them. And therefore we must beg of God that by his good Spirit he would order our steps accordingly. 2. For deliverance from the power of sin: "*Let no iniquity have dominion over me,* so as to gain my consent to it, and that I should be led captive by it." The dominion of sin is to be headed and deprecated by every one of us;

and, if in sincerity we pray against it, we may receive that promise as an answer to the prayer (Rom. vi. 14), *Sin shall not have dominion over you.*

134 Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep thy precepts.

Here, 1. David prays that he might live a quiet and peaceable life, and might not be harassed and discomposed by those that studied to be vexatious: "*Deliver me from the oppression of man—man, whom God can control, and whose power is limited. Let them know themselves to be but men (ix. 20), and let me be delivered out of the hands of unreasonable men.*" 2. He promises that then he would live in all godliness and honesty. "Let me be delivered out of the hands of my enemies, that I may serve God without fear; so will I keep thy precepts." Not but that he would keep God's precepts, though he should be continued under oppression; "but so shall I keep thy precepts more cheerfully and with more enlargement of heart, my bonds being loosed." Then we may expect temporal blessings when we desire them with this in our eye, that we may serve God the better.

135 Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; and teach me thy statutes.

David here, as often elsewhere, writes himself God's servant, a title he gloried in, though he was a king; now here, as became a good servant, 1. He is very ambitious of his Master's favour, accounting that his happiness and chief good. He asks not for corn and wine, for silver and gold, but, "*Make thy face to shine upon thy servant;* let me be accepted of thee, and let me know that I am so. Comfort me with the light of thy countenance in every cloudy and dark day. If the world frown upon me, yet do thou smile." 2. He is very solicitous about his Master's work, accounting that his business and chief concern. This he would be instructed in, that he might do it, and do it well, so as to be accepted in the doing of it: *Teach me thy statutes.* Note, We must pray as earnestly for grace as for comfort. If God hides his face from us, it is because we have been careless in keeping his statutes; and therefore, that we may be qualified for the returns of his favour, we must pray for wisdom to do our duty.

136 Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.

Here we have David in sorrow. 1. It is a great sorrow, to such a degree that he weeps *rivers of tears.* Commonly, where there is a gracious heart, there is a weeping eye, in conformity to Christ, who was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. David had prayed for comfort in God's favour (v. 135) now he pleads that he was qualified

for that comfort, and had need of it, for he was one of those that mourned in Zion, and those that do so shall be comforted, Isa. lxi. 3. 2. It is godly sorrow. He wept not for his troubles, though they were many, but for the dishonour done to God: *Because they keep not thy law*, either *because my eyes keep not thy law*, so some (the eye is the inlet and outlet of a great deal of sin, and therefore it ought to be a weeping eye), or, rather, *they*, that is, those about me, v. 139. Note, The sins of sinners are the sorrows of saints. We must mourn for that which we cannot mend.

18. TZADDI.

137 Righteous art thou, O LORD, and upright are thy judgments. 138 Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded are righteous and very faithful.

Here is, 1. The righteousness of God, the infinite rectitude and perfection of his nature. As he is what he is, so he is what he should be, and in every thing acts as becomes him; there is nothing wanting, nothing amiss, in God; his will is the eternal rule of equity, and he is righteous, for he does all according to it. 2. The righteousness of his government. He rules the world by his providence, according to the principles of justice, and never did, nor ever can do, any wrong to any of his creatures: *Upright are thy judgments*, the promises and threatenings and the executions of both. Every word of God is pure, and he will be true to it; he perfectly knows the merits of every cause and will judge accordingly. 3. The righteousness of his commands, which he has given to be the rule of our obedience: *"Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded, which are backed with thy sovereign authority, and to which thou dost require our obedience, are exceedingly righteous and faithful, righteousness and faithfulness itself."* As he acts like himself, so his law requires that we act like ourselves and like him, that we be just to ourselves and to all we deal with, true to all the engagements we lay ourselves under both to God and man. That which we are commanded to practise is righteous; that which we are commanded to believe is faithful. It is necessary to our faith and obedience that we be convinced of this.

139 My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words.

Here is, 1. The great contempt which wicked men put upon religion: *My enemies have forgotten thy words*. They have often heard them, but so little did they heed them that they soon forgot them, they willingly forgot them, not only through carelessness let them slip out of their minds, but contrived how to cast them behind their backs. This is at the bottom of all the wickedness of the wicked, and particularly of their malig-

nity and enmity to the people of God; they have forgotten the words of God, else they would give check to their sinful courses. The great concern which godly men show in religion. David reckoned those his enemies who forgot the words of God because they were enemies to religion, which he had entered into a league with, offensive and defensive. And therefore his zeal even consumed him, when he observed their impieties. He conceived such an indignation at their wickedness as preyed upon his spirits, even *it* *threw* *them* *up* (as Christ's zeal, John ii. 17), swallowed up all inferior considerations, and made him forget himself. *My zeal has pressed or constrained me* (so Dr. Hammond reads it, Acts xviii. 5. Zeal against sin should constrain us to do what we can against it in all places, at least to do so much the more in religion ourselves. The worse others are the better we should be.

140 Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it.

Here is, 1. David's great affection for the word of God: *Thy servant loves it*. Every good man, being a servant of God, loves the word of God, because it lets him know his Master's will and directs him in his Master's work. Wherever there is grace there is warm attachment to the word of God. The ground and reason of that affection; he saw it to be *very pure*, and therefore he loved it. Our love to the word of God is then a evidence of our love to God when we love for the sake of its purity, because it bears the image of God's holiness and is designed to make us partakers of his holiness. It commands purity, and, as it is itself refined from all corrupt mixture, so if we receive it in the light and love of it it will refine us from the dross of worldliness and fleshly-mindedness.

141 I am small and despised: yet do not I forget thy precepts.

Here is, 1. David pious and yet poor. He was a man after God's own heart, one whom the King of kings did delight to honour, and yet *small and despised* in his own account and in the account of many others. Men's real excellency cannot always secure them from contempt; nay, it often exposes them to the scorn of others and always makes them low in their own eyes. *God has chosen the foolish things of the world*, and it has been the common lot of his people to be a despised people. 2. David poor and yet pious, *small and despised* for his strict and serious godliness, yet his conscience can witness for him that he did not forget God's precepts. He would not throw off his religion, though it exposed him to contempt, for he knew that was designed to try his constancy. When we are small and despised we have the more need to remember God's precepts, that we may have them to support us under the pressures of a low condition.

142 Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth.

Observe, 1. That God's word is *righteousness*, and it is an *everlasting righteousness*. It is the rule of God's judgment, and it is consonant to his counsels from eternity and will direct his sentence for eternity. The word of God will judge us, it will judge us in righteousness, and by it our everlasting state will be determined. This should possess us with a very great reverence for the word of God that it is righteousness itself, the standard of righteousness, and it is everlasting in its rewards and punishments. That God's word is a law, and that law is truth. See the double obligation we are under to be governed by the word of God. We are reasonable creatures, and as such we must be ruled by truth, acknowledging the force and power of it. If the principles be true, the practices must be agreeable to them, else we do not act rationally. We are creatures, and therefore subjects, and must be ruled by our Creator; and whatever he commands we are bound to obey as a law. See how these obligations are here twisted, these words of a man. Here is truth brought to the understanding, there to sit chief, and direct the motions of the whole man; but, lest the authority of that should become weak through the flesh, here is a law to bind the will and bring that into subjection. God's word is a law (John xviii. 37) *and God's law is the truth*; surely we cannot break such words as these asunder.

143 Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me: yet thy commandments are my delights. 144 The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live.

These two verses are almost a repetition of the two foregoing verses, but with improvement. 1. David again professes his constant adherence to God and his duty, notwithstanding the many difficulties and discouragements he met with. He had said (v. 141), *I am small and despised*, and yet adhere to my duty. Here he finds himself not only mean, but miserable, as far as this world could make him so: *Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me*—trouble without, anguish within; they surprised him, they seized him, they held him. Sorrows are often the lot of saints in this vale of tears; they are in *heaviness through manifold temptations*. There he had said, *Yet do I not forget thy precepts*; here he carries his constancy much higher: *Yet thy commandments are my delights*. All this trouble and anguish did not put his mouth out of taste for the comforts of the word of God, but he could still relish them and find that peace and pleasure in them which all the calamities of this present time could not de-

prive him of. There are delights, variety of delights, in the word of God, which the saints have often the sweetest enjoyment of when they are in trouble and anguish, 2 Cor. i. 5. 2. He again acknowledges the everlasting righteousness of God's word as before (v. 142): *The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting* and cannot be altered; and, when it is admitted in its power into a soul, it is there an abiding principle, *a well of living water*, John iv. 14. We ought to meditate much and often upon the equity and the eternity of the word of God. Here he adds, by way of inference, (1.) His prayer for grace: *Give me understanding*. Those that know much of the word of God should still covet to know more; for there is more to be known. He does not say, "Give me a further revelation," but, *Give me a further understanding*; what is revealed we should desire to understand, and what we know to know better; and we must go to God for a heart to know. (2.) His hope of glory: "Give me this renewed understanding, and then *I shall live*, shall live for ever, shall be eternally happy, and shall be comforted, for the present, in the prospect of it." *This is life eternal, to know God*, John xvii. 3.

19. KOPH.

145 I cried with my whole heart; hear me, O LORD: I will keep thy statutes. 146 I cried unto thee; save me, and I shall keep thy testimonies.

Here we have, I. David's good prayers, by which he sought to God for mercy; these he mentions here, not as boasting of them, or trusting to any merit in them, but reflecting upon them with comfort, that he had taken the appointed way to comfort. Observe here, 1. That he was inward with God in prayer; he prayed *with his heart*, and prayer is acceptable no further than the heart goes along with it. Lip-labour, if that be all, is lost labour. 2. He was importunate with God in prayer; he *cried*, as one in earnest, with fervour of affection and a holy vehemence and vigour of desire. He *cried with his whole heart*; all the powers of his soul were not only engaged and employed, but exerted to the utmost, in his prayers. Then we are likely to speed when we thus strive and wrestle in prayer. 3. That he directed his prayer to God: *I cried unto thee*. Whither should the child go but to his father when any thing ails him? 4. That the great thing he prayed for was salvation: *Save me*. A short prayer (for we mistake if we think we shall be heard for our much speaking), but a comprehensive prayer: "Not only rescue me from ruin, but make me happy." We need desire no more than God's salvation (1. 23) and the *things that accompany* it, Heb. vi. 9. 5. That he was earnest for an answer; and not only looked up in his prayers, but looked up after them, to see what became of them

(Ps. v. 3): "Lord, *hear me*, and let me know that thou hearest me."

II. David's good purposes, by which he bound himself to duty when he was in the pursuit of mercy. "*I will keep thy statutes; I am resolved that by thy grace I will;*" for, *if we turn away our ear from hearing the law*, we cannot expect an answer of peace to our prayers, Prov. xxviii. 9. This purpose is used as a humble plea (v. 146): "*Save me from my sins, my corruptions, my temptations, all the hindrances that lie in my way, that I may keep thy testimonies.*" We must cry for salvation, not that we may have the ease and comfort of it, but that we may have an opportunity of serving God the more cheerfully.

147 I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried: I hoped in thy word. 148 Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word.

David goes on here to relate how he had abounded in the duty of prayer, much to his comfort and advantage: he cried unto God, that is, offered up to him his pious and devout affections with all seriousness. Observe,

I. The handmaids of his devotion. The two great exercises that attended his prayers, and were helpful to them, were, 1. Hope in God's word, which encouraged him to continue instant in prayer, though the answer did not come immediately: "I cried, and hoped that at last I should speed, because *the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it will speak and not lie. I hoped in thy word, which I knew would not fail me.*" 2. Meditation in God's word. The more intimately we converse with the word of God, and the more we dwell upon it in our thoughts, the better able we shall be to speak to God in his own language and the better we shall know what to pray for as we ought. Reading the word will not serve, but we must meditate in it.

II. The hours of his devotion. *He anticipated the dawning of the morning, nay, and the night-watches.* See here, 1. That David was an early riser, which perhaps contributed to his eminency. He was none of those that say, *Yet a little sleep.* 2. That he began the day with God. The first thing he did in the morning, before he admitted any business, was to pray, when his mind was most fresh and in the best frame. If our first thoughts in the morning be of God they will help to keep us in his fear all the day long. 3. That his mind was so full of God, and the cares and delights of his religion, that a little sleep served his turn. Even in the *night-watches*, when he awaked from his first sleep, he would rather meditate and pray than turn himself and go to sleep again. *He esteemed the words of God's mouth more than his necessary repose,* which we can as ill spare as our food, Job

xxiii. 12. 4. That he would redeem time for religious exercises. He was full of business all day, but that will excuse no man from secret devotion; it is better to take time from sleep, as David did, than not to find time for prayer. And this is our comfort, when we pray in the night, that we can never come unseasonably to the throne of grace; for we may have access to it at all hours. Baal may be asleep, but Israel's God never slumbers, nor are there any hours in which he may not be spoken with.

149 Hear my voice according unto thy lovingkindness: O LORD, quicken me according to thy judgment.

Here, 1. David applies to God for grace and comfort with much solemnity. He begged of God to hear his voice: "Lord, I have something to say to thee; shall I obtain thy gracious audience?" Well, what has he to say? What is his petition and what is his request? It is not long, but it has much in it: "Lord, *quicken me*; stir me up to that which is good, and make me vigorous, actively, and cheerful in it. Let habits of grace be drawn out into act." 2. He encouraged himself to hope that he shall obtain his request; for he depends, (1.) Upon God's lovingkindness: "He is good, therefore he will be good to me, who hope in his mercy. His lovingkindness manifested to me will help to quicken me, and put life into me." (2.) Upon God's judgment, that is, his wisdom ("He knows what I need, and what is good for me, and therefore will quicken me"), and his promise, the word which he has spoken: mercy secured by the new covenant: *Quicken me according to the tenour of that covenant.*

150 They draw nigh that follow after mischief: they are far from thy law. 151 Thou art near, O LORD, and all thy commandments are truth.

Here is, I. The apprehension David was in of danger from his enemies. 1. They were very malicious, and industrious in prosecuting their malicious designs: *They follow after mischief*, any mischief they could do to David or his friends; they would let slip no opportunity nor let fall any pursuit that might be to his hurt. 2. They were very impious, and had no fear of God before their eyes: *They are far from thy law*, setting themselves as far as they can out of the reach of its convictions and commands. The persecutors of God's people are such as make light of God himself; we may therefore be sure that God will take his people's part against them. They followed him closely and he was just ready to fall into their hands: *They draw nigh*, nigher than they were; so that he got ground of him. They were at his heels just upon his back. God sometimes suffers persecutors to prevail very far against his people, so that, as David said (1 Sam. xx. 3) *There is but a step between them and death.*

Perhaps this comes in here as a reason why David was so earnest in prayer, *v.* 149. God brings us into imminent perils, as he did Jacob, that, like him, we may wrestle for a blessing.

II. The assurance David had of protection with God: "*They draw nigh to destroy me, but thou art near, O Lord! to save me, not only mightier than they and therefore able to help me against them, but nearer than they and therefore ready to help.*" It is the happiness of the saints that, when trouble is near, God is near, and no trouble can separate between them and him. He is never far to seek, but he is within our call, and means are within his call, *Deut.* iv. 7. *All thy commandments are truth.* The enemies thought to defeat the promises God had made to David, but he was sure it was out of their power; they were inviolably true, and would be infallibly performed.

152 Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever.

This confirms what he had said in the close of the foregoing verses, *All thy commandments are truth*; he means the covenant, the word which God has commanded to a thousand generations. This is firm, as true as truth itself. For, 1. God has founded it so; he has framed it for a perpetuity. Such is the constitution of it, and so well ordered is it in all things, that it cannot but be sure. The promises are *founded for ever*, so that when heaven and earth shall have passed away every iota and tittle of the promise shall stand firm, *2 Cor.* i. 20. 2. David had found it so, both by a work of God's grace upon his heart (begetting in him a full persuasion of the truth of God's word and enabling him to rely upon it with a full satisfaction) and by the works of his providence on his behalf, fulfilling the promise beyond what he expected. Thus he *knew of old*, from the days of his youth, ever since he began to look towards God, that the word of God is what one may venture one's all upon. This assurance was confirmed by the observations and experiences of his own life all along, and of others that had gone before him in the ways of God. All that ever dealt with God, and trusted in him will own that they have found him faithful.

20. RESH.

153 Consider mine affliction, and deliver me: for I do not forget thy law. 154 Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word.

Here, I. David prays for succour in distress. *Is any afflicted? let him pray*; let him pray as David does here. 1. He has an eye to God's pity, and prays, "*Consider my affliction*"; take it into thy thoughts, and all the circumstances of it, and sit not by as one unconcerned." God is never unmindful of his

people's afflictions, but he will have us to put *him in remembrance* (*Isa.* xliii. 26), to spread our case before him, and then leave it to his compassionate consideration to do in it as in his wisdom he shall think fit, in his own time and way. 2. He has an eye to God's power and prays, *Deliver me*; and again, "*Deliver me*; consider my troubles and bring me out of them." God has promised deliverance (*1.* 15) and we may pray for it, with submission to his will and with regard to his glory, that we may serve him the better. 3. He has an eye to God's righteousness, and prays, "*Plead my cause*"; be thou my patron and advocate, and take me for thy client." David had a just cause, but his adversaries were many and mighty, and he was in danger of being run down by them; he therefore begs of God to clear his integrity and silence their false accusations. If God do not plead his people's cause, who will? He is righteous, and they commit themselves to him, and therefore he will do it, and do it effectually, *Isa.* li. 22; *Jer.* i. 34. (4.) He has an eye to God's grace, and prays, "*Quicken me.* Lord, I am weak, and unable to bear my troubles; my spirit is apt to droop and sink. O that thou wouldst revive and comfort me, till the deliverance is wrought!"

II. He pleads his dependence upon the word of God and his obedient regard to its directions: *Quicken and deliver me according to thy word of promise, for I do not forget thy precepts.* The more closely we cleave to the word of God, both as our rule and as our stay, the more assurance we may have of deliverance in due time.

155 Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not thy statutes.

Here is, 1. The description of wicked men. They do not only not do God's statutes, but they do not so much as seek them; they do not acquaint themselves with them, nor so much as desire to know their duty, nor in the least endeavour to do it. Those are wicked indeed who do not think the law of God worth enquiring after, but are altogether regardless of it, being resolved to live at large and to walk in the way of their heart. 2. Their doom: *Salvation is far from them.* They cannot upon any good grounds promise themselves temporal deliverance. *Let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.* How can those expect to seek God's favour with success, when they are in adversity, who never sought his statutes when they were in prosperity? But eternal salvation is certainly far from them. They flatter themselves with a conceit that it is near, and that they are going to heaven; but they are mistaken: it is far from them. They thrust it from them by thrusting the Saviour from them; it is so far from them that they cannot reach it, and the longer they persist in sin the further it is: nay, while salvation is far from them, damna-

tion is near; it slumbers not. *Behold, the Judge stands before the door.*

156 *Great are thy tender mercies, O LORD: quicken me according to thy judgments.*

Here, 1. David admires God's grace: *Great are thy tender mercies, O Lord!* The goodness of God's nature, as it is his glory, so it is the joy of all the saints. His mercies are tender, for he is full of compassion; they are many, they are great, a fountain that can never be exhausted. He is rich in mercy to all that call upon him. David had spoken of the misery of the wicked (v. 155); but God is good notwithstanding; there were tender mercies sufficient in God to have saved them, if they had not *despised the riches of those mercies.* Those that are delivered from the sinner's doom are bound for ever to own the greatness of God's mercies which delivered them. 2. He begs for God's grace, reviving quickening grace, *according to his judgments*, that is, according to the tenour of the new covenant (that established rule by which he goes in dispensing that grace) or according to his manner, his custom or usage, with those that love his name, v. 132.

157 *Many are my persecutors and mine enemies; yet do I not decline from thy testimonies.*

Here is, 1. David surrounded with difficulties and dangers: *Many are my persecutors and my enemies.* When Saul the king was his persecutor and enemy no marvel that many more were so. multitudes will follow the pernicious ways of abused authority. David, being a public person, had many enemies, but withal he had many friends, who loved him and wished him well; let him set the one over-against the other. In this David was a type both of Christ and his church. The enemies, the persecutors, of both, are many, very many. 2. David established in the way of his duty, notwithstanding: *"Yet do I not decline from thy testimonies, as knowing that while I adhere to them God is for me; and then no matter who is against me."* A man who is steady in the way of his duty, though he may have many enemies, needs fear none.

158 I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not thy word.

Here is, 1. David's sorrow for the wickedness of the wicked. Though he conversed much at home, yet sometimes he looked abroad, and could not but see the wicked walking on every side. He *beheld the transgressors*, those whose sins were open before all men, and it *grieved him to see them dishonour God, serve Satan, debauch the world, and ruin their own souls, to see the transgressors so numerous, so daring, so very impudent, and so industrious to draw unstable souls into their snares.* All this cannot but

be a grief to those who have any regard to the glory of God and the welfare of mankind. 2. The reason of that sorrow. He was grieved, not because they were vexatious to him, but because they were provoking to God: *They kept not thy word.* Those that hate sin truly hate it as sin, as a transgression of the law of God and a violation of his word.

159 Consider how I love thy precepts: quicken me, O LORD, according to thy lovingkindness.

Here is, 1. David's appeal to God concerning his love to his precepts: "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love them; consider it then, and deal with me as thou usest to deal with those that love thy word, which thou hast magnified above all thy name." He does not say, "Consider how I fulfil thy precepts;" he was conscious to himself that in many things he came short; but, "Consider how I love them." Our obedience is pleasing to God, and pleasant to ourselves, only when it comes from a principle of love. 2. His petition thereupon: *"Quicken me, to do my duty with vigour; revive me, keep me alive, not according to any merit of mine, though I love thy word, but according to thy lovingkindness;"* to that we owe our lives, nay, that is better than life itself. We need not desire to be quickened any further than God's lovingkindness will quicken us.

160 Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.

David here comforts himself with the faithfulness of God's word, for the encouragement of himself and others to rely upon it. 1. It has always been found faithful hitherto, and never failed any that ventured upon it: *It is true from the beginning.* Ever since God began to reveal himself to the children of men all he said was true and to be trusted. The church, from its beginning, was built upon this rock. It has not gained its validity by lapse of time, as many governments, whose best plea is prescription and long usage, *Quod initio non valet, tractu temporis convalescit—That which, at first, wanted validity, in the progress of time acquired it.* But the *beginning of God's word was true* (so some read it); his government was laid on a sure foundation. And all, in every age, that have received God's word in faith and love, have found every saying in it *faithful and well worthy of all acceptance.* 2. It will be found faithful to the end, because righteous: *"Every one of thy judgments remains for ever unalterable and of perpetual obligation, adjusting men's everlasting doom."*

21. SCHIN.

161 Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word.

David here lets us know, 1. How he was discouraged in his duty by the fear of man: *princes persecuted him*. They looked upon him as a traitor and an enemy to the government, and under that notion sought his life, and bade him *go serve other gods*, 1 Sam. xvi. 19. It has been the common lot of the best men to be persecuted; and the case the worse if princes be the persecutors, for they have not only the sword in their hand, and therefore can do the more hurt, but they have the law on their side, and can do it with reputation and a colour of justice. It is sad that the power which magistrates have from God, and should use for him, should ever be employed against him. But *marvel not at the matter*, Eccl. v. 8. It was a comfort to David that when princes persecuted him he could truly say it was without cause, he never gave them any provocation. 2. How he was kept to his duty, notwithstanding, by the fear of God: "They would make me stand in awe of them and their word, and do as they bid me; but *my heart stands in awe of thy word*, and I am resolved to please God, and keep in with him, whoever is displeased and falls out with me." Every gracious soul stands in awe of the word of God, of the authority of its precepts and the terror of its threatenings; and to those that do so nothing appears, in the power and wrath of man, at all formidable. We ought to obey God rather than men, and to make sure of God's favour, though we throw ourselves under the wheels of all the world, Luke xii. 4, 5. The heart that stands in awe of God's word is armed against the temptations that arise from persecution.

162 I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.

Here is, 1. The pleasure David took in the word of God. He rejoiced at it, rejoiced that God had made such a discovery of his mind, that Israel was blessed with that light when other nations sat in darkness, that he was himself let into the understanding of it and had had experience of the power of it. He took a pleasure in reading it, hearing it, and meditating on it, and every thing he met with in it was agreeable to him. He had just now said that his heart stood in awe of his word, and yet here he declares that he rejoiced in it. The more reverence we have for the word of God the more joy we shall find in it. 2. The degree of that pleasure—*as one that finds great spoil*. This supposes a victory over the enemy. It is through much opposition that a soul comes to this, *to rejoice in God's word*. But, besides the pleasure and honour of a conquest, there is great advantage gained by the plunder of the field, which adds much to the joy. By the word of God we become more than conquerors, that is, unspeakable gainers.

163 I hate and abhor lying: but thy law do I love.

Love and hatred are the leading affections of the soul; if those be fixed aright, the rest move accordingly. Here we have them fixed aright in David. 1. He had a rooted antipathy to sin; he could not endure to think of it: *I hate and abhor lying*, which may be taken for all sin, inasmuch as by it we deal treacherously and perfidiously with God and put a cheat upon ourselves. Hypocrisy is lying; false doctrine is lying; breach of faith is lying. Lying, in commerce or conversation, is a sin which every good man hates and abhors, hates and doubly hates, because of the seven things which the Lord hates *one is a lying tongue and another is a false witness that speaks lies*, Prov. vi. 16. Every man hates to have a lie told him; but we should more hate telling a lie because by the former we only receive an affront from men, by the latter we give an affront to God. 2. He had a rooted affection to the word of God: *Thy law do I love*. And therefore he abhorred lying, for lying is contrary to the whole law of God; and the reason why he loved the law of God was because of the truth of it. The more we see of the amiable beauty of truth the more we shall see of the detestable deformity of a lie.

164 Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments.

David, in this psalm, is full of complaints, yet those did neither jostle out his praises nor put him out of tune for them; whatever condition a child of God is in he does not want matter for praise and therefore should not want a heart. See here, 1. How often David praised God—*seven times a day*, that is, very frequently, not only every day, but often every day. Many think that once a week will serve, or once or twice a day, but David would praise God seven times a day at least. Praising God is a duty which we should very much abound in. We must praise God at every meal, praise him upon all occasions, in every thing give thanks. We should praise God seven times a day, for the subject can never be exhausted and our affections should never be tired. See v. 62. 2. What he praised God for—*because of thy righteous judgments*. We must praise God for his precepts, which are all just and good, for his promises and threatenings and the performance of both in his providence. We are to praise God even for our afflictions, if through grace we get good by them.

165 Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.

Here is an account of the happiness of good men, who are governed by a principle of love to the word of God, who make it their rule and are ruled by it. 1. They are easy, and have a holy serenity none enjoy themselves more than they do; *Great peace have*

those that love thy law, abundant satisfaction in doing their duty and pleasure in reflecting upon it. *The work of righteousness is peace* (Isa. xxxii. 17), such peace as the world can neither give nor take away. They may be in great troubles without and yet enjoy great peace within, *sat lucis intus—abundance of internal light*. Those that love the world have great vexation, for it does not answer their expectation; those that love God's word have great peace, for it outdoes their expectation, and in it they have sure footing. 2. They are safe, and have a holy security: *Nothing shall offend them*; nothing shall be a scandal, snare, or stumbling-block, to them, to entangle them either in guilt or grief. No event of providence shall be either an invincible temptation or an intolerable affliction to them, but their love to the word of God shall enable them both to hold fast their integrity and to preserve their tranquillity. They will make the best of that which is, and not quarrel with any thing that God does. Nothing shall offend or hurt them, for every thing shall work for good to them, and therefore shall please them, and they shall reconcile themselves to it. Those in whom this holy love reigns will not be apt to perplex themselves with needless scruples, nor to take offence at their brethren, 1 Cor. xiii. 6, 7.

166 LORD, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments.

Here is the whole duty of man; for we are taught, 1. To keep our eye upon God's favour as our end: "*Lord, I have hoped for thy salvation*, not only temporal but eternal salvation. I have hoped for that as my happiness and laid up my treasure in it; I have hoped for it as thine, as a happiness of thy preparing, thy promising, and which consists in being with thee. Hope of this has raised me above the world, and borne me up under all my burdens in it." 2. To keep our eye upon God's word as our rule: *I have done thy commandments*, that is, I have made conscience of conforming myself to thy will in every thing. Observe here how God has joined these two together, and let no man put them asunder. We cannot, upon good grounds, hope for God's salvation, unless we set ourselves to do his commandments, Rev. xxii. 14. But those that sincerely endeavour to do his commandments ought to keep up a good hope of the salvation; and that hope will both engage and enlarge the heart in doing the commandments. The more lively the hope is the more lively the obedience will be.

167 My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly. 168 I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies; for all my ways are before thee.

David's conscience here witnesses for him

I. That his practices were good. 1. He loved God's testimonies, he loved them exceedingly. Our love to the word of God must be a superlative love (we must love it better than the wealth and pleasure of this world) and it must be a victorious love, such as will subdue and mortify our lusts and extirpate carnal affections. 2. He kept them, his soul kept them. Bodily exercise profits little in religion; we must make heart-work of it or we make nothing of it. The soul must be sanctified and renewed, and delivered into the mould of the word; the soul must be employed in glorifying God, for he will be worshipped in the spirit. We must keep both the precepts and the testimonies, the commands of God by our obedience to them and his promises by our reliance on them.

II. That he was governed herein by a good principle: "*Therefore I have kept thy precepts*, because by faith I have seen thy eye always upon me; *all my ways are before thee*; thou knowest every step I take and strictly observe all I say and do. Thou dost see and accept all that I say and do well; thou dost see and art displeased with all I say and do amiss." Note, The consideration of this, that God's eye is upon us at all times, should make us very careful in every thing to keep his commandments, Gen. xvii. 1.

32. TAU.

169 Let my cry come near before thee, O LORD: give me understanding according to thy word. 170 Let my supplication come before thee: deliver me according to thy word.

Here we have, I. A general petition for audience repeated: *Let my cry come near before thee*; and again, *Let my supplication come before thee*. He calls his prayer his cry, which denotes the fervency and vehemence of it, and his supplication, which denotes the humility of it. We must come to God as beggars come to our doors for an alms. He is concerned that his prayer might come before God, might come near before him, that is, that he might have grace and strength by faith and fervency to lift up his prayers, that no guilt might interpose to shut out his prayers and to separate between him and God, and that God would graciously receive his prayers and take notice of them. His prayer that his supplication might come before God implies a deep sense of his unworthiness, and a holy fear that his prayer should come short or miscarry, as not fit to come before God; nor would any of our prayers have had access to God if Jesus Christ had not approached to him as an advocate for us.

II. Two particular requests, which he is thus earnest to present:—1. That God, by his grace, would give him wisdom to conduct himself well under his troubles: *Give me understanding*; he means that wisdom of

the prudent which is to understand his way; "Give me to know thee and myself, and my duty to thee." 2. That God, by his providence, would rescue him out of his troubles: *Deliver me*, that is, with the temptation make way to escape, 1 Cor. x. 13.

III. The same general plea to enforce these requests—*according to thy word*. This directs and limits his desires: "Lord, give me such an understanding as thou hast promised and such a deliverance as thou hast promised; I ask for no other. It also encourages his faith and expectation: "Lord, that which I pray for is what thou hast promised, and wilt not thou be as good as thy word?"

171 My lips shall utter praise, when thou hast taught me thy statutes.

Here is, 1. A great favour which David expects from God, that he will teach him his statutes. This he had often prayed for in his psalm, and urged his petition for it with various arguments; and now that he is drawing towards the close of the psalm he speaks of it as taken for granted. Those that are humbly earnest with God for his grace, and resolve with Jacob that they will not let him go unless he bless them with spiritual blessings, may be humbly confident that they shall at length obtain what they are so importunate for. The God of Israel will grant them those things which they request of him. 2. The grateful sense he promises to have of that favour: *My lips shall utter praise when thou hast taught me*. (1.) Then he shall have cause to praise God. Those that are taught of God have a great deal of reason to be thankful, for this is the foundation of all these spiritual blessings, which are the best blessings, and the earnest of eternal blessings. (2.) Then he shall know how to praise God, and have a heart to do it. All that are taught of God are taught his lesson; when God opens the understanding, opens the heart, and so opens the lips, it is that the mouth may show forth his praise. We have learned nothing to pursue if we have not learned to praise God. (3.) Therefore he is thus importunate for divine instructions, that he might praise God. Those that pray for God's grace must aim at God's glory, Eph. i. 12.

172 My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness.

Observe here, 1. The good knowledge David had of the word of God; he knew it so well that he was ready to own, with the utmost satisfaction, that all God's commandments are not only righteous, but righteousness itself, the rule and standard of righteousness. 2. The good use he resolved to make of that knowledge: *My tongue shall speak of thy word*, not only utter praise for it to the glory of God, but discourse of it for the instruction and edification of others, as that

which he was himself full of (for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak) and as that which he desired others also might be filled with. The more we see of the righteousness of God's commandments the more industrious we should be to bring others acquainted with them, that they may be ruled by them. We should always make the word of God the governor of our discourse, so as never to transgress it by sinful speaking or sinful silence; and we should often make it the subject-matter of our discourse, that it may feed many and minister grace to the hearers.

173 Let thine hand help me; for I have chosen thy precepts. 174 I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD; and thy law is my delight.

Here, 1. David prays that divine grace would work for him: *Let thy hand help me*. He finds his own hands are not sufficient for him, nor can any creature lend him a helping hand to any purpose; therefore he looks up to God in hopes that the hand that had made him would help him; for, if the Lord do not help us, whence can any creature help us? All our help must be expected from God's hand, from his power and his bounty. 2. He pleads what divine grace had already wrought in him as a pledge of further mercy, being a qualification for it. Three things he pleads:—(1.) That he had made religion his serious and deliberate choice: "*I have chosen thy precepts*. I took them for my rule, not because I knew no other, but because, upon trial, I knew no better." Those are good, and do good indeed, who are good and do good, not by chance, but from choice; and those who have thus chosen God's precepts may depend upon God's helping hand in all their services and under all their sufferings. (2.) That his heart was upon heaven: *I have longed for thy salvation*. David, when he had got to the throne, met with enough in the world to court his stay, and to make him say, "It is good to be here;" but still he was looking further, and longing for something better in another world. There is an eternal salvation which all the saints are longing for, and therefore pray that God's hand would help them forward in their way to it. (3.) That he took pleasure in doing his duty: "*Thy law is my delight*. Not only I delight in it, but it is my delight, the greatest delight I have in this world." Those that are cheerful in their obedience may in faith beg help of God to carry them on in their obedience; and those that expect God's salvation must take delight in his law and their hopes must increase their delight.

175 Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee; and let thy judgments help me.

David's heart is still upon praising God and therefore, 1. He prays that God would

give him time to praise him: "*Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee*, that is, let my life be prolonged, that I may live to thy glory." The reason why a good man desires to live is that he may praise God in the land of the living, and do something to his honour. Not, "Let me live and serve my country, live and provide for my family;" but, "Let me live that, in doing this, I may praise God here in this world of conflict and opposition." When we die we hope to go to a better world to praise him, and that is more agreeable for us, though here there is more need of us. And therefore one would not desire to live any longer than we may do God some service here. *Let my soul live*, that is, let me be sanctified and comforted, for sanctification and comfort are the life of the soul, and then *it shall praise thee*. Our souls must be employed in praising God, and we must pray for grace and peace that we may be fitted to praise God. 2. He prays that God would give him strength to praise him: "*Let thy judgments help me*; let all ordinances and all providences" (both are God's judgments) "further me in glorifying God; let them be the matter of my praise and let them help to fit me for that work."

176 I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments.

Here is, 1. A penitent confession: *I have gone astray*, or wander up and down, *like a lost sheep*. As unconverted sinners are like lost sheep (Luke xv. 4), so weak unsteady saints are like lost sheep, Matt. xviii. 12, 13. We are apt to wander like the sheep, and very unapt, when we have gone astray, to find the way again. By going astray we lose the comfort of the green pastures and expose ourselves to a thousand mischiefs. 2. A believing petition: *Seek thy servant*, as the good shepherd seeks a wandering sheep to bring it back again, Ezek. xxxiv. 12. "Lord, seek me, as I used to seek my sheep when they went astray;" for David had been himself a tender shepherd. "Lord, own me for one of thine; for, though I am a stray sheep, I have thy mark; concern thyself for me, send after me by the word, and conscience, and providences; bring me back by thy grace." *Seek me*, that is, *find me*; for God never seeks in vain. *Turn me, and I shall be turned*. 3. An obedient plea: "Though I have gone astray, yet I have not wickedly departed, *I do not forget thy commandments*." Thus he concludes the psalm with a penitent sense of his own sin and a believing dependence on God's grace. With these a devout Christian will conclude his duties, will conclude his life; he will live and die repenting and praying. Observe here, (1.) It is the character of good people that they do not forget God's commandments, being well pleased with their convictions and well settled in their resolutions. (2.) Even those who, through grace, are mindful of their duty, cannot but own that they

have in many instances wandered from it. (3.) Those that have wandered from their duty, if they continue mindful of it, may with a humble confidence commit themselves to the care of God's grace.

PSALM CXX.

This psalm is the first of those fifteen which are here put together under the title of "songs of degrees." It is well that it is so, material what the meaning of that title should be, for nothing is offered towards the explication of it, no, not by the Jewish writers themselves, but what is conjectural. These psalms do not seem to be composed all by the same hand, much less all at the same time. Four of them are expressly ascribed to David, and one is said to be designed for Solomon, and perhaps penned by him; yet cxvii. and cxviii. seem to be of a much later date. Some of them are calculated for the closet (as cxix. cxlvi.), some for the family (as cxvii. cxviii.), some for the public assembly (as cxlii. cxlvii.), and some occasional, as cxv. cxviii. So that it should seem, they had not this title from the author, but from the publisher. Some conjecture that they are so called from their singular excellency (as the song of songs, so the song of degrees, is a most excellent song, in the highest degree), others from the tune they were set to, or the musical instruments that were sung to, or the raising of the voice in singing them. Some think they were sung on the fifteen steps or stairs, by which they went up from the outward court of the temple to the inner; others at so many stages of the people's journey, when they returned out of captivity. I shall only observe, 1. That they are all short psalms, all but one very short (three of them have but three verses apiece), and that they are placed next to Ps. cxix. which is by much the longest of all. Now as that was one psalm divided into many parts, so these were many psalms, which, being short, were sometimes sung all together, and made, as it were, one psalm, observing only a pause between each; as many steps make one pair of stairs. 2. That, in the composition of them, we frequently meet with the figure they call climax, or an ascent the preceding word repeated, and then rising to something further, as cxix. "With him that hated peace, I peace." cxviii. "Whence cometh my help; my help cometh." "He that keepeth thee shall not slumber; he that keepeth Israel." cxvii. "Within thy gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is builded." cxvii. "Untill that he have mercy upon us. Have mercy upon us. And the like in most of them, if not all. Perhaps for one of these reasons they are called songs of degrees.

This psalm is supposed to have been penned by David upon occasion of Doeg's accusing him and the priests to Saul, because it is like lili, which was penned on that occasion, and because the psalmist complains of his being driven out of the congregation of the Lord and his being forced among barbarous people. I. He prays to God to deliver him from the mischief designed him by false and malicious tongues, ver. 1, 2. II. He threatens the judgments of God against such, ver. 3, 4. III. He complains of his wicked neighbours that were quarrelsome and vexatious, ver. 5-7. In singing this psalm we may comfort ourselves in reference to the scourge of the tongue, when at any time we fall so justly under the lash of it, that better than we have smarter from it.

A song of degrees.

IN my distress I cried unto thee, O LORD, and he heard me. 2 Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue. 3 What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue? 4 Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper.

Here is, I. Deliverance from a false tongue obtained by prayer. David records his own experience of this.

1. He was brought into distress, into great distress, by *lying lips and a deceitful tongue*. There were those that sought his ruin, and had almost effected it, by lying. (1.) By telling lies to him. They flattered him with professions and protestations of friendship, and promises of kindness and service to him, that they might the more securely and without suspicion carry on their designs against him, and might have an opportunity, by betraying his counsels, to do him a mischief. They smiled in his face and kissed him, even when they were aiming to smite him under the fifth rib. The most dangerous enemies, and those

which it is most hard to guard against, are such as carry on their malicious designs under the colour of friendship. The Lord deliver every good man from such lying lips. 2) By telling lies of him. They forged false accusations against him and *laid to his charge things that he knew not*. This has often been the lot not only of the innocent, but of the excellent ones, of the earth, who have been greatly distressed by lying lips, and have not only had their names blackened and made odious by calumnies in conversation, but their lives, and all that is dear to them in this world, endangered by false-witness-bearing in judgment. David was herein a type of Christ, who was distressed by lying lips and deceitful tongues.

2. In this distress he had recourse to God by faithful and fervent prayer: *I cried unto the Lord*. Having no fence against false tongues, he appealed to him who has all men's hearts in his hand, who has power over the consciences of bad men, and can, when he pleases, bridle their tongues. His prayer was, *Deliver my soul, O Lord! from lying lips*, that my enemies may not by these cursed methods work my ruin." He that had prayed so earnestly to be kept from lying (cxix. 29) and hated it so heartily in himself (v. 163) might with the more confidence pray to be kept from being belied by others, and from the ill consequences of it.

3. He obtained a gracious answer to this prayer. God heard him; so that his enemies, though they carried their designs very far, were baffled at last, and could not prevail to do him the mischief they intended. The God of truth is, and will be, the protector of his people from lying lips, xxxvii. 6.

II. The doom of a false tongue foretold by v. 3, 4. As God will preserve his people from this mischievous generation, so he will reckon with their enemies, xii. 3, 7. The threatening is addressed to the sinner himself, for the awakening of his conscience, if he have any left: "Consider *what shall be given unto thee, and what shall be done unto thee*, by the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, *thou false tongue*." Surely sinners durst not do as they do if they knew, and would be persuaded to think, what will be in the end thereof. Let liars consider what shall be given to them: *Sharp arrows of the Almighty, with coals of juniper*, that is, they will fall and be for ever under the wrath of God, and will be made miserable by the tokens of his displeasure, which will fly swiftly like arrows, and will strike the sinner ere he is aware and when he sees not who hurts him. This is threatened against liars, lxiv. 7. *God shall shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded*. They set God at a distance from them, but from afar his arrows can reach them. They are sharp arrows, and arrows of the mighty, the Almighty; for they will pierce through the strongest armour and strike deep to the hardest heart. The terrors of the

Lord are his arrows (Job vi. 4), and his wrath is compared to burning coals of juniper, which do not flame or crackle, like thorns under a pot, but have a vehement heat, and keep fire very long (some say, a year round) even when they seem to be gone out. This is the portion of the false tongue; for all that love and make a lie shall have their portion in the lake that burns eternally, Rev. xxii. 15.

5 Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar! 6 My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace. 7 I am for peace: but when I speak, they are for war.

The psalmist here complains of the bad neighbourhood into which he was driven; and some apply the two foregoing verses to this: "What shall the deceitful tongue give, what shall it do to those that lie open to it? What shall a man get by living among such malicious deceitful men? Nothing but *sharp arrows and coals of juniper*," all the mischiefs of a false and spiteful tongue, lvii. 4. *Woe is me*, says David, that I am forced to dwell among such, *that I sojourn in Mesech and Kedar*. Not that David dwelt in the country of Mesech or Kedar; we never find him so far off from his own native country; but he dwelt among rude and barbarous people, like the inhabitants of Mesech and Kedar: as, when we would describe an ill neighbourhood, we say, *Woe dwell among Turks and heathens*. This made him cry out, *Woe is me!* 1. He was forced to live at a distance from the ordinances of God. While he was in banishment, he looked upon himself as a sojourner, never at home but when he was near God's altars; and he cries out, "*Woe is me* that my sojourning is prolonged, that I cannot get home to my resting-place, but am still kept at a distance!" So some read it. Note, A good man cannot think himself at home while he is banished from God's ordinances and has not them within reach. And it is a great grief to all that love God to be without the means of grace and of communion with God: when they are under a force of that kind they cannot but cry out, as David here, *Woe is me!* 2. He was forced to live among wicked people, who were, upon many accounts, troublesome to him. He *dwelt in the tents of Kedar*, where the shepherds were probably in an ill name for being litigious, like the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot. It is a very grievous burden to a good man to be cast into, and kept in, the company of those whom he hopes to be for ever separated from (like Lot in Sodom; 2 Pet. ii. 8); to dwell long with such is grievous indeed, for they are thorns, vexing, and scratching, and tearing, and they will show the old enmity that is in the *seed of the serpent* against the *seed of the woman*. Those that David dwelt with were such as not only hated him, but hated peace, and pro-

claimed war with it, who might write on their weapons of war not *Sic sequimur pacem*—*Thus we aim at peace*, but *Sic persequimur*—*Thus we persecute*. Perhaps Saul's court was the Mesech and Kedar in which David dwelt, and Saul was the man he meant that hated peace, whom David studied to oblige and could not, but the more service he did him the more exasperated he was against him. See here, (1.) The character of a very good man in David, who could truly say, though he was a man of war, *I am for peace*; for living peaceably with all men and unpeaceably with none. *I peace* (so it is in the original); "I love peace and pursue peace; my disposition is to peace and my delight is in it. I pray for peace and strive for peace, will do any thing, submit to any thing, part with any thing, in reason, for peace. *I am for peace*, and have made it to appear that I am so." *The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable*. (2.) The character of the worst of bad men in David's enemies, who would pick quarrels with those that were most peaceably disposed: "*When I speak they are for war*;" and the more forward for war the more they find me inclined to peace." He spoke with all the respect and kindness that could be, proposed methods of accommodation, spoke reason, spoke love; but they would not so much as hear him patiently, but cried out, "To arms! to arms!" so fierce and implacable were they, and so bent to mischief. Such were Christ's enemies: for his love they were his adversaries, and for his good words, and good works, they stoned him. If we meet with such enemies, we must not think it strange, nor love peace the less for our seeking it in vain. *Be not overcome of evil*, no, not of such evil as this, but, even when thus tried, still try to *overcome evil with good*.

PSALM CXXI.

Some call this the soldier's psalm, and think it was penned in the camp, when David was hazarding his life in the high-places of the field, and thus trusted God to cover his head in the day of battle. Others call it the traveller's psalm (for there is nothing in it of military dangers) and think David penned it when he was going abroad, and designed it pro vehiculo—for the carriage, for a good man's convoy and companion in a journey or voyage. But we need not thus appropriate it; wherever we are, at home or abroad, we are exposed to danger more than we are aware of; and this psalm directs and encourages us to repose ourselves and our confidence in God, and by faith to put ourselves under his protection and commit ourselves to his care, which we must do, with an entire resignation and satisfaction, in singing this psalm. I. David here assures himself of help from God, ver. 1, 2. II. He assures others of it, ver. 3—8.

A song of degrees.

I WILL lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. 2 My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth. 3 He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. 4 Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. 5 The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand. 6 The sun shall not smite thee by day,

nor the moon by night. 7 The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. 8 The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

This psalm teaches us,

I. To stay ourselves upon God as a God of power and a God all-sufficient for us. David did so and found the benefit of it. 1. We must not rely upon creatures, upon men and means, instruments and second causes, nor make flesh our arm: "*Shall I lift up my eyes to the hills?*"—so some read it. "Does my help come thence? Shall I depend upon the powers of the earth, upon the strength of the hills, upon princes and great men, who, like hills, fill the earth, and hold up their heads towards heaven? No; in vain is salvation hoped for from hills and mountains, Jer. iii. 23. I never expect help to come from them; my confidence is in God only." *We must lift up our eyes above the hills* (so some read it); we must look beyond instruments to God, who makes them that to us which they are. 2. We must see all our help laid up in God, in his power and goodness, his providence and grace; and from him we must expect it to come: "*My help comes from the Lord*;" the help I desire is what he sends, and from him I expect it in his own way and time. If he do not help, no creature can help; if he do, no creature can hinder, can hurt." 3. We must fetch in help from God, by faith in his promises, and a due regard to all his institutions: "*I will lift up my eyes to the hills*" (probably he meant the hills on which the temple was built, Mount Moriah, and the holy hill of Zion, where the ark of the covenant, the oracle, and the altars were); "I will have an eye to the special presence of God in his church, and with his people (his presence by promise) and not only to his common presence." When he was at a distance he would look towards the sanctuary (xxviii. 2; xlii. 6); thence comes our help, from the word and prayer, from the secret of his tabernacle. *My help cometh from the Lord* (so the word is, v. 2), *from before the Lord, or from the sight and presence of the Lord*. "This (says Dr. Hammond) may refer to Christ incarnate, with whose humanity the Deity being inseparably united, God is always present with him, and, through him, with us, for whom, sitting at God's right hand, he constantly maketh intercession." Christ is called the *angel of his presence*, that saved his people. Isa. lxi. 9. 4. We must encourage our confidence in God with this that he made heaven and earth, and he who did that can do any thing. He made the world out of nothing himself alone, by a word's speaking, in a little time, and *all very good*, very excellent and beautiful; and therefore, how great so ever our straits and difficulties are, he has

power sufficient for our succour and relief. He that made heaven and earth is sovereign Lord of all the hosts of both, and can make use of them as he pleases for the help of his people, and restrain them when he pleases from hurting his people.

II. To comfort ourselves in God when our difficulties and dangers are greatest. It is here promised that if we put our trust in God, and keep in the way of our duty, we shall be safe under his protection, so that no real evil, no mere evil, shall happen to us, nor any affliction but what God sees good for us and will do us good by. 1. God himself has undertaken to be our protector: *The Lord is thy keeper, v. 5.* Whatever charge he gives his angels to keep his people, he has not hereby discharged himself, so that, whether every particular saint has an angel for his guardian or no, we are sure he has God himself for his guardian. It is infinite wisdom that contrives, and infinite power that works, the safety of those that have put themselves under God's protection. Those must needs be well kept that have *the Lord* for their keeper. If, by affliction, they be made his prisoners, yet still he is their keeper. 2. The same that is the protector of the church in general is engaged for the preservation of every particular believer, the same wisdom, the same power, the same promises. *He that keepeth Israel (v. 4) is thy keeper, v. 5.* The shepherd of the flock is the shepherd of every sheep, and will take care that not one, even of the little ones, shall perish. 3. He is a wakeful watchful keeper: "*He that keepeth Israel, that keepeth thee, O Israelite! shall neither slumber nor sleep; he never did, nor ever will, for he is never weary; he not only does not sleep, but he does not so much as slumber; he has not the least inclination to sleep.*" 4. He not only protects those whom he is the keeper of, but he refreshes them: *He is their shade.* The comparison was a great deal of gracious condescension in God; the eternal Being who is infinite substance is what he is in order that he may speak sensible comfort to his people, promises to be their *umbra*—their *shadow*, to keep as close to them as the shadow does to the body, and to shelter them from the scorching heat, as *the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, Isa. xxxii. 2.* Under this shadow they may sit with delight and assurance, Cant. i. 3. 5. He is always near to his people for their protection and refreshment, and never at a distance; he is their *keeper and shade on their right hand*; so that he is never far to seek. The right hand is the working hand; let them but turn themselves dexterously to their duty, and they shall find God ready to them, to assist them and give them success, Ps. xvi. 8. 6. He is not only at their right hand, but he will also *keep the feet of his saints, 1 Sam. ii. 9.* He will have an eye upon them in their motions: *He will not suffer thy foot to be moved.* God will provide that his

people shall not be tempted above what they are able, shall not fall into sin, though they may be very near it (lxxiii. 2, 23), shall not fall into trouble, though there be many endeavouring to undermine them by fraud or overthrow them by force. He will keep them from being frightened, as we are when we slip or stumble and are ready to fall. 7. He will protect them from all the malignant influences of the heavenly bodies (v. 6): *The sun shall not smite thee with his heat by day nor the moon with her cold and moisture by night.* The sun and moon are great blessings to mankind, and yet (such a sad change has sin made in the creation) even the sun and moon, though worshipped by a great part of mankind, are often instruments of hurt and distemper to human bodies; God by them often smites us; but his favour shall interpose so that they shall not damage his people. He will keep them *night and day* (Isa. xxvii. 3), as he kept Israel in the wilderness by a *pillar of cloud by day*, which screened them from the heat of the sun, and *of fire by night*, which probably diffused a genial warmth over the whole camp, that they might not be prejudiced by the cold and damp of the night, their father Jacob having complained (Gen. xxxi. 40) that *by day the drought consumed him and the frost by night.* It may be understood figuratively: "Thou shalt not be hurt either by the open assaults of thy enemies, which are as visible as the scorching beams of the sun, or by their secret treacherous attempts, which are like the insensible insinuations of the cold by night." 8. His protection will make them safe in every respect: "*The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil, the evil of sin and the evil of trouble.* He shall prevent the evil thou fearest, and shall sanctify, remove, or lighten, the evil thou feelest. He will keep thee from doing evil (2 Cor. xiii. 7), and so far from suffering evil that whatever affliction happens to thee there shall be no evil in it. Even that which kills shall not hurt." 9. It is the spiritual life, especially, that God will take under his protection: *He shall preserve thy soul.* All souls are his; and the soul is the man, and therefore he will with a peculiar care preserve them, that they be not defiled by sin and disturbed by affliction. He will keep them by keeping us in the possession of them; and he will preserve them from perishing eternally. 10. He will keep us in all our ways: "*He shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in.* Thou shalt be under his protection in all thy journeys and voyages, outward-bound or homeward-bound, as he kept Israel in the wilderness, in their removes and rests. He will prosper thee in all thy affairs at home and abroad, in the beginning and in the conclusion of them. He will keep thee in life and death, thy going out and going on while thou livest and thy coming in when thou diest, going out to thy labour in the morning of thy days and coming home to thy rest when

the evening of old age calls thee in," civ. 23. 11. He will continue his care over us *from this time forth and even for evermore*. It is a protection for life, never out of date. "He will be thy guide *even unto death*, and will then hide thee in the grave, hide thee in heaven. He will *preserve thee in his heavenly kingdom*." God will protect his church and his saints always, *even to the end of the world*. The Spirit, who is their preserver and comforter, shall abide with them for ever.

PSALM CXXII.

This psalm seems to have been penned by David for the use of the people of Israel, when they came up to Jerusalem to worship at the three solemn feasts. It was in David's time that Jerusalem was first chosen to be the city where God would record his name. It being a new thing, this, among other means, was used to bring the people to be in love with Jerusalem, as the holy city, though it was but the other day in the hands of the Jebusites. Observe, I. The joy with which they were to go up to Jerusalem, ver. 1, 2. II. The great esteem they were to have of Jerusalem, ver. 3-5. III. The great concern they were to have for Jerusalem, and the prayers they were to put up for its welfare, ver. 6-9. In singing this psalm we must have an eye to the gospel church, which is called the "Jerusalem that is from above."

A song of degrees of David.

I WAS glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD. 2 Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. 3 Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together: 4 Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD. 5 For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.

Here we have,

I. The pleasure which David and other pious Israelites took in approaching to and attending upon God in public ordinances, v. 1, 2.

1. The invitation to them was very welcome. David was himself glad, and would have every Israelite to say that he *was glad, when he was called upon to go up to the house of the Lord*. Note, (1.) It is the will of God that we should worship him in concert, that many should join together to wait upon him in public ordinances. We ought to worship God in our own houses, but that is not enough; we must *go into the house of the Lord*, to pay our homage to him there, and *not forsake the assembling of ourselves together*. (2.) We should not only agree with one another, but excite and stir up one another, to go to worship God in public. *Let us go; not, "Do you go and pray for us, and we will stay at home;" but, "We will go also, Zech. viii. 21. Not, "Do you go before, and we will follow at our leisure;" or, "We will go first, and you shall come after us;" but, "Let us go together, for the honour of God and for our mutual edification and encouragement."* We ourselves are slow and backward, and others are so too, and therefore we should thus quicken and sharpen one another to that which is good, as iron sharpens iron. (3.) Those that rejoice in God will rejoice in

calls and opportunities to wait upon him. David himself, though he had as little need of a spur to his zeal in religious exercises as any, yet was so far from taking it as an affront that he was glad of it as a kindness when he was called upon to go up to the house of the Lord with the meanest of his subjects. We should desire our Christian friends, when they have any good work in hand, to call for us and take us along with them.

2. The prospect of them was very pleasing. They speak it with a holy triumph (v. 2): *Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem!* Those that came out of the country, when they found the journey tedious, comforted themselves with this, that they should be in Jerusalem shortly, and that would make amends for all the fatigues of their journey. We shall stand there as servants; it is desirable to have a place in Jerusalem, though it be among those that stand by (Zech. iii. 7), though it be the door-keeper's place, Ps. lxxxiv. 10. We have now got a resting-place for the ark, and where it is there will we be.

II. The praises of Jerusalem, as xlviii. 12.

1. It is the beautiful city, not only for situation, but for building. It is built into a city, the houses not scattered, but contiguous, and the streets fair and spacious. It is built uniform, compact together, the houses strengthening and supporting one another. Though the city was divided into the higher and lower town, yet the Jebusites being driven out, and it being entirely in the possession of God's people, it is said to be compact together. It was a type of the gospel-church, which is compact together in holy love and Christian communion, so that it is all as one city.

2. It is the holy city, v. 4. It is the place where all Israel meet one another: *Thither the tribes go up*, from all parts of the country, as one man, under the character of the tribes of the Lord, in obedience to his command. It is the place appointed for their general rendezvous; and they come together, (1.) To receive instruction from God; they come to the testimony of Israel, to hear what God had to say to them and to consult his oracle. (2.) To ascribe the glory to God, to give thanks to the name of the Lord, which we have all reason to do, especially those that have the testimony of Israel among them. If God speak to us by his word, we have reason to answer him by our thanksgivings. See on what errand we go to public worship, to give thanks.

3. It is the royal city (v. 5): *There are set thrones of judgment*. Therefore the people had reason to be in love with Jerusalem, because justice was administered there by a man after God's own heart. The civil interests of the people were as well secured as their ecclesiastical concerns; and very happy they were in their courts of judicature, which were erected in Jerusalem, as with us in Westminster Hall. Observe, What a goodly sight it was to see the testimony of Israel and the

thrones of judgment such near neighbours, and they are good neighbours, which may greatly befriend one another. Let the testimony of Israel direct the thrones of judgment, and the thrones of judgment protect the testimony of Israel.

6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. 7 Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. 8 For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, *Peace be within thee.* 9 Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good.

Here, I. David calls upon others to wish well to Jerusalem, *v. 6, 7. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem*, for the welfare of it, for all good to it, particularly for the uniting of the inhabitants among themselves and their preservation from the incursions of enemies. This we may truly desire, that in the peace thereof we may have peace; and this we must earnestly pray for, for it is the gift of God, and for it he will be enquired of. Those that can do nothing else for the peace of Jerusalem can pray for it, which is something more than showing their good-will; it is the appointed way of fetching in mercy. The peace and welfare of the gospel church, particularly in our land, is to be earnestly desired and prayed for by every one of us. Now, 1. We are here encouraged in our prayers for Jerusalem's peace: *Those shall prosper that love thee.* We must pray for Jerusalem, not out of custom, nor for fashion's sake, but out of a principle of love to God's government of man and man's worship of God; and, in seeking the public welfare, we seek our own, for so well does God *love the gates of Zion* that he will love all those that do love them, and therefore they cannot but prosper; at least their souls shall prosper by the ordinances they so dearly love. 2. We are here directed in our prayers for it and words are put into our mouths (*v. 7*): *Peace be within thy walls.* He teaches us to pray, (1.) For all the inhabitants in general, all within the walls, from the least to the greatest. Peace be in thy fortifications; let them never be attacked, or, if they be, let them never be taken, but be an effectual security to the city. (2.) For the princes and rulers especially: Let *prosperity be in the palaces of the great men* that sit at the helm and have the direction of public affairs; for, if they prosper, it will be well for the public. The poorer sort are apt to envy the prosperity of the palaces, but they are here taught to pray for it.

II. He resolves that whatever others do he will approve himself a faithful friend to Jerusalem, 1. In his prayers: "*I will now say, now I see the tribes so cheerfully resorting hither to the testimony of Israel, and the matter settled, that Jerusalem must be the place where God will record his name, now I will*

say, Peace be within thee." He did not say, "Let others pray for the public peace, the priests and the prophets, whose business it is, and the people, that have nothing else to do, and I will fight for it and rule for it." No; "*I will pray for it too.*" 2. In his endeavours, with which he will second his prayers: "*I will, to the utmost of my power, seek thy good.*" Whatever lies within the sphere of our activity to do for the public good we must do it, else we are not sincere in praying for it. Now it might be said, No thanks to David to be so solicitous for the welfare of Jerusalem; it was his own city, and the interests of his family were lodged in it. This is true; yet he professes that this was not the reason why he was in such care for the welfare of Jerusalem, but it proceeded from the warm regard he had, (1.) To the communion of saints: It is *for my brethren and companions' sakes*, that is, for the sake of all true-hearted Israelites, whom I look upon as my brethren (so he calls them, 1 Chron. xxviii. 2) and who have often been my companions in the worship of God, which has knit my heart to them. (2.) To the ordinances of God: He had *set his affection to the house of his God* (1 Chron. xxix. 3); he took a great pleasure in public worship, and for that reason would pray for the good of Jerusalem. Then our concern for the public welfare is right when it is the effect of a sincere love to God's institutions and his faithful worshippers.

PSALM CXXIII.

This psalm was penned at a time when the church of God was brought low and trampled upon; some think it was when the Jews were captives in Babylon, though that was not the only time that they were insulted over by the proud. The psalmist begins as if he spoke for himself only (*ver. 1*), but presently speaks in the name of the church. Here is, I. Their expectation of mercy from God, *ver. 1, 2*. II. Their plea for mercy with God, *ver. 3, 4*. In singing it we must have our eye up to God's favour with a holy concern, and then an eye down to men's reproach with a holy contempt.

A song of degrees.

UNTO thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens. 2 Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us. 3 Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt. 4 Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud.

We have here,

I. The solemn profession which God's people make of faith and hope in God, *v. 1, 2*. Observe, 1. The title here given to God: O thou that dwellest in the heavens. Our Lord Jesus has taught us, in prayer, to have an eye to God as our *Father in heaven*; not that

he is confined there, but there especially he manifests his glory, as the King in his court. Heaven is a place of prospect and a place of power; he that dwells there beholds thence all the calamities of his people and thence can send to save them. Sometimes God seems to have forsaken the earth, and the enemies of God's people ask, *Where is now your God?* But then they can say with comfort, *Our God is in the heavens. O thou that sittest in the heavens* (so some), *sittest as Judge there; for the Lord has prepared his throne in the heavens*, and to that throne injured innocence may appeal. 2. The regard here had to God. The psalmist himself *lifted up his eyes* to him. The eyes of a good man are *ever towards the Lord*, xxv. 15. In every prayer we lift up our soul, the eye of our soul, to God, especially in trouble, which was the case here. *The eyes of the people waited on the Lord*, v. 2. We find mercy coming towards a people *when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, are towards the Lord*, Zech. ix. 1. The eyes of the body are heaven-ward. *Os homini sublime dedit—To man he gave an erect mien*, to teach us which way to direct the eyes of the mind. *Our eyes wait on the Lord*, the eye of desire and prayer, the begging eye, and the eye of dependence, hope, and expectation, the longing eye. Our eyes must wait upon God as *the Lord, and our God, until that he have mercy upon us*. We desire mercy from him, we hope he will show us mercy, and we will continue our attendance on him till the mercy come. This is illustrated (v. 2) by a similitude: Our eyes are to God as *the eyes of a servant, and handmaid, to the hand of their master and mistress*. The eyes of a servant are, (1.) To his master's directing hand, expecting that he will appoint him his work, and cut it out for him, and show him how he must do it. *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* (2.) To his supplying hand. Servants look to their master, or their mistress, for their portion of meat in due season, Prov. xxxi. 15. And to God must we look for daily bread, for grace sufficient; from him we must receive it thankfully. (3.) To his assisting hand. If the servant cannot do his work himself, where must he look for help but to his master? And in the strength of the Lord God we must go forth and go on. (4.) To his protecting hand. If the servant meet with opposition in his work, if he be questioned for what he does, if he be wronged and injured, who should bear him out and right him, but his master that set him on work? The people of God, when they are persecuted, may appeal to their Master, *We are thine; save us*. (5.) To his correcting hand. If the servant has provoked his master to beat him, he does not call for help against his master, but looks at the hand that strikes him, till it shall say, "It is enough; I will not contend for ever." The people of God were now under his rebukes; and whether should they turn but to him that smote

them? Isa. ix. 13. To whom should the make supplication but to their Judge? They will not do as Hagar did, who ran away from her mistress when she put some hardship upon her (Gen. xvi. 6), but they submit themselves to and humble themselves under God's mighty hand. (6.) To his rewarding hand. The servant expects his wages, *his well-done*, from his master. Hypocrites have their eye to the world's hand; and thence *they have their reward* (Matt. vi. 2); but true Christians have their eye to God as their rewarder.

II. The humble address which God's people present to him in their calamitous condition (v. 3, 4), wherein, 1. They sue for mercy, not prescribing to God what he shall do for them, nor pleading any merit of their own, why he should do it for them, but, *Have mercy upon us, O Lord! have mercy upon us*. We find little mercy with men; their tender mercies are cruel; there are cruel mockings. But this is our comfort, that *with the Lord there is mercy* and we need desire no more to relieve us, and make us easy, than the mercy of God. Whatever the troubles of the church are, God's mercy is a sovereign remedy. 2. They set forth their grievances: *We are exceedingly filled with contempt*. Reproach is the wound, the burden, they complain of. Observe, (1.) Who were reproached: "We, who have our eyes up to thee." Those who are owned of God are often despised and trampled on by the world. Some translate the words which we render, *those that are at ease, and the proud*, so as to signify the persons that are scorned and contemned. "Our soul is troubled to see how those that are at peace, and the excellent ones, are scorned and despised." The saints are a peaceable people and yet are abused (xxxv. 20), the excellent ones of the earth and yet undervalued, Lam. iv. 1, 2. (2.) Who did reproach them. Taking the words as we read them, they were the epicures who lived at ease, carnal sensual people, Job xii. 5. The scoffers are such as walk after their own lusts and serve their own bellies, and the proud such as set God himself at defiance and had a high opinion of themselves; they trampled on God's people, thinking they magnified themselves by vilifying them. (3.) To what degree they were reproached: "*We are filled*, we are surfeited with it. *Our soul is exceedingly filled with it*." The enemies thought they could never jeer them enough, nor say enough to make them despicable; and they could not but lay it to heart; it was a sword in their bones, Ps. xlii. 10. Note, [1.] Scorning and contempt have been and are, and are likely to be, the lot of God's people in this world. Ishmael mocked Isaac, which is called *persecuting* him; and so it is now, Gal. iv. 29. [2.] In reference to the scorn and contempt of men it is matter of comfort that there is mercy with God, mercy to our good names when they are barba-

usly used. Hear, O our God! for we are
spised.

PSALM CXXIV.

David penned this psalm (we suppose) upon occasion of some great deliverance which God wrought for him and his people from some very threatening danger, which was likely to have involved them all in ruin, whether by foreign invasion, or intestine insurrection, is not certain; whatever it was he seems to have been himself much affected, and very desirous to affect others, with the goodness of God, in making a way for them to escape. To him he is careful to give all the glory, and takes none to himself as conquerors usually do. I. He here magnifies the greatness of the danger they were in, and of the ruin they were at the brink of, ver. 1-5. II. He gives God the glory of their escape, ver. 6, 7, compared with ver. 1, 2. III. He takes encouragement thence to trust in God, ver. 8. In singing this psalm, besides the application of it to any particular deliverance wrought for us and our people, in our days and the days of our fathers, we may have in our thoughts the great work of our redemption by Jesus Christ, by which we were rescued from the powers of darkness.

A song of degrees of David.

If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say; 2 If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us: 3 Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us: 4 Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul: 5 Then the proud waters had gone over our soul. The people of God, being here called upon to praise God for their deliverance, are to take notice,

I. Of the malice of men, by which they were reduced to the very brink of ruin. Let Israel say that there was but a step between them and death: the more desperate the disease appears to have been the more does the skill of the Physician appear in the cure. Observe, Whence the threatening danger came: *Men rose up against us*, creatures of our own kind, and yet bent upon our ruin. *Homo mini lupus—Man is a wolf to man*. No marvel that the red dragon, the roaring lion, should seek to swallow us up; but that men should thirst after the blood of men, Absalom after the blood of his own father, that a man should be drunk with the blood of infants, is what, with St. John, we may wonder at with great admiration. From men we may expect humanity, yet there are those whose *tender mercies are cruel*. But what has the matter with these men? Why *their wrath was kindled against us* (v. 3); something or other they were angry at, and then no less would serve than the destruction of those they had conceived a displeasure against. *Wrath is cruel and anger is outrageous*. Their wrath was kindled as fire ready to consume us. They were proud; and *the wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor*. They were rising in their attempt; they *rose up against us*, rose in rebellion, with a resolution to *swallow us up alive*. 2. How far it went, and how fatal it would have been if it had gone a little further: "We should have been devoured as a lamb by a lion, not only slain, but *swallowed up*," so that there would have been no relics of us remaining, swallowed

up with so much haste, ere we were aware, that we should have gone down alive to the pit. We should have been deluged as the low grounds by a land-flood or the sands by a high spring-tide." This similitude he dwells upon, with the ascents which bespeak this a song of degrees, or risings, like the rest. *The waters had overwhelmed us*. What of us? Why *the stream had gone over our souls*, our lives, our comforts, all that is dear to us. What waters? Why *the proud waters*. God suffers the enemies of his people sometimes to prevail very far against them, that his own power may appear the more illustrious in their deliverance.

II. Of the goodness of God, by which they were rescued from the very brink of ruin. "*The Lord was on our side*; and, if he had not been so, we should have been undone." 1. "God was on our side; he took our part, espoused our cause, and appeared for us. He was our helper, and a very present help, a help on our side, nigh at hand. He was with us, not only for us, but among us, and commander-in-chief of our forces." 2. That God was Jehovah; there the emphasis lies. "It had not been Jehovah himself, a God of infinite power and perfection, that had undertaken our deliverance, our enemies would have overpowered us." Happy the people, therefore, whose God is Jehovah, a God all-sufficient. Let Israel say this, to his honour, and resolve never to forsake him.

6 Blessed be the LORD, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth. 7 Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped. 8 Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

Here the psalmist further magnifies the great deliverance God had lately wrought for them.

I. That their hearts might be the more enlarged in thankfulness to him (v. 6): *Blessed be the Lord*. God is the author of all our deliverances, and therefore he must have the glory of them. We rob him of his due if we do not return thanks to him. And we are the more obliged to praise him because we had such a narrow escape. We were delivered, 1. Like a lamb out of the very jaws of a beast of prey: God *has not given us as a prey to their teeth*, intimating that they had no power over God's people but what was given them from above. They could not be a prey to their teeth unless God gave them up, and therefore they were rescued, because God would not suffer them to be ruined. 2. Like a bird, a little bird (the word signifies a sparrow), out of the snare of the fowler. The enemies are very subtle and spiteful; they lay snares for God's people, to bring them into sin and trouble, and to hold them there. Sometimes they seem to have prevailed so far as to gain their point. God's people are

taken in the snare, and are as unable to help themselves out as any weak and silly bird is; and then is God's time to appear for their relief, when all other friends fail; then God breaks the snare, and turns the counsel of the enemies into foolishness: *The snare is broken and so we are delivered.* Isaac was saved when he lay ready to be sacrificed. *Jehovah-ireh—in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.*

II. That their hearts, and the hearts of others, might be the more encouraged to trust in God in the like dangers (v. 8): *Our help is in the name of the Lord.* David had directed us (cxxx. 2) to depend upon God for help as to our personal concerns—*My help is in the name of the Lord;* here as to the concerns of the public—*Our help is so.* It is a comfort to all that lay the interests of God's Israel near their hearts that Israel's God is the same that made the world, and therefore will have a church in the world, and can secure that church in times of the greatest danger and distress. In him therefore let the church's friends put their confidence, and they shall not be put to confusion.

PSALM CXXV.

This short psalm may be summed up in those words of the prophet (Isa. iii. 10, 11), "Say you to the righteous, It shall be well with him. Woe to the wicked, the blessing and the curse, set before us often in the psalms, as well as in the law and the prophets. 1. It is certainly well with the people of God; for, 1. They have the promises of a good God that they shall be fixed (ver. 1), and safe (ver. 2), and not always under the hatches, ver. 3. 2. They have the prayers of a good man, which shall be heard for them, ver. 4. 3. It is certainly ill with the wicked, and particularly with the apostates, ver. 5. Some of the Jewish rabbies are of opinion that it has reference to the days of the Messiah; however, we that are members of the gospel-church may certainly, in singing this psalm, take the comfort of these promises, and the more so if we stand in awe of the threatening.

A song of degrees.

THEY that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. 2 As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about his people from henceforth even for ever. 3 For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.

Here are three very precious promises made to the people of God, which, though they are designed to secure the welfare of the church in general, may be applied by particular believers to themselves, as other promises of this nature may. Here is,

I. The character of God's people, to whom these promises belong. Many call themselves God's people who have no part nor lot in this matter. But those shall have the benefit of them and may take the comfort of them, (1.) Who are *righteous* (v. 3), righteous before God, righteous to God, and righteous to all men, for his sake justified and sanctified. (2.) Who *trust in the Lord*, who depend upon his care and devote themselves to his honour. All that deal with God must deal upon trust, and he will give com-

fort to those only that give credit to him, and make it to appear they do so by quitting other confidences, and venturing to the utmost for God. The closer our expectations are confined to God the higher our expectations may be raised from him.

II. The promises themselves.

1. That their hearts shall be established in faith: those minds shall be truly stayed that are stayed on God: *They shall be as Mount Zion.* The church in general is called *Mount Zion* (Heb. xii. 22), and it shall in this respect be like *Mount Zion*, it shall be built upon a rock, and its interests shall be so well secured that *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* The stability of the church is the satisfaction of all its well-wishers. Particular persons, who trust in God, shall be established (Ps. cxii. 7); their faith shall be their fixation, Isa. vii. 9. *They shall be as Mount Zion* which is firm as it is a mountain supported by providence, much more as a holy mountain supported by promise. (1.) *They cannot be removed* by the prince of the power of the air nor by all his subtlety and strength. They cannot be removed from their integrity nor from their confidence in God. (2.) *They abide for ever* in that grace which is the earnest of their everlasting continuance in glory.

2. That, committing themselves to God, they shall be safe, under his protection, from all the insults of their enemies, as Jerusalem had a natural fastness and fortification *the mountains that were round about it*, v. 2. Those mountains not only sheltered it from winds and tempests, and broke the force of them, but made it also very difficult of access for an enemy; such a defence is God's providence to his people. Observe, (1.) The compass of it: *The Lord is round about his people* on every side. There is no gap in the hedge of protection which he makes round about his people, at which the enemy, who goes about them, seeking to do them a mischief, can find entrance, Job. i. 10. (2.) The continuance of it—*henceforth even for ever*. Mountains may moulder and come to nought, and rocks be removed out of their place (Job. xiv. 18), but God's covenant with his people cannot be broken (Isa. liv. 10) nor his care of them cease. Their being said to stand fast *for ever* (v. 1), and here to have God *round about them for ever*, intimates that the promises of the stability and security of God's people will have their full accomplishment in their everlasting state. In heaven they shall stand fast for ever, shall be as pillars in the temple of our God and go no more out (Rev. iii. 12), and there God himself, with his glory and favour, will be round about them for ever.

3. That their troubles shall last no longer than their strength will serve to bear them up under them, v. 3. (1.) It is supposed that the rod of the wicked may come, may fall upon the lot of the righteous. The rod of the power may oppress them; the rod of the anger may vex and torment them. It may

upon their persons, their estates, their liberties, their families, their names, any thing that falls to their lot, only it cannot reach their souls. (2.) It is promised that, though they may come upon their lot, it shall not rest there; it shall not continue so long as the enemies design, and as the people of God fear, but God will cut the work short in righteousness, so short that even *with the temptation he will make a way for them to escape*. (3.) It is considered as a reason of this promise that if the trouble should continue ever-long the righteous themselves would be tempted to *put forth their hands to iniquity*, to join with wicked people in their wicked practices, to say as they say and do as they do. There is danger lest, being long persecuted for their religion, at length they grow weary of it and willing to give it up, and, being kept long in expectation of promised mercies, they begin to distrust the promise, and to think of casting God off, upon suspicion of his having cast them off. See lxxiii. 14. Note, God considers the frame of his people, and will proportion their trials to their strength by the care of his providence, as well their strength to their trials by the power of his grace. *Oppression makes a wise man mad*, especially if it continue long; therefore *for the elect's sake* the days shall be shortened, that, whatever becomes of their lot in this world, they may not lose their lot among the chosen.

4 Do good, O LORD, unto those that be good, and to them that are upright in their hearts. 5 As for such who turn aside unto their crooked ways, the LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity: but peace shall be upon Israel.

Here is, 1. The prayer the psalmist puts in for the happiness of those that are sincere and constant (v. 4): *Do good, O Lord! unto those that are good*. This teaches us to pray for all good people, to *make supplication for saints*; and we may pray in faith for them, being assured that those who do well shall certainly be well dealt with. Those that are upright they should be shall be as they would be, provided they be *upright in heart*, that they be really as good as they seem to be. *With the upright God will show himself upright*. He does not say, Do good, O Lord! to those that are perfect, that are sinless and spotless, but to those that are sincere and honest. God's promises should quicken our prayers. It is comfortable wishing well to those for whom God has engaged to do well. 2. The prospect he has of the ruin of hypocrites and deserters; he does not pray for it (*I have not desired the woeful day, thou knowest*), but he predicts it: *As for those who, having known the way of righteousness, for fear of the rod of the wicked, basely turn aside out of it to their wicked ways*, use indirect ways to prevent trouble or extricate themselves out of

it, or those who, instead of reforming, grow worse and worse and are more obstinate and daring in their impieties, God shall *send them away, cast them out, and lead them forth with the workers of iniquity*, that is, he will appoint them their portion with the worst of sinners. Note, (1.) Sinful ways are *crooked ways*; sin is the perverting of that which is right. (2.) The doom of those who turn aside to those crooked ways out of the right way will be the same with theirs who have all along walked in them, nay, and more grievous, for if any place in hell be hotter than another that shall be the portion of hypocrites and apostates. God shall *lead them forth*, as prisoners are led forth to execution. *Go, you cursed, into everlasting fire; and these shall go away*; all their former righteousness shall not be mentioned unto them. The last words, *Peace upon Israel*, may be taken as a prayer: "God preserve his Israel in peace, when his judgments are abroad reckoning with evil-doers. We read them as a promise: *Peace shall be upon Israel*; that is, [1.] When those who have treacherously deserted the ways of God meet with their own destruction those who faithfully adhere to them, though they may have trouble in their way, shall have peace in the end. [2.] The destruction of those who walk in crooked ways will contribute to the peace and safety of the church. When Herod was cut off *the word of God grew*, Acts xii. 23, 24. [3.] The peace and happiness of God's Israel will be the vexation, and will add much to the torment, of those who perish in their wickedness, Luke xiii. 28; Isa. lxxv. 13. *My servants shall rejoice, but you shall be ashamed*.

PSALM CXXVI.

It was with reference to some great and surprising deliverance of the people of God out of bondage and distress that this psalm was penned, most likely their return out of Babylon in Ezra's time. Though Babylon was not mentioned here (as it is, Ps. cxxxvii.) yet their captivity there was the most remarkable captivity both in itself and as their return out of it was typical of our redemption by Christ. Probably this psalm was penned by Ezra, or some of the prophets that came up with the first. We read of singers of the children of Asaph, that famous psalmist, who returned then, Ezra ii. 41. It being a song of ascents, in which the same things are twice repeated with advancement (ver. 2, 3, and ver. 4, 5), it is put here among the rest of the psalms that bear that title. I. Those that had returned out of captivity are here called upon to be thankful, ver. 1-3. II. Those that were yet remaining in captivity are here prayed for (ver. 4) and encouraged, ver. 5, 6. It will be easy, in singing this psalm, to apply it either to any particular deliverance wrought for the church or our own land or to the great work of our salvation by Christ.

A song of degrees.

WHEN the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. 2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them. 3 The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.

While the people of Israel were captives in Babylon their harps were hung upon the willow-trees, for then God called to weeping and mourning, then he mourned unto them

and they lamented; but now that their captivity is turned they resume their harps; Providence pipes to them, and they dance. Thus must we accommodate ourselves to all the dispensations of Providence and be suitably affected with them. And the harps are never more melodiously tunable than after such a melancholy disuse. The long want of mercies greatly sweetens their return. Here is, 1. The deliverance God had wrought for them: *He turned again the captivity of Zion.* It is possible that Zion may be in captivity for the punishment of her degeneracy, but her captivity shall be turned again when the end is answered and the work designed by it is effected. Cyrus, for reasons of state, proclaimed liberty to God's captives, and yet it was *the Lord's doing*, according to his word many years before. God sent them into captivity, not as dross is put into the fire to be consumed, but as gold to be refined. Observe, The release of Israel is called *the turning again of the captivity of Zion*, the holy hill, where God's tabernacle and dwelling-place were; for the restoring of their sacred interests, and the reviving of the public exercise of their religion, were the most valuable advantages of their return out of captivity. 2. The pleasing surprise that this was to them. They were amazed at it; it came so suddenly that at first they were in confusion, not knowing what to make of it, nor what it was tending to: "We thought ourselves *like men that dream*; we thought it too good news to be true, and began to question whether we were well awake or no, and whether it was not still" (as sometimes it had been to the prophets) "only a representation of it in vision," as St. Peter for a while thought his deliverance was, Acts xii. 9. Sometimes the people of God are thus prevented with the blessings of his goodness before they are aware. *We were like those that are recovered to health* (so Dr. Hammond reads it); "such a comfortable happy change it was to us, as life from the dead or sudden ease from exquisite pain; we thought ourselves in a new world." And the surprise of it put them into such an ecstasy and transport of joy that they could scarcely contain themselves within the bounds of decency in the expressions of it: *Our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongue with singing.* Thus they gave vent to their joy, gave glory to their God, and gave notice to all about them what wonders God had wrought for them. Those that were laughed at now laugh and a new song is put into their mouths. It was a laughter of joy in God, not scorn of their enemies. 3. The notice which their neighbours took of it: *They said among the heathen, Jehovah, the God of Israel, has done great things* for that people, such as our gods cannot do for us. The heathen had observed their calamity and had triumphed in it, Jer. xxii. 8, 9; Ps. cxxxvii. 7. Now they could not but observe their

deliverance and admire that. It put a reputation upon those that had been scorned and despised, and made them look considerably besides, it turned greatly to the honour of God, and extorted from those that set up other gods in competition with him an acknowledgment of his wisdom, power, and providence. 4. The acknowledgments which they themselves made of it, v. 3. The heathen were but spectators, and spoke only as matter of news; they had no personal lot in the matter; but the people of God spoke of it as sharers in it, (1.) With application: "He has done great things for us, things that we are interested in and have advantage by." Thus it is comfortable speaking of the redemption Christ has wrought out as wrought out for us. *Who loved me and gave himself for me.* (2.) With affection: "Whereof we are glad. The heathen are amazed at it, and some of them angry, but we are glad." While Israel went a whoring from their God joy was forbidden them (Hos. ix. 1); but now that the iniquity of Jacob was purged by the captivity, and their sin taken away, now God makes them to rejoice. It is the repenting reforming people that are and shall be, the rejoicing people. Observe here, [1.] God's appearances for his people are to be looked upon as great things. [2.] God is to be eyed as the author of all the great things done for the church. [3.] It is good to observe how the church's deliverances are for us, that we may rejoice in them.

4 Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. 6 He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

These verses look forward to the mercies that were yet wanted. Those that had come out of captivity were still in distress, even in their own land (Neh. i. 3), and many yet remained in Babylon; and therefore they rejoiced with trembling, and bore upon the hearts the grievances that were yet to be redressed. We have here, 1. A prayer for the perfecting of their deliverance (v. 4): "Turn again our captivity." Let those that have returned to their own land be eased of the burdens which they are yet groaning under. Let those that remain in Babylon have the hearts stirred up, as ours were, to take the benefit of the liberty granted." The beginnings of mercy are encouragements to us to pray for the completing of it. And while we are here in this world there will still be matter for prayer, even when we are more furnished with matter for praise. And, while we are free and in prosperity ourselves, we must not be unmindful of our brethren that are in trouble and under restraint. The bringing of those that were yet in captivity

join with their brethren that had returned could be as welcome to both sides as streams of water in those countries, which, lying far south, were parched and dry. As cold water a thirsty soul, so would this good news come from that far country, Prov. xxv. 2. 2. promise for their encouragement to wait for assuring them that, though they had now sorrowful time, yet it would end well. But the promise is expressed generally, that all the saints may comfort themselves with this confidence, that their seedness of tears will certainly end in a harvest of joy at last, v. 6. (1.) Suffering saints have a seedness of tears. They are in tears often; they share the calamities of human life, and commonly have a greater share in them than others. But they *sow in tears*; they do the duty of an afflicted state and so answer the intentions of the providences they are under. Weeping must not hinder sowing; when we suffer ill we must be doing well. Nay, as the ground is by the rain prepared for the seed, and the husbandman sometimes chooses to sow in the wet, so we must improve times of affliction, as disposing us to repentance, and prayer, and humiliation. Nay, there are tears which are themselves the seed that we must sow, tears of sorrow for sin, our own and others, tears of sympathy with the afflicted church, and tears of tenderness in prayer and under the word. These are precious seed, such as the husbandman sows when corn is dear and he has but little for his family, and therefore weeps to part with it, yet buries it under ground, in expectation of receiving it again with advantage. Thus is a good man sow in tears. (2.) They all have a harvest of joy. The troubles of the saints will not last always, but, when they have done their work, shall have a happy period. The captives in Babylon were sowing in tears, but at length they were brought forth with joy, and then they reaped the benefit of their patient suffering, and brought their sheaves with them to their own land, in their experiences of the goodness of God to them. Job, and Joseph, and David, and many others, had harvests of joy after a sorrowful seedness. Those that sow in the tears of godly sorrow shall reap in the joy of sealed pardon and a settled peace. Those that *sow to the spirit*, in this vale of tears, *shall of the spirit reap life everlasting*, and that will be a joyful harvest indeed. *Blessed are those that mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

PSALM CXXVII.

This is a family-psalm, as divers before were state-poems and church-poems. It is entitled (as we read it) "for Solomon," dedicated to him by his father. He having a house to build, a duty to keep, and seed to raise up to his father, David directs him to look up to God, and to depend upon his providence, without which all his wisdom, care, and industry, would not serve. Some take it to have been penned by Solomon himself, and it may as well be read, "a song of Solomon," who wrote a great many; and they compare it with the Ecclesiastes, the scope of both being the same, to show the vanity of worldly care and how necessary it is that we keep in favour with God. On him we must depend, 1. For wealth, ver. 1, 2. 11. For heirs to leave us, ver. 3—5. In singing this psalm we must have our eye up to God for success in all our undertakings and a blessing upon

all our comforts and enjoyments, because every creature is that to us which he makes it to be and no more.

A song of degrees for Solomon.

EXCEPT the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh *but* in vain. 2 *It is vain* for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: *for* so he giveth his beloved sleep. 3 Lo, children *are* an heritage of the LORD: *and* the fruit of the womb *is* his reward. 4 As arrows *are* in the hand of a mighty man; so *are* children of the youth. 5 Happy *is* the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.

We are here taught to have a continual regard to the divine Providence in all the concerns of this life. Solomon was cried up for a wise man, and would be apt to lean to his own understanding and forecast, and therefore his father teaches him to look higher, and to take God along with him in his undertakings. He was to be a man of business, and therefore David instructed him how to manage his business under the direction of his religion. Parents, in teaching their children, should suit their exhortations to their condition and occasions. We must have an eye to God,

I. In all the affairs and business of the family, even of the royal family, for kings' houses are no longer safe than while God protects them. We must depend upon God's blessing and not our own contrivance, 1. For the raising of a family: *Except the Lord build the house*, by his providence and blessing, *those labour in vain*, though ever so ingenious, *that build it*. We may understand it of the material house: except the Lord bless the building it is to no purpose for men to build, any more than for the builders of Babel, who attempted in defiance of heaven, or Hiel, who built Jericho under a curse. If the model and design be laid in pride and vanity, or if the foundations be laid in oppression and injustice (Hab. ii. 11, 12), God certainly does not build there; nay, if God be not acknowledged, we have no reason to expect his blessing, and without his blessing all is nothing. Or, rather, it is to be understood of the making of a family considerable that was mean; men labour to do this by advantageous matches, offices, employments, purchases; but all in vain, unless God build up the family, and *raise the poor out of the dust*. The best-laid project fails unless God crown it with success. See Mal. i. 4. 2. For the securing of a family or a city (for this is what the psalmist particularly mentions): if the guards of the city cannot secure it with-

out God, much less can the good man of the house save his house from being broken up. *Except the Lord keep the city from fire, from enemies, the watchmen, who go about the city, or patrol upon the walls of it, though they neither slumber nor sleep, wake but in vain, for a raging fire may break out, the mischief of which the timeliest discoveries may not be able to prevent. The guards may be slain, or the city betrayed and lost, by a thousand accidents, which the most watchful sentinel or most cautious governor could not obviate.*

3. For the enriching of a family; this is a work of time and thought, but cannot be effected without the favour of Providence any more than that which is the product of one happy turn: "*It is vain for you to rise up early and sit up late, and so to deny yourselves your bodily refreshments, in the eager pursuit of the wealth of the world.*" Usually, those that rise early do not care for sitting up late, nor can those that sit up late easily persuade themselves to rise early; but there are some so hot upon the world that they will do both, will rob their sleep to pay their cares. And they have as little comfort in their meals as in their rest; they *eat the bread of sorrows*. It is part of our sentence that we eat our bread in the sweat of our face; but those go further: *all their days they eat in darkness*, Eccl. v. 17. They are continually full of care, which enbitters their comforts, and makes their lives a burden to them. All this is to get money, and all in vain except God prosper them, for *riches are not always to men of understanding*, Eccl. ix. 11. Those that love God, and are beloved of him, have their minds easy and live very comfortably without this ado. Solomon was called *Jedidiah—Beloved of the Lord* (2 Sam. xii. 25); to him the kingdom was promised, and then it was in vain for Absalom to rise up early, to wheedle the people, and for Adonijah to make such a stir, and to say, *I will be king*. Solomon sits still, and, being *beloved of the Lord*, to him he gives sleep and the kingdom too. Note, (1.) Inordinate excessive care about the things of this world is a vain and fruitless thing. We weary ourselves for vanity if we have it, and often weary ourselves in vain for it, Hag. i. 6, 9. (2.) Bodily sleep is God's gift to his beloved. We owe it to his goodness that our sleep is safe (iv. 8), that it is sweet, Jer. xxxi. 25, 26. God gives us sleep as he gives it to his beloved when with it he gives us grace to lie down in his fear (our souls returning to him and reposing in him as our rest), and when we awake to be still with him and to use the refreshment we have by sleep in his service. *He gives his beloved sleep*, that is, quietness and contentment of mind, a comfortable enjoyment of what is present and a comfortable expectation of what is to come. Our care must be to *keep ourselves in the love of God*, and then we may be easy whether we have little or much of this world.

II. In the increase of the family. It shows, 1. That children are *God's gift*, v. 3. If children are withheld it is God that withholds them (Gen. xxx. 2); if they are given it is God that gives them (Gen. xxxiii. 5); and they are to us what he makes them, comforts or crosses. Solomon multiplied wives contrary to the law, but we never read more than one son that he had; for those that desire children as a heritage from the Lord must receive them in the way that he is pleased to give them, by lawful marriage to one wife. Mal. ii. 15, *therefore one, that might seek a seed of God. But they shall commit whoredom and shall not increase. Children are a heritage, and a reward, and are so to be accounted, blessings and not burden* for he that sends mouths will send meat we trust in him. Obed-edom had eight sons for the Lord blessed him because he had entertained the ark, 1 Chron. xxvi. 5. Children are a heritage for the Lord, as well as from him; they are *my children* (says God) *which thou hast borne unto me* (Ezek. xvi. 20); and they are most our honour and comfort when they are accounted to him for a generation.

2. That they are a good gift, and a great support and defence to a family: *As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, who knows how to use them for his own safety and advantage, so are children of the youth, that is children born to their parents when they are young, which are the strongest and most healthful children, and are grown up to serve them by the time they need their service; or rather, children who are themselves young, they are instruments of much good to the parents and families, which may fortify themselves with them against their enemies. The family that has a large stock of children, like a quiver full of arrows, of different sizes, we may suppose, but all of use one time or other; children of different capacities and inclinations may be several ways serviceable to the family. He that has a numerous issue may boldly speak with his enemy in the gate in judgment; in battle he needs not fear, having so many good seconds, so zealous, so faithful, and in the vigour of youth, 1 Sam. ii. 4, 5. Observe here, *Children of the youth are arrows in the hand, which, with prudence may be directed aright to the mark, God's glory and the service of their generation* but afterwards, when they have gone abroad into the world, they are arrows out of the hand; it is too late to bend them then. But these arrows in the hand too often prove arrows in the heart, a constant grief to their godly parents, whose gray hairs they bring with sorrow to the grave.*

PSALM CXXVIII.

This, as the former, is a psalm for families. In that we were taught that the prosperity of our families depends upon the blessing of God; in this we are taught that the only way to obtain that blessing which will make our families comfortable is to live in the fear of God and in obedience to him. Those that do so, in general, shall be blessed, ver. 1, 2, 4. In particular, 1. They shall be prosperous and successful in their employments, ver. 3. 11. Their relations shall be agreeable, ver. 6. 11. They shall live to see their families brought up, ver. 6. 14. They shall

have the satisfaction of seeing the church of God in a flourishing condition, ver. 5, 6. We must sing this psalm in the firm belief of this truth, That religion and piety are the best friends to outward prosperity, giving God the praise that it is so and that we have found it so, and encouraging ourselves and others with it.

A song of degrees.

BLESSED is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways. 2 For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.

Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. 4 Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD. 5 The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. 6 Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel.

It is here shown that godliness has the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.

It is here again and again laid down as an undoubted truth that *those who are truly godly are truly happy*. Those whose blessed estate we are here assured of are such as *fear the Lord and walk in his ways*, such as have deep reverence of God upon their spirits and evidence it by a regular and constant conformity to his will. Where the fear of God is a commanding principle in the heart the tenour of the conversation will be accordingly; and in vain do we pretend to be of those that fear God if we do not make conscience both of keeping to his ways and not slipping in them or drawing back. Such are blessed (v. 1), and shall be blessed, v. 4. God blesses them, and his pronouncing them blessed makes them so. They are blessed now, they shall be blessed still, and for ever. This blessedness, arising from this blessing, is here secured, 1. To all the saints universally: *Blessed is every one that fears the Lord*, whoever he be; in every nation he that fears God and works righteousness is accepted of God, and therefore is blessed whether he be high or low, rich or poor, in the world; if religion rule him, it will protect and enrich him.

To such a saint in particular: *Thus shall the man be blessed*, not only the nation, the church in its public capacity, but the particular person in his private interests. 3. We are encouraged to apply it to ourselves (v. 2): *Happy shalt thou be*; thou mayest take the comfort of the promise, and expect the benefit of it, as if it were directed to thee by name, if thou *fear God and walk in his ways*. *Happy shalt thou be*, that is, *It shall be well with thee*; whatever befalls thee, good shall be brought out of it; it shall be well with thee while thou livest, better when thou diest, and best of all to eternity." It is asserted (v. 4) with a note commanding atten-

tion: *Behold, thus shall the man be blessed*; behold it by faith in the promise; behold it by observation in the performance of the promise; behold it with assurance that it shall be so, for God is faithful, and with admiration that it should be so, for we merit no favour, no blessing, from him.

II. Particular promises are here made to godly people, which they may depend upon, as far as is for God's glory and their good; and that is enough.

1. That, by the blessing of God, they shall get an honest livelihood and live comfortably upon it. It is not promised that they shall live at ease, without care or pains, but, *Thou shalt eat the labour of thy hands*. Here is a double promise, (1.) That they shall have something to do (for an idle life is a miserable uncomfortable life) and shall have health, and strength, and capacity of mind to do it, and shall not be forced to be beholden to others for necessary food, and to live, as the disabled poor do, upon the labours of other people. It is as much a mercy as it is a duty *with quietness to work and eat our own bread*, 2 Thess. iii. 12. (2.) That they shall succeed in their employments, and they and theirs shall enjoy what they get; others shall not come and eat the bread out of their mouths, nor shall it be taken from them either by oppressive rulers or invading enemies. God will not blast it and blow upon it (as he did, Hag. i. 9), and his blessing will make a little go a great way. It is very pleasant to enjoy the fruits of our own industry; as the sleep, so the food, of a labouring man is sweet.

2. That they shall have abundance of comfort in their family-relations. As a wife and children are very much a man's care, so, if by the grace of God they are such as they should be, they are very much a man's delight, as much as any creature-comfort. (1.) *The wife shall be as a vine by the sides of the house*, not only as a spreading vine which serves for an ornament, but as a fruitful vine which is for profit, and with the fruit whereof both God and man are honoured, Judg. ix. 13. The vine is a weak and tender plant, and needs to be supported and cherished, but it is a very valuable plant, and some think (because all the products of it were prohibited to the Nazarites) it was the *tree of knowledge* itself. The wife's place is the husband's house; there her business lies, and that is her castle. *Where is Sarah thy wife? Behold, in the tent*; where should she be else? Her place is *by the sides of the house*, not under-foot to be trampled on, nor yet upon the house-top to domineer (if she be so, she is but *as the grass upon the house-top*, in the next psalm), but on the side of the house, being a rib out of the side of the man. She shall be a loving wife, as the vine, which cleaves to the house-side, an obedient wife, as the vine, which is pliable, and grows as it is directed. She shall be

fruitful as the vine, not only in children, but in the fruits of wisdom, and righteousness, and good management, the *branches* of which *run over the wall* (Gen. xlix. 22; Ps. lxxx. 11), like a fruitful vine, not cumbering the ground, nor bringing forth sour grapes, or grapes of Sodom, but good fruit. (2.) The children shall be as *olive plants*, likely in time to be olive-trees, and, though *wild by nature*, yet grafted into the good olive, and partaking of its *root and fatness*, Rom. xi. 17. It is pleasant to parents who have a table spread, though but with ordinary fare, to see their children round about it, to have many children, enough to surround it, and those with them, and not scattered, or the parents forced from them. Job makes it one of the first instances of his former prosperity that *his children were about him*, Job xxix. 5. Parents love to have their children at table, to keep up the pleasantness of the table-talk, to have them in health, craving food and not physic, to have them like *olive-plants*, straight and green, sucking in the sap of their good education, and likely in due time to be serviceable.

3. That they shall have those good things which God has promised and which they pray for: *The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion*, where the ark of the covenant was, and where the pious Israelites attended with their devotions. *Blessings out of Zion* are the best blessings, which flow, not from common providence, but from special grace; Ps. xx. 2.

4. That they shall live long, to enjoy the comforts of the rising generations: "Thou shalt see *thy children's children*, as Joseph, Gen. i. 23. Thy family shall be built up and continued, and thou shalt have the pleasure of seeing it." *Children's children*, if they be good children, *are the crown of old men* (Prov. xvii. 6), who are apt to be fond of their grandchildren.

5. That they shall see the welfare of God's church, and the land of their nativity, which every man who fears God is no less concerned for than for the prosperity of his own family. "Thou shalt be blessed in Zion's blessing, and wilt think thyself so. Thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem as long as thou shalt live, though thou shouldst live long, and shalt not have thy private comforts allayed and embittered by public troubles." A good man can have little comfort in seeing his children's children, unless withal he see peace upon Israel, and have hopes of transmitting the entail of religion pure and entire to those that shall come after him, for that is the best inheritance.

PSALM CXXIX.

This psalm relates to the public concerns of God's Israel. It is not certain when it was penned, probably when they were in captivity in Babylon, or about the time of their return. I. They look back with thankfulness for the former deliverances God had wrought for them and their fathers out of the many distresses they had been in from time to time, ver. 1-4. II. They look forward with a believing prayer for and prospect of the destruction of all the enemies of Zion, ver. 5-8. In singing this psalm we may apply it both ways to the Gospel-Israel, which, like the Old-Testament Israel, has weathered many a storm and is still threatened by many enemies.

A song of degrees.

MANY a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say: 2 Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet they have not prevailed against me. 3 The ploughers ploughed upon my back, they made long their furrows. 4 The Lord is righteous: he hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.

The church of God, in its several ages, is here spoken of, or, rather, here speaks, as one single person, now old and gray-headed but calling to remembrance the former days and reflecting upon the times of old. And upon the review, it is found, 1. That the church has been often greatly distressed by its enemies on earth: *Israel may now say*, "I am the people that has been oppressed more than any people, that has been as a *speckled bird*, pecked at by *all the birds round about*," Jer. xii. 9. It is true, they brought their troubles upon themselves by their sins; it was for them that God punished them; but it was for the peculiarity of their covenant and the singularities of their religion, that their neighbours hated and persecuted them. "For these many a time have they afflicted me from my youth." Note, God's people have always had many enemies, and the state of the church, from its infancy, has frequently been an afflicted state. Israel's youth was in Egypt, or in the times of the Judges; then they were afflicted, and thenceforward more or less. The gospel-church, ever since it had a being, has been at times afflicted; and it bore this yoke most of all in its youth witness the ten persecutions which the primitive church groaned under. *The plougher ploughed upon my back*, v. 3. We read (cxxxv. 3) of *the rod of the wicked upon the lot of the righteous*, where we rather expected the plough, to mark it out for themselves; here we read of the *plough* of the wicked upon the *back of the righteous*, where we rather expected to find the rod. But the metaphor in these places may be said to be *crossed*, in the sense however of both is the same, and is too plain, that the enemies of God's people have all along used them very barbarously. They tore them, as the husbandman tears the ground with his plough-share, to pull them to pieces and get all they could out of them, and so to *wear out the saints of the Most High*, as the ground is worn out that has been long tilled, tilled (as we say) quite out of heart. When God permitted them to plough thus, he intended it for his people's good, that their fallow ground being thus broken up, he might sow the seeds of his grace upon them, and reap a harvest of good fruit from them: howbeit, the enemies meant not so; neither did their hearts think so (Isa. x. 7): *they made long their furrows*, never knew when to have done, aiming at nothing, less

the destruction of the church. Many by the furrows they made on the backs of God's people understand the stripes they have them. *The cutters cut upon my back*, so they read it. The saints have often *had trials of cruel scourgings* (probably the captivities and *cruel mockings* (for we read of the scourge or lash of the tongue, Heb. xi. 36), and so it was fulfilled in Christ, who *gave his back to the smiters*, Isa. l. 6. Or it may refer to the desolations they made of the cities of Israel. *Zion shall, for your sake, be ploughed as a field*, Mic. iii. 12. 2. That the church has been always graciously de-
 5 Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion. 6 Let them be as the grass upon the house-tops, which withereth afore it groweth up: 7 Wherewith the mower fill-
 not his hand: nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom. 8 Neither do they which go by say, The blessing of the LORD be upon you: we bless you in the name of the LORD.

covered by her friend in heaven. (1.) The enemies' projects have been defeated. They have afflicted the church, in hopes to ruin it, but they have not gained their point. Many a storm it has weathered; many a shock, and many a brunt, it has borne; and yet it is in being: *They have not prevailed against me*. One would wonder how this ship has lived in the sea, when it has been tossed with tempests, and all the waves and billows have gone over it. Christ has built his church upon a rock, and the gates of hell have not prevailed against it, nor ever shall. (2.) The enemies' power has been broken: *God has cut asunder the cords of the wicked*, has cut their gears, has cut their traces, and so spoiled their ploughing, has cut their scourges, and so spoiled their shining, has cut the bands of union by which they were combined together, has cut the bands of captivity in which they held God's people. God has many ways of disabling wicked men to do the mischief they design against his church and shaming their counsels. These words, *The Lord is righteous*, may refer either to the distresses or to the deliverances of the church. [1.] *The Lord is righteous* in suffering Israel to be afflicted. He is the people of God were always ready to turn, that, how unjust soever their enemies were, God was *just in all that was brought upon them*, Neh. ix. 33. [2.] *The Lord is righteous* in not suffering Israel to be ruined; for he has promised to preserve it a people to himself, and he will be as good as his word. He is righteous in reckoning with their persecutors, and rendering to them a *compence*, 2 Thess. i. 6.

5 Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion. 6 Let them be as the grass upon the house-tops, which withereth afore it groweth up: 7 Wherewith the mower fill-
 not his hand: nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom. 8 Neither do they which go by say, The blessing of the LORD be upon you: we bless you in the name of the LORD.

The psalmist, having triumphed in the defeat of the many designs that had been laid deep as hell to ruin the church, here con-

cludes his psalm as Deborah did her song, *So let all thy enemies perish, O Lord!* Judg. v. 31.

I. There are many that hate Zion, that hate Zion's God, his worship, and his worshippers, that have an antipathy to religion and religious people, that seek the ruin of both, and do what they can that God may not have a church in the world.

II. We ought to pray that all their attempts against the church may be frustrated, that in them they may be *confounded and turned back* with shame, as those that have not been able to bring to pass their enterprise and expectation: *Let them all be confounded* is as much as, *They shall be all confounded*. The confusion imprecated and predicted is illustrated by a similitude; while God's people shall flourish as the loaded palm-tree, or the green and fruitful olive, their enemies shall *wither as the grass upon the house-top*. As men they are not to be feared, for they shall be made as grass, Isa. li. 12. But as they are enemies to Zion they are so certainly marked for ruin that they may be looked upon with as much contempt as the grass on the house-tops, which is little, and short, and sour, and good for nothing. 1. It perishes quickly: *It withers before it grows up* to any maturity, having no root; and the higher its place is, which perhaps is its pride, the more it is exposed to the scorching heat of the sun, and consequently the sooner does it wither. *It withers before it is plucked up*, so some read it. The enemies of God's church wither of themselves, and stay not till they are rooted out by the judgments of God. 2. It is of no use to any body; nor are they any thing but the unprofitable burdens of the earth, nor will their attempts against Zion ever ripen or come to any head, nor, whatever they promise themselves, will they get any more by them than the husbandman does by the grass on his house-top. Their *harvest will be a heap in the day of grief*, Isa. xvii. 11.

III. No wise man will pray God to bless the mowers or reapers, v. 8. Observe, 1. It has been an ancient and laudable custom not only to salute and wish a good day to strangers and travellers, but particularly to pray for the prosperity of harvest-labourers. Thus Boaz prayed for his reapers. Ruth ii. 4, *The Lord be with you*. We must thus acknowledge God's providence, testify our good-will to our neighbours, and commend their industry, and it will be accepted of God as a pious ejaculation if it come from a devout and upright heart. 2. Religious expressions, being sacred things, must never be made use of in light and ludicrous actions. Mowing the grass on the house-top would be a jest, and therefore those that have a reverence for the name of God will not prostitute to it the usual forms of salutation, which savoured of devotion; for holy things must not be jested with. 3. It is a dangerous thing to let the church's enemies have our good wishes in

their designs against the church. If we wish then God speed, we are partakers of their evil deeds, 2 John 11. When it is said, None will bless them, and show them respect, more is implied, namely, that all wise and good people will cry out shame on them, and beg of God to defeat them; and woe to those that have the prayers of the saints against them. *I cursed his habitation, Job v. 3.*

PSALM CXXX.

This psalm relates not to any temporal concern, either personal or public, but it is wholly taken up with the affairs of the soul. It is reckoned one of the seven penitential psalms, which have sometimes been made use of by penitents, upon their admission into the church; and, in singing it, we are all concerned to apply it to ourselves. The psalmist here expresses, I. His desire towards God, ver. 1, 2. II. His repentance before God, ver. 3, 4. III. His attendance upon God, ver. 5, 6. IV. His expectations from God, ver. 7, 8. And, as in water face answers to face, so does the heart of one humble penitent to another.

A song of degrees.

OUT of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD. 2 Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. 3 If thou, LORD, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? 4 But *there is* forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.

In these verses we are taught,

I. Whatever condition we are in, though ever so deplorable, to continue calling upon God, v. 1. The best men may sometimes be in the depths, in great trouble and affliction, and utterly at a loss what to do, in the depths of distress and almost in the depths of despair, the spirit low and dark, sinking and drooping, cast down and disquieted. But, in the greatest depths, it is our privilege that we may cry unto God and be heard. A prayer may reach the heights of heaven, though not out of the depths of hell, yet out of the depths of the greatest trouble we can be in in this world, Jeremiah's out of the dungeon, Daniel's out of the den, and Jonah's out of the fish's belly. It is our duty and interest to cry unto God, for that is the likeliest way both to prevent our sinking lower and to recover us out of the horrible pit and miry clay, xl. 1, 2.

II. While we continue calling upon God to assure ourselves of an answer of peace from him; for this is that which David in faith prays for (v. 2): *Lord, hear my voice, my complaint and prayer, and let thy ears be attentive to the voice both of my afflictions and of my supplications.*

III. We are taught to humble ourselves before the justice of God as guilty in his sight, and unable to answer him for one of a thousand of our offences (v. 3): *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord! who shall stand?* His calling God Lord twice, in so few words, *Jah* and *Adonai*, is very emphatic, and intimates a very awful sense of God's glorious majesty and a dread of his wrath. Let us learn here, 1. To acknowledge our iniquities, that we cannot justify ourselves before God, or plead Not guilty. There is that which is

remarkable in our iniquities and is liable to be animadverted upon. 2. To own the power and justice of God, which are such that, if we were extreme to mark what we do amiss, there would be no hopes of coming off. His eye can discover enough in the best man ground a condemnation upon; and, if he proceed against us, we have no way to help ourselves, we cannot stand, but shall certainly be cast. If God deal with us in strict justice, we are undone; if he make remarks upon our iniquities, he will find them to be many and great, greatly aggravated and very provoking; and then, if he should proceed accordingly, he would shut us out from all hope of his favour and shut us up under his wrath; and what could we do to help ourselves? We could not make our escape, nor resist nor bear up under his avenging hand. 3. Let us admire God's patience and forbearance, we should be undone if he were to mark iniquities, and he knows it, and therefore bears with us. *It is of his mercy that we are not consumed by his wrath.*

IV. We are taught to cast ourselves upon the pardoning mercy of God, and to comfort ourselves with that when we see ourselves obnoxious to his justice, v. 4. Here is, God's grace discovered, and pleaded with him, by a penitent sinner: *But there is forgiveness with thee.* It is our unspeakable comfort, in all our approaches to God, that there is forgiveness with him, for that is what we need. He has put himself into a capacity to pardon sin; he has declared himself gracious and merciful, and ready to forgive Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. He has promised to forgive the sins of those that do repent. Never any that dealt with him found him implacable, but easy to be entreated, and swift to show mercy. With us there is iniquity, and therefore it is well for us that with him there is forgiveness. *There is a propitiation with thee, so some read it.* Jesus Christ is that great propitiation, the ransom which God has found; he is ever with him, as advocate for us, and through him we hope to obtain forgiveness. 2. Our duty designed in that discovery, and inferred from it: "*There is forgiveness with thee, not that thou mayest be made bold with and presumed upon, but that thou mayest be feared*—in general, that thou mayest be worshipped and served by the children of men, who, being sinners, could have no dealings with God, if he were not a Master that could pass by a great many faults." But this encourages us to come into his service that we shall not be turned off for every misdemeanour; no, nor for any, if we truly repent. This does in a special manner invite those who have sinned to repent, and return to the fear of God, that he is gracious and merciful, and will receive them upon their repentance, Joel ii. 13; Matt. iii. 2. And, particularly, we are to have a holy awe and reverence of God's pardoning mercy (Hos. iii. 5) *They shall fear the Lord, and his goodness;*

then we may expect the benefit of the forgiveness that is with God when we make it object of our holy fear.

5 I wait for the LORD, my soul shall wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch the morning. 7 Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. 8 And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

Here, I. The psalmist engages himself to wait in God and to wait for him, 2. 5, 6. Observe, 1. His dependence upon God, expressed in climax, it being a song of degrees, or ascents: "I wait for the Lord; from him I expect relief and comfort, believing it will come, waiting till it does come, but patiently bearing the delay of it, and resolving to look for it from no other hand. My soul doth wait; wait for him in sincerity, and not in profession only. I am an expectant, and it is for the Lord that my soul waits, for the gifts of grace and the operations of his power."

The ground of that dependence: *In his word do I hope.* We must hope for that only which he has promised in his word, and not the creatures of our own fancy and imagination; and we must hope for it because he has promised it, and not from any opinion of our own merit. 3. The degree of that dependence—"more than those that watch for morning, who are, (1.) Well-assured that morning will come; and so am I that God will return in mercy to me, according to his promise; in God's covenant is more firm than the ordinances of day and night, for they all come to an end, but that is everlasting."

Very desirous that it would come. Sentinels that keep guard upon the walls, those that watch with sick people, and travellers that are abroad upon their journey, long to see the dawning of the day; more earnestly does this good man long to see the tokens of God's favour and the visits of his grace, and more readily will he be aware of his first appearances than they are of day.

Hammond reads it thus, *My soul hastens to the Lord, from the guards in the morning, from the guards in the morning,* and gives this sense of it, "To thee I daily betake myself, daily in the morning, addressing my prayers, O my very soul, before thee, at the time that the priests offer their morning sacrifice."

I. He encourages all the people of God in the same manner to depend upon him and trust in him: *Let Israel hope in the Lord and wait for him; not only the body of the people, but every good man, who surnames himself by the name of Israel,* Isa. xlv. 5. Let all that desire themselves to God cheerfully stay themselves upon him (v. 7, 8), for two reasons:—

1. Because the light of nature discovers to us that *there is mercy with him*, that the God of Israel is a merciful God and *the Father of mercies.* *Mercy is with him*; not only inherent in his nature, but it is his delight, it is his darling attribute; it is with him in all his works, in all his counsels. 2. Because the light of the gospel discovers to us that *there is redemption with him*, contrived by him, and to be wrought out *in the fulness of time*; it was in the beginning hidden in God. See here, (1.) The nature of this redemption; it is redemption from sin, from all sin, and therefore can be no other than that eternal redemption which Jesus Christ became the author of; for it is *he that saves his people from their sins* (Matt. i. 21), that *redeems them from all iniquity* (Tit. ii. 14), and *turns away ungodliness from Jacob*, Rom. xi. 26. It is he that redeems us both from the condemning and from the commanding power of sin. (2.) The riches of this redemption; it is *plenteous redemption*; there is an all-sufficient fulness of merit and grace in the Redeemer, enough for all, enough for each; enough for me, says the believer. Redemption from sin includes redemption from all other evils, and therefore is a plenteous redemption. (3.) The persons to whom the benefits of this redemption belong: *He shall redeem Israel*, Israel according to the spirit, all those who are in covenant with God, as Israel was, and who are *Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile.*

PSALM CXXXI.

This psalm is David's profession of humility, humbly made, with thankfulness to God for his grace, and not in vain-glory. It is probable enough that (as most interpreters suggest) David made this protestation in answer to the calumnies of Saul and his courtiers, who represented David as an ambitious aspiring man, who, under pretence of a divine appointment, sought the kingdom, in the pride of his heart. But he appeals to God, that, on the contrary, I. He aimed at nothing high nor great, ver. 1. II. He was very easy in every condition which God allotted him (ver. 2); and therefore, III. He encourages all good people to trust in God as he did, ver. 3. Some have made it an objection against singing David's psalms that there are many who cannot say, "My heart is not haughty," &c. It is true there are; but we may sing it for the same purpose that we read it, to teach and admonish ourselves, and one another, what we ought to be, with repentance that we have come short of being so, and humble prayer to God for his grace to make us so.

A song of degrees of David.

LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. 2 Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child. 3 Let Israel hope in the LORD from henceforth and for ever.

Here are two things which will be comforts to us:—

I. Consciousness of our integrity. This was David's rejoicing, that his heart could witness for him that he had walked humbly with his God, notwithstanding the censures he was under and the temptations he was in.

1. He aimed not at a high condition, nor was he desirous of making a figure in the world, but, if God had so ordered, could

have been well content to spend all his days, as he did the beginning of them, in the sheep-folds. His own brother, in a passion, charged him with pride (1 Sam. xvii. 28), but the charge was groundless and unjust. God, who searches the heart, knew, (1.) That he had no conceited opinion of himself, or his own merits: *Lord, my heart is not haughty.* Humble saints cannot think so well of themselves as others think of them, are not in love with their own shadow, nor do they magnify their own attainments or achievements. The love of God reigning in the heart will subdue all inordinate self-love. (2.) That he had neither a scornful nor an aspiring look: "*My eyes are not lofty*, either to look with envy upon those that are above me or to look with disdain upon those that are below me." Where there is a proud heart there is commonly a proud look (Prov. vi. 17), but the humble publican will not so much as lift up his eyes. (3.) That he did not employ himself in things above his station, *in things too great or too high* for him. He did not employ himself in studies too high; he made God's word his meditation, and did not amuse himself with matters of nice speculation or doubtful disputation, or covet to be wise above what is written. To know God and our duty is learning sufficiently high for us. He did not employ himself in affairs too great; he followed his ewes, and never set up for a politician; no, nor for a soldier; for, when his brethren went to the wars, he staid at home to keep the sheep. It is our wisdom, and will be our praise, to keep within our sphere, and not to intrude into things which we have not seen, or meddle with that which does not belong to us. Princes and scholars must not exercise themselves in matters too great, too high, for men: and those in a low station, and of ordinary capacities, must not pretend to that which is out of their reach, and which they were not cut out for. Those will fall under due shame that affect undue honours.

2. He was well reconciled to every condition that God placed him in (v. 2): *I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother.* As he had not proudly aimed at the kingdom, so, since God had appointed him to it, he had not behaved insolently towards any, nor been restless in his attempts to get the crown before the time set; but, (1.) He had been as humble as a little child about the age of a weanling, as manageable and governable, and as far from aiming at high things; as entirely at God's disposal as the child at the disposal of the mother or nurse; as far from taking state upon him, though anointed to be king, or valuing himself upon the prospect of his future advancement, as a child in the arms. Our Saviour has taught us humility by this comparison (Matt. xviii. 3); we must *become as little children*. (2.) He had been as indifferent to the wealth and honour of this world as a child is

to the breast when it is thoroughly weaned from it. *I have levelled and quieted myself* (so Dr. Hammond reads it) *as a child that is weaned.* This intimates that our hearts naturally as desirous of worldly things as a babe is of the breast, and in like manner lish them, cry for them, are fond of to play with them, and cannot live without them. But, by the grace of God, a soul that sanctified, is weaned from those things. Providence puts wormwood upon the breast, that helps to wean us. The child is pericross and fretful while it is in the wean, and thinks itself undone when it has lost the breast. But in a day or two it is forgotten the fret is over, and it accommodates itself well enough to a new way of feeding, and no longer for milk, but can bear strong meat. Thus does a gracious soul quiet itself upon the loss of that which it loved and disappointment in that which it hoped for, and easy whatever happens, lives, and lives comfortably, upon God and the covenant-grace when creatures prove dry breasts. *When our condition is not to our mind we must bring our mind to our condition; and then we are easy to ourselves and all about us, then our souls are as a weaned child.*

II. Confidence in God; and this David commends to all the Israel of God, no doubt from his own experience of the benefit of (v. 3): *Let Israel hope in the Lord, and they shall continue to do so henceforth and forever.* Though David could himself wait patiently and quietly for the crown designed him, yet perhaps Israel, the people whose darling he was, would be ready to attempt something in favour of him before the time; he therefore endeavours to quiet them, and bids them *hope in the Lord* that they should see a happy change of the face of affairs in due time. *Thus it is good to hope and quietly to wait for the salvation of the Lord.*

PSALM CXXXII.

It is probable that this psalm was penned by Solomon, to be sung at the dedication of the temple which he built according to the charge his father gave him, 1 Chron. xxviii. 2, &c. He fulfilled his trust, he begs of God to own what he had done. He had built this house for the honour and service of God; when he brings the ark into it, the token of God's presence, he desires that God himself would come and take possession of it. ver. 8—10. With these words Solomon concluded his prayer, Chron. vi. 41, 42. II. He had built it in pursuance of the promise he had received from his father, and therefore his petition forces these petitions relative to David. 1. He pleads David's promise towards God, ver. 1—7. 2. He pleads God's promise to David, ver. 11—18. The former introduces his petition; the latter shows it as an answer to it. In singing this psalm we must have a concern for the gospel church as the temple of God, and dependence upon Christ as David our King, in whom the promises of God are sure mercies.

A song of degrees.

LORD, remember David, and his afflictions: 2 How he swore unto the LORD, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob: 3 Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of mine house, nor go up into my bed; 4 I will not give sleep to mine eyes, nor slumber to mine eyelids, 5 Until

and out a place for the LORD, a habitation for the mighty God of Jacob. 6 Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah : we found it in the fields of the wood. We will go into his tabernacles : we will worship at his footstool. 8 Arise, LORD, into thy rest ; thou, and the strength of thy strength. 9 Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness ; and thy saints shout for joy. 10 For thy servant David's sake turn not away the face of thine anointed.

In these verses we have Solomon's address to God for his favour to him and to his government, and his acceptance of his building house to God's name. Observe,

1. What he pleads—two things :—

1. That what he had done was in pursuance of the pious vow which his father David had made to build a house for God. Solomon was a wise man, yet pleads not any merit of his own : " I am not worthy, for whom thou shouldst do this ; but, *Lord, remember David*, with whom thou madest the covenant" (as Moses prayed, Exod. xxxii. 13, *Remember Abraham*, the first trustee of the covenant) ; "*remember all his afflictions*, all the troubles of his life, which his being anointed was the occasion of," or his careful concern about the ark, and what an unseasonable it was to him that the ark was in the wilderness, 2 Sam. vii. 2. *Remember all his meekness* (so some read it), all that pious and devout affection with which he had made the following vow. Note, It is amiss for us to put God in mind of our predecessors in profession, of their afflictions, of their services, and their sufferings, of God's covenant with them, the experiences they have had of his goodness, the care they took, and the many prayers they put up for, and that should come after them. We may apply it to Christ, the Son of David, and to his afflictions : "*Lord, remember the covenant made with him and the satisfaction made by him. Remember all his offerings*" (Exod. xx. 3), that is, all his sufferings." He specially pleads the solemn vow that David had made as soon as ever he was settled in his government, and before he was well settled in a house of his own, that he would build a house for God. Observe, (1.) Whom he bound himself to, *to the Lord, to the mighty God of Jacob*. Vows are to be made to God, and not to a party as well as a witness. The Lord is the Mighty One of Jacob, Jacob's God, and a mighty one, whose power is engaged for Jacob's defence and deliverance. Jacob is weak, but the God of Jacob is a mighty one. (2.) What he bound himself to, *to find out a place for the Lord*, that is, for the ark, the token of his presence. He had observed in the law frequent mention of *the place that God would choose to put his*

name there, to which all the tribes should resort. When he came to the crown there was no such place ; Shiloh was deserted, and no other place was pitched upon, for want of which the feasts of the Lord were not kept with due solemnity. " Well," says David, " I will find out such a place for the general rendezvous of all the tribes, a place of habitation for the Mighty One of Jacob, a place for the ark, where there shall be room both for the priests and people to attend upon it." (3.) How intent he was upon it ; he would not settle in his house, nay, he would not sleep in his bed, till he had brought this matter to some head, v. 3, 4. The thing had been long talked of, and nothing done, till at last David, when he went out one morning about public business, made a vow that before night he would come to a resolution in this matter, and would determine the place either where the tent should be pitched for the reception of the ark, at the beginning of his reign, or rather where Solomon should build the temple, which was not fixed till the latter end of his reign, just after the pestilence with which he was punished for numbering the people (1 Chron. xxii. 1, *Then David said, This is the house of the Lord*) ; and perhaps it was upon occasion of that judgment that he made this vow, being apprehensive that one of God's controversies with him was for his dilatoriness in this matter. Note, When needful work is to be done for God it is good for us to task ourselves, and tie ourselves to a time, because we are apt to put off. It is good in the morning to cut out work for the day, binding ourselves that we will do it before we sleep, only with submission to Providence ; for we know not what a day may bring forth. Especially in the great work of conversion to God we must be thus solicitous, thus zealous ; we have good reason to resolve that we will not enjoy the comforts of this life till we have laid a foundation for hopes of a better.

2. That it was in pursuance of the expectations of the people of Israel, v. 6, 7. (1.) They were inquisitive after the ark ; for they lamented its obscurity, 1 Sam. vii. 2. They heard of it at Ephratah (that is, at Shiloh, in the tribe of Ephraim) ; there they were told it had been, but it was gone. They found it, at last, *in the fields of the wood*, that is, in Kirjath-jearim, which signifies the city of woods. Thence all Israel fetched it, with great solemnity, in the beginning of David's reign (1 Chron. xiii. 6), so that in building this house for the ark Solomon had gratified all Israel. They needed not to go about to seek the ark any more ; they now knew where to find it. (2.) They were resolved to attend it : " Let us but have a convenient place, and we will go into his tabernacle, to pay our homage there ; we will worship at his footstool as subjects and suppliants, which we neglected to do, for want of such a place, *in the days of Saul*," 1 Chron. xiii. 3.

II. What he prays for, *v. 8—10.* 1. That God would vouchsafe, not only to take possession of, but to take up his residence in, this temple which he had built: *Arise, O Lord! into thy rest*, and let this be it, *thou, even the ark of thy strength*, the pledge of thy presence, thy mighty presence. 2. That God would give grace to the ministers of the sanctuary to do their duty: *Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness*; let them appear righteous both in their administrations and in their conversations, and let both be according to the rule. Note, Righteousness is the best ornament of a minister. Holiness towards God, and goodness towards all men, are habits for ministers of the necessity of which there is no dispute. "They are *thy priests*, and will therefore discredit their relation to thee if they be *not clothed with righteousness.*" 3. That the people of God might have the comfort of the due administration of holy ordinances among them: *Let thy saints shout for joy*. They did so when the ark was brought into the city of David (2 Sam. vi. 15); they will do so when the priests are clothed with righteousness. A faithful ministry is the joy of the saints; it is the matter of it; it is a friend and a furtherance to it; we are *helpers of your joy*, 2 Cor. i. 24. 4. That Solomon's own prayer, upon occasion of the dedicating of the temple, might be accepted of God: "*Turn not away the face of thy anointed*, that is, deny me not the things I have asked of thee, send me not away ashamed." He pleads, (1.) That he was the anointed of the Lord, and this he pleads as a type of Christ, the great anointed, who, in his intercession, urges his designation to his office. He is God's anointed, and therefore the Father hears him always. (2.) That he was the son of David: "For his sake do not deny me;" and this is the Christian's plea: "For the sake of Christ" (our David), "*in whom thou art well pleased*, accept me." He is David, whose name signifies *beloved*; and we are made accepted in the beloved. He is God's servant, whom he *upholds*, Isa. xlii. 1. "We have no merit of our own to plead, but for his sake, in whom there is a fulness of merit, let us find favour." When we pray for the prosperity of the church we may pray with great boldness, for Christ's sake, who purchased the church with his own blood. "Let both ministers and people do their duty."

11 The LORD hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne. 12 If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore. 13 For the LORD hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. 14 This is my rest for

ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it. 15 I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread. 16 I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy. 17 The LORD will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed. 18 His enemies will I clothe with shame: but upon himself shall his crown flourish.

These are precious promises, *confirmed by an oath*, that the heirs of them might have *strong consolation*, Heb. vi. 17, 18. It is one whether we take them as pleas urged the prayer or as answers returned to the prayer; believers know how to make use of the promises both ways, with them to speak to God and in them to hear what God the Lord will speak to us. These promises relate to the establishment both in church and state, both to the throne of the house of David and to the testimony of Israel fixed on Mount Zion. The promises concerning Zion hill are as applicable to the gospel-church as these concerning David's seed are to Christ; and therefore both pleadable by us and very comfortable to us. Here is,

I. The choice God made of David's house as the throne of his kingdom, and the confirmation of it by an oath.

1. God chose David's family for the royal family and confirmed his choice by an oath *v. 11, 12.* David, being a type of Christ, was made king with an oath: *The Lord hath sworn and will not repent*, will not turn from it. Did David swear to the Lord (*v. 2*) that he would find him a house? The Lord swore to David that he would build him a house; for God will be behind with none of his people in affections or assurances. The promise made to David refers, (1.) To a long succession of kings that should descend from his loins: *Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne*, which was fulfilled in Solomon. David himself lived to see it with great satisfaction, 1 Kings i. 48. The crown was also entailed conditionally upon his heirs for ever: *If thy children*, in following ages, *will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them*. God himself engaged to teach them and he did his part; they had Moses and the prophets, and all he expects is that they should keep what he taught them, and keep to it, *and then their children shall sit upon thy throne for evermore*. Kings are before God upon their good behaviour, and their commission from him runs *quoadmum se bene gesserint, during good behaviour*. The issue of this was that they did not keep God's covenant, and so the entail was at length cut off, and the sceptre departed from Judah by degrees. (2.) To an everlasting successor, a king that should descend from his loins of the increase of whose government and peace there shall

end. St. Peter applies this to Christ, nay, tells us that David himself so understood Acts ii. 30, *He knew that God had sworn an oath to him that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up a Christ to sit on his throne*; and in the fulness of time he did so, and gave him the throne of his father David, Luke i. 32. He did fulfil the condition of the promise; he kept God's covenant and his testimony, did his Father's will, and in all things pleased him; and therefore to him, and his spiritual seed, the promise shall be made good. He, and the children of God has given him, all believers, shall sit on the throne for evermore, Rev. iii. 21.

2. God chose Zion hill for the holy hill, and confirmed his choice by the delight he took in it, v. 13, 14. *He chose the Mount Zion which he loved* (lxxviii. 68); he chose it for the habitation of his ark, and said of it, *This is my rest for ever*, and not merely my residence for a time, Shiloh was. Zion was the city of David; he chose it for the royal city because God chose it for the holy city. God said, *Here will I dwell*, and therefore David said, *Here will I dwell*, for here he adhered to his principle, *it is good for me to be near to God*. Zion must be here looked upon as a type of the spel-church, which is called *Mount Zion* (Heb. xii. 22), and in it what is here said of Zion has its full accomplishment. Zion was long since ploughed as a field, but the church of Christ *is the house of the living God* (1 Tim. iii. 15), and it is his *rest for ever*, and shall be blessed with his presence always, even to the end of the world. The delight God takes in his church, and the continuance of his presence with his church, are the comfort and glory of all its members.

III. The choice blessings God has in store for David's house and Zion hill. Whom God chooses he will bless.

1. God, having chosen Zion hill, promises to bless that,

(1.) With the blessings of the life that now is; for godliness has the promise of them, v. 1. The earth shall yield her increase; where godliness is set up there shall be provision, and blessing God will bless it (lxvii. 6); he will rely and abundantly bless it. And a little provision, with an abundant blessing upon it, will be more serviceable, as well as more comfortable, than a great deal without that blessing. God's people have a special blessing upon common enjoyments, and that blessing puts peculiar sweetness into them. Nay, the promise goes further: *I will satisfy her poor with bread*. Zion has her own poor to keep; and it is promised that God will take care even of them. [1.] By his providence they shall be kept from wanting; they shall have provision enough. If there be scarcity, the poor are the first that feel it, so that it is a sure sign of plenty if they have sufficient. Zion's poor shall not want, for God has obliged all the sons of Zion to be charitable to the poor, according to their ability, and the church

must take care that they be not neglected, Acts vi. 1. [2.] By his grace they shall be kept from complaining; though they have but dry bread, yet they shall be satisfied. Zion's poor have, of all others, reason to be content with a little of this world, because they have better things prepared for them. And this may be understood spiritually of the provision that is made for the soul in the word and ordinances; God will abundantly bless that for the nourishment of the new man, and satisfy the poor in spirit with the bread of life. What God sanctifies to us we shall and may be satisfied with.

(2.) With the blessings of the life that is to come, things pertaining to godliness (v. 16), which is an answer to the prayer, v. 9. [1.] It was desired that the priests might be clothed with righteousness; it is here promised that God will clothe them with salvation, not only save them, but make them and their administrations instrumental for the salvation of his people; they shall both *save themselves and those that hear them*, and add those to the church that shall be saved. Note, Whom God clothes with righteousness he will clothe with salvation; we must pray for righteousness and then with it God will give salvation. [2.] It was desired that the saints might shout for joy; it is promised that they shall shout aloud for joy. God gives more than we ask, and when he gives salvation he will give an abundant joy.

2. God, having chosen David's family, here promises to bless that also with suitable blessings. (1.) Growing power: *There, in Zion, will I make the horn of David to bud*, v. 17. The royal dignity shall increase more and more, and constant additions be made to the lustre of it. Christ is the *horn of salvation* (denoting a plentiful and powerful salvation) which God has raised up, and made to bud, *in the house of his servant David*. David had promised to use his power for God's glory, to cut off the horns of the wicked, and to exalt the horns of the righteous (lxxv. 10); in recompence for it God here promises to make his horn to bud, for to those that have power, and use it well, more shall be given. (2.) Lasting honour: *I have ordained a lamp for my anointed*. Thou wilt light my candle, xviii. 28. That lamp is likely to burn brightly which God ordains. A lamp is a successor, for, when a lamp is almost out, another may be lighted by it; it is a succession, for by this means David shall not want a man to stand before God. Christ is the lamp and the light of the world. (3.) Complete victory: *His enemies, who have formed designs against him, will I clothe with shame*, when they shall see their designs baffled." Let the enemies of all good governors expect to be clothed with shame, and especially the enemies of the Lord Jesus and his government, who shall rise, in the great day, to *everlasting shame and contempt*. (4.) Universal prosperity: *Upon himself shall his crown flourish*, that is, his government shall be more and more his honour. This was to have its full accomplish-

ment in Jesus Christ, whose crown of honour and power shall never fade, nor the flowers of it wither. The crowns of earthly princes endure not to all generations (Prov. xxvii. 24), but Christ's crown shall endure to all eternity and the crowns reserved for his faithful subjects are such as *fade not away*.

PSALM CXXXIII.

This psalm is a brief eulogium on unity and brotherly love, which, if we did not see the miseries of discord among men, we should think needless; but we cannot say too much, it were well if we could say enough, to persuade people to live together in peace. Some conjecture that David penned this psalm upon occasion of the union between the tribes when they all met unanimously to make him king. It is a psalm of general use to all societies, smaller and larger, civil and sacred. Here is, I. The doctrine laid down of the happiness of brotherly love, ver. 1. II. The illustration of that doctrine, in two similitudes, ver. 2, 3. III. The proof of it, in a good reason given for it (ver. 3); and then we are left to make the application, which we ought to do in singing it, provoking ourselves and one another to holy love. The contents of this psalm, in our Bibles, are short, but very proper; it is "the benefit of the communion of saints."

A song of degrees of David.

BEHOOLD, how good and how pleasant *it is* for brethren to dwell together in unity! 2 *It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;* 3 *As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.*

Here see, I. What it is that is commended—*brethren's dwelling together in unity*, not only not quarrelling, and devouring one another, but delighting in each other with mutual endearments, and promoting each other's welfare with mutual services. Sometimes it is chosen, as the best expedient for preserving peace, that brethren should live asunder and at a distance from each other; that indeed may prevent enmity and strife (Gen. xiii. 9), but the goodness and pleasantness are for *brethren to dwell together* and so *to dwell in unity, to dwell even as one* (so some read it), as having one heart, one soul, one interest. David had many sons by many wives; probably he penned this psalm for their instruction, to engage them to love another, and, if they had done this, much of the mischief that arose in his family would have been happily prevented. The tribes of Israel had long had separate interests during the government of the Judges, and it was often of bad consequence; but now that they were united under one common head he would have them sensible how much it was likely to be for their advantage, especially since now the ark was fixed, and with it the place of their rendezvous for public worship and the centre of their unity. Now let them live in love.

II. How commendable it is. *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is!* It is good in itself, agreeable to the will of God, the conformity of earth to heaven. It is good for us, for our honour and comfort. It is pleasant and pleasing to God and all good men; it

brings constant delight to those who do live in unity. *Behold, how good!* We cannot conceive or express the goodness or pleasantness of it. Behold it is a rare thing and therefore admirable. Behold and wonder that there should be so much goodness and pleasantness among men, so much of heaven on this earth! Behold it is an amiable thing which will attract our hearts. Behold it is an exemplary thing, which, where it is, is imitated by us with a holy emulation.

III. How the pleasantness of it is illustrated.

1. It is fragrant as the holy anointing which was strongly perfumed, and diffused its odours, to the great delight of all the bystanders, when it was poured upon the head of Aaron, or his successor the high priest, plentifully that it ran down the face, even the collar or binding of the garment, v. 2. (1.) This ointment was holy. So must our brotherly love be, with a pure heart, devoted to God. We must love those that are begotten for his sake that begat, 1 John v. 1. (2.) This ointment was a composition made up of a divine dispensatory; God appointed the ingredients and the quantities. Thus believers are taught of God to love one another; it is the grace of his working in us. (3.) It was very precious, and the like to it was not to be made for any common use. Thus holy love is, the sight of God, of great price; and that precious indeed which is so in God's sight. (4.) It was grateful both to Aaron himself and to all about him. So is holy love; it like ointment and perfume which rejoiceth the heart. Christ's love to mankind was part of that oil of gladness with which he was anointed above his fellows. (5.) Aaron and his sons were not admitted to minister unto the Lord till they were anointed with this ointment; nor are our services acceptable to God without this holy love; if we have it not we are nothing, 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2.

2. It is fruitful. It is profitable as well as pleasing; it is as the dew; it brings abundance of blessings along with it, as numerous as the drops of dew. It cools the scorching heat of men's passions, as the evening dew cools the air and refreshes the earth. It contributes very much to our fruitfulness in everything that is good; it moistens the heart, and makes it tender and fit to receive the good seed of the word; as, on the contrary, malice and bitterness unfit us to receive it, 1 Pet. i. 1. It is as the dew of Hermon, a common blessing (for brotherly love is the beauty and benefit of civil societies), and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion, a holy hill, for it contributes greatly to the fruitfulness of sacred societies. Both Hermon and Zion wither without this dew. It is said of the dew that it *tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men*, Mic. v. 7. Nor should our love to our brethren stay for theirs to us (tho' it is publican's love), but should go before it—that is divine love.

IV. The proof of the excellency of brotherly

ove. Loving people are blessed people. For, 1. They are blessed of God, and therefore blessed indeed: *There, where brethren dwell together in unity, the Lord commands the blessing*, a complicated blessing, including all blessings. It is God's prerogative to command the blessing, man can but beg a blessing. Blessings according to the promise are commanded blessings, for he has commanded *is covenant for ever*. Blessings that take effect are commanded blessings, for *he speaks and it is done*. 2. They are everlastingly blessed. The blessing which God commands on those that dwell in love is *life for evermore*; that is the blessing of blessings. Those that dwell in love not only dwell in God, but already dwell in heaven. As the perfection of love is the blessedness of heaven, so the sincerity of love is the earnest of that blessedness. Those that live in love and peace shall have the God of love and peace with them now, and they shall be with him shortly, with him for ever, in the world of endless love and peace. How good then is love, and how pleasant!

PSALM CXXXIV.

is the last of the fifteen songs of degrees; and, if they were at any time sung all together in the temple-service, it is fitly made the conclusion of them, for the design of it is to stir up the ministers to go on with their work in the night, when the solemnities of the day were over. Some make this psalm to be a dialogue. 1. In the first two verses, the priests or Levites who at up all night to keep the watch of the house of the Lord are called upon to spend their time while they were upon the guard, not in idle talk, but in the acts of devotion. II. In the last verse those who were thus called upon to praise God pray for him that are the exhortation, either the high priest or the captain of the guard. Or thus: those who did that service did mutually short one another and pray for one another. In singing this psalm we must both stir up ourselves to give glory to God and encourage ourselves to hope for mercy and grace from him

A song of degrees.

BEHOLD, bless ye the LORD, all ye servants of the LORD, which by night stand in the house of the LORD. 2 Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the LORD. 3 The LORD that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion.

This psalm instructs us concerning a two-fold blessing:—

I. Our blessing God, that is, speaking well of him, which here we are taught to do, v. 1, 2. 1. It is a call to the Levites to do it. They are the *servants of the Lord* by office, appointed to minister in holy things; they attended the sanctuary, and kept the charge of the house of the Lord, Num. iii. 6, &c Some of them did *by night stand in the house of the Lord*, to guard the holy things of the temple, that they might not be profaned, and the richings of the temple, that they might not be plundered. While the ark was in curtains there was the more need of guards upon it. They attended likewise to see that neither the lamps on the altar nor the lamps in the candlestick went out. Probably it was usual for the devout and pious Israelites to sit up with them; we read of one that *departed not from the temple night or day*, Luke ii. 37. Now we are here called upon to *bless the Lord*.

Thus they must keep themselves awake by keeping themselves employed. Thus they must redeem time for holy exercises; and how can we spend our time better than in praising God? It would be an excellent piece of husbandry to fill up the vacancies of time with pious meditations and ejaculations; and surely it is a very modest and reasonable demand to converse with God when we have nothing else to do. Those who stood *in the house of the Lord* must remember where they were, and that holiness and holy work became that house. Let them therefore *bless the Lord*; let them all do it in concert, or each by himself; let them *lift up their hands* in the doing of it, in token of the lifting up of their hearts. *Let them lift up their hands in holiness* (so Dr. Hammond reads it) or in sanctification, as it is fit when they lift them up *in the sanctuary*; and let them remember that when they were appointed to wash before they went in to minister they were thereby taught to *lift up holy hands* in prayer and praise. 2. It is a call to us to do it, who, as Christians, are made priests to our God, and Levites, Isa. lvi. 21. We are the *servants of the Lord*; we have a place and a name in his house, in his sanctuary; we stand before him to minister to him. Even by night we are under his eye and have access to him. Let us therefore *bless the Lord*, and again bless him; think and speak of his glory and goodness. Let us *lift up our hands* in prayer, in praise, in vows; let us do our work with diligence and cheerfulness, and an elevation of mind. This exhortation is ushered in with *Behold!* a note commanding attention. Look about you, Sirs, when you are in God's presence, and conduct yourselves accordingly.

II. God's blessing us, and that is doing well for us, which we are here taught to desire, v. 3. Whether it is the watchmen's blessing their captain, or the Levites' blessing the high priest, or whoever was their chief (as many take it, because it is in the singular number, *The Lord bless thee*), or whether the blessing is pronounced by one upon many ("The Lord bless thee, each of you in particular, thee and thee; you that are blessing God, the Lord bless you"), is not material. We may learn, 1. That we need desire no more to make us happy than to be blessed of the Lord, for those whom he blesses are blessed indeed. 2. That blessings out of Zion, spiritual blessings, the blessings of the covenant, and of communion with God, are the best blessings, which we should be most earnest for. 3. It is a great encouragement to us, when we come to God for a blessing, that it is he who *made heaven and earth*, and therefore has all the blessings of both at his disposal, the upper and nether springs. 4. We ought to beg these blessings, not only for ourselves, but for others also; not only, *The Lord bless me*, but, *The Lord bless thee*, thus testifying our belief of the fulness of divine blessings, that there is enough for others

as well as for us, and our good-will also to others. We must pray for those that exhort us. Though *the less is blessed of the greater* (Heb. vii. 7), yet the greater must be prayed for by the less.

PSALM CXXXV.

This is one of the Hallelujah-psalms; that is the title of it, and that is the Amen of it, both its Alpha and its Omega. 1. It begins with a call to praise God, particularly a call to the "servants of the Lord" to praise him, as in the foregoing psalm, ver. 1—3. 11. It goes on to furnish us with matter for praise. God is to be praised, 1. As the God of Jacob, ver. 4. 2. As the God of gods, ver. 5. 3. As the God of the whole world, ver. 6, 7. 4. As a terrible God to the enemies of Israel, ver. 8—11. 5. As a gracious God to Israel, both in what he had done for them and what he would do; ver. 12—14. 6. As the only living God, all other gods being vanity and a lie, ver. 15—18. 111. It concludes with another exhortation to all persons concerned to praise God, ver. 19—21. In singing this psalm our hearts must be filled, as well as our mouths, with the high praises of God.

PRAISE ye the LORD. Praise ye the name of the LORD; praise him, O ye servants of the LORD. 2 Ye that stand in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God, 3 Praise the LORD; for the LORD is good: sing praises unto his name; for *it is pleasant*. 4 For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself, *and Israel for his peculiar treasure*.

Here is, 1. The duty we are called to—to *praise the Lord, to praise his name; praise him, and again praise him*. We must not only thank him for what he has done for us, but praise him for what he is in himself and has done for others; take all occasions to speak well of God and to give his truths and ways a good word. 2. The persons that are called upon to do this—the *servants of the Lord*, the priests and Levites *that stand in his house*, and all the devout and pious Israelites *that stand in the courts of his house* to worship there, v. 2. Those have most reason to praise God who are admitted to the privileges of his house, and those see most reason who there behold his beauty and taste his bounty; from them it is expected, for to that end they enjoy their places. Who should praise him if they do not? 3. The reasons why we should praise God. (1.) Because he whom we are to praise is *good*, and goodness is that which every body will speak well of. He is good to all, and we must give him the praise of that. His goodness is his glory, and we must make mention of it to his glory. (2.) Because the work is its own wages: *Sing praises to his name, for it is pleasant*. It is best done with a cheerful spirit, and we shall have the pleasure of having done our duty. It is a heaven upon earth to be praising God; and the pleasure of that should quite put our mouths out of taste for the pleasures of sin. (3.) Because of the peculiar privileges of God's people (v. 4): *The Lord hath chosen Jacob to himself*, and therefore Jacob is bound to praise him; for *therefore* God chose a people to himself that they might be unto him *for a name and a praise* (Jer. xiii. 11), and *therefore*

Jacob has abundant matter for praise, being thus dignified and distinguished. *Israel* is God's *peculiar treasure* above all people (Exod. xix. 5); they are his *Segullah*, a people appropriated to him, and that he has delight in, *precious in his sight and honourable*. For this distinguishing surprising favour, the seed of Jacob do not praise him, they are the most unworthy ungrateful people under the sun.

5 For I know that the LORD is great, and *that our Lord is above all gods*. 6 Whatsoever the LORD pleased, *that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places*. 7 He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings for the rain; he bringeth the wind out of his treasures. 8 Who smote the firstborn of Egypt, both man and beast. 9 *Who* sent tokens and wonders into the midst of the land of Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants. 10 Who smote great nations, and slew mighty kings; 11 Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan: 12 And gave their land *for* a heritage, a heritage unto Israel his people. 13 Thy name, O LORD, *endureth for ever; and thou art a memorial, O LORD, throughout all generations*. 14 For the LORD will judge his people, and he will reprove himself concerning his servants.

The psalmist had suggested to us the goodness of God, as the proper matter of our cheerful praises; here he suggests to us the greatness of God as the proper matter of our awful praises; and on this he is most copious because this we are less forward to consider.

1. He asserts the doctrine of God's greatness (v. 5): *The Lord is great, great indeed* who knows no limits of time or place. He asserts it with assurance, "I know that he is so; know it not only by observation of the proofs of it, but by belief of the revelation of it. I know it; I am sure of it; I know it by my own experience of the divine greatness working on my soul." He asserts it with a holy defiance of all pretenders, though they should join in confederacy against him. He is not only above any god, but above all gods, infinitely above them, between him and them there is no comparison.

II. He proves him to be a great God by the greatness of his power, v. 6. 1. He has an absolute power, and may do what he will: *Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he, and none could control him, or say unto him, What dost thou?* He does what he pleases, because he

ceases, and gives not account of any of his matters. 2. He has an almighty power and can do what he will; if he will work, none shall hinder. 3. This absolute almighty power is universal extent; he does what he will in heaven, in earth, in the seas, and in all the deep places that are in the bottom of the sea and the bowels of the earth. The gods of the heathen can do nothing; but our God can do anything and does do every thing.

III. He gives instances of his great power, 1. In the kingdom of nature, v. 7. All the powers of nature prove the greatness of the God of nature, from whom they are derived and on whom they depend. The chain of natural causes was not only framed by him at first, but is still preserved by him. (1.) It is by his power that exhalations are drawn up from the terraqueous globe. The heat of the sun raises them, but it has that power from God, and therefore it is given as an instance of the glory of God that *nothing is hidden from the heat of the sun*, xix. 6. *He causes the vapours to ascend* (not only unhelped, but unseen, by us) from the earth, *from the ends of the earth*, that is, from the seas, which the earth is surrounded. (2.) It is he who, out of those vapours so raised, forms the rain, so that the earth is no loser by the showers it sends up, for they are returned to its advantage in fruitful showers. (3.) Out of the same vapours (such is his wonderful power) he *makes lightnings for the rain*; by them he opens the bottles of heaven, and makes the clouds, that they may water the earth. Here are fire and water thoroughly reconciled by divine omnipotence. They come together, and yet the water does not quench the fire, nor the fire lick up the water, as fire on heaven did when God pleased, 1 Kings iii. 38. (4.) The same exhalations, to serve another purpose, are converted into winds, which blow where they list, from what point the compass they will, and we are so far from directing them that we cannot tell whence they come nor whither they go, but God *brings them out of his treasures* with as much exactness and design as a prudent prince orders money to issue out of his exchequer.

2. In the kingdoms of men; and here he mentions the great things God had formerly done for his people Israel, which were proofs of God's greatness as well as of his goodness, and confirmations of the truth of the scriptures of the Old Testament, which began to be written by Moses, the person employed in working those miracles. Observe God's sovereign dominion and irresistible power, (1.) In bringing Israel out of Egypt, humbling Pharaoh by many plagues, and so forcing him to let them go. These plagues are called *tokens and wonders*, because they came not in the common course of providence, but there was something miraculous in each of them. *They were sent upon Pharaoh and all his servants*, his subjects; but the Israelites, whom

God claimed for his servants, his son, his first-born, his free-born, were exempted from them, and no plague came nigh their dwelling. The death of the first-born both of men and cattle was the heaviest of all the plagues, and that which gained the point. (2.) In destroying the kingdoms of Canaan before them, v. 10. Those that were in possession of the land designed for Israel had all possible advantages for keeping possession. The people were numerous, and warlike, and confederate against Israel. They were great nations. Yet, if a great nation has a meek and mean-spirited prince, it lies exposed; but these great nations had *mighty kings*, and yet they were all smitten and slain—*Sihon and Og*, and *all the kingdoms of Canaan*, v. 10, 11. No power of hell or earth can prevent the accomplishment of the promise of God when the time, the set time, for it has come. (3.) In settling them in the land of promise. He that gives kingdoms to whomsoever he pleases gave Canaan to be a heritage to Israel his people. It came to them by inheritance, for their ancestors had the promise of it, though not the possession; and it descended as an inheritance to their seed. This was done long before, yet God is now praised for it; and with good reason, for the children were now enjoying the benefit of it.

IV. He triumphs in the perpetuity of God's glory and grace. 1. Of his glory (v. 13): *Thy name, O God! endures for ever*. God's manifestations of himself to his people have everlasting fruits and consequences. *What God doeth it shall be for ever*, Eccl. iii. 14. His name endures for ever in the constant and everlasting praises of his people; his memorial endures, has endured hitherto, and shall still endure throughout all generations of the church. This seems to refer to Exod. iii. 15, where, when God had called himself *the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, he adds, *This is my name for ever and this is my memorial unto all generations*. God is, and will be, always the same to his church, a gracious, faithful, wonder-working God; and his church is, and will be, the same to him, a thankful praising people; and thus his name *endures for ever*. 2. Of his grace. He will be kind to his people. (1.) He will plead their cause against others that contend with them. *He will judge his people*, that is, he will judge for them, and will not suffer them to be run down. (2.) He will not himself contend for ever with them, but will *repent himself concerning his servants*, and not proceed in his controversy with them; he will be entreated for them, or he will be comforted concerning them; he will return in ways of mercy to them and will delight to do them good. This verse is taken from the song of Moses, Deut. xxxii. 36.

15 The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. 16 They have mouths, but they

16 speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; 17 They have ears, but they hear not; neither is there *any* breath in their mouths. 18 They that make them are like unto them: *so is* every one that trusteth in them. 19 Bless the LORD, O house of Israel: bless the LORD, O house of Aaron: 20 Bless the LORD, O house of Levi: ye that fear the LORD, bless the LORD. 21 Blessed be the LORD out of Zion, which dwelleth at Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.

The design of these verses is,

I. To arm the people of God against idolatry and all false worship, by showing what sort of gods they were that the heathen worshipped, as we had it before, cxv. 4, &c. 1. They were gods of their own making; being so, they could have no power but what their makers gave them, and then what power could their makers receive from them? The images were the *work of men's hands*, and the deities that were supposed to inform them were as much the creatures of men's fancy and imagination. 2. They had the shape of animals, but could not perform the least act, no, not of the *animal* life. They could neither see, nor hear, nor speak, nor so much as breathe; and therefore to make them with eyes, and ears, and mouths, and nostrils, was such a jest that one would wonder how reasonable creatures could suffer themselves to be so imposed upon as to expect any good from such mock-deities. 3. Their worshippers were therefore as stupid and senseless as they were, both those that made them to be worshipped and those that trusted in them when they were made, v. 18. The worshipping of such gods as were the objects of sense, and senseless, made the worshippers sensual and senseless. Let our worshipping a God that is a Spirit make us spiritual and wise.

II. To stir up the people of God to true devotion in the worship of the true God, v. 19—21. The more deplorable the condition of the Gentile nations that worship idols is the more are we bound to thank God that we know better. Therefore, 1. Let us set ourselves about the acts of devotion, and employ ourselves in them: *Bless the Lord*, and again and again, *bless the Lord*. In the parallel place (cxv. 9—11), by way of inference from the impotency of idols, the duty thus pressed upon us is to *trust in the Lord*; here to *bless him*; by putting our trust in God we give glory to him, and those that depend upon God shall not want matter of thanksgiving to him. All persons that knew God are here called to praise him—the *house of Israel* (the nation in general), the *house of Aaron* and the *house of Levi* (the Lord's ministers that attended in his sanctuary), and all others that *feared the Lord*, though they were not of the

house of Israel. 2. Let God have the glory of all: *Blessed be the Lord*. The tribute of praise arises out of Zion. All God's works do praise him, but his saints bless him; and they need not go far to pay their tribute, for he dwells in Jerusalem, in his church, which they are members of, so that he is always nigh unto them to receive their homage. The condescensions of his grace, in dwelling with men upon the earth, call for our grateful and thankful returns, and our repeated Hallelujahs.

PSALM CXXXVI.

The scope of this psalm is the same with that of the foregoing psalm, but there is something very singular in the composition of it; for the latter half of each verse is the same, repeated throughout the psalm, "for his mercy endureth for ever," and yet no vain repetition. It is allowed that such burdensome "keepings," as we call them, add very much to the beauty of song, and help to make it moving and affecting; nor can an verse contain more weighty matter, or more worthy to be repeated, than this, that God's mercy endureth for ever; and the repetition of it here twenty-six times intimates, 1. The God's mercies to his people are thus repeated and drawn, as were, with a continuance from the beginning to the end, with progress and advance in infinitum. 2. That in every particular favour we ought to take notice of the mercy of God, and to take notice of it as enduring still, the same now that it has been, as enduring for ever, the same always that it is. 3. That the everlasting continuance of the mercy of God is very much in honour and that which he glories in, and very much the source of comfort and that which they glory in. It is that which therefore our hearts should be full of and greatly affected with, so that the most frequent mention of it, instead of cloying us, should raise us the more, because it will be the subject of our praise to all eternity. This most excellent sentence, that God's mercy endureth for ever, is magnified above all the truths concerning God, not only by the repetition of it here, but by the significant tokens of divine acceptance with which God owned the singing of it, both in Solomon's time (2 Chron. v. 13, when they sang these words, "for his mercy endureth for ever," the house was filled with a cloud) and in Jehoshaphat's time (when they sang these words, God gave them victory, 2 Chron. xx. 22), which should make us love to sing, "His mercies sure do still endure eternally." We must praise God, I. As great and good in himself, ver. 1—3. II. As the Creator of the world, ver. 5—9. III. As Israel's God and Saviour, ver. 10—23. IV. As our Redeemer, ver. 23, 24. V. As the great benefactor of the whole creation and God over all, blessed for evermore, ver. 25, 26.

GIVE thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. 2 O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy endureth for ever. 3 O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for his mercy endureth for ever. 4 To him who alone doeth great wonders: for his mercy endureth for ever. 5 To him that by wisdom made the heavens: for his mercy endureth for ever. 6 To him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for his mercy endureth for ever. 7 To him that made great lights: for his mercy endureth for ever: 8 The sun to rule by day: for his mercy endureth for ever: 9 The moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy endureth for ever.

The duty we are here again and again called to is to give thanks, to offer the sacrifice of praise continually, not the fruits of our ground or cattle, but the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name, Heb. xiii. 15. We are never so earnestly called upon to pray and repent as to give thanks; for it is the will of God that

we should abound most in the most pleasant exercises of religion, in that which is the work of heaven. Now here observe, 1. Whom we must give thanks to—to him that we receive all good from, *to the Lord, Jehovah, Israel's God* (v. 1), *the God of gods*, the God whom angels adore, from whom magistrates derive their power, and by whom all pretended cities are and shall be conquered (v. 2), *to the Lord of lords*, the Sovereign of all sovereigns, the stay and supporter of all supports, &c.

2. In all our adorations we must have an eye to God's excellency as transcendent, and to his power and dominion as incontestably great and uncontrollably supreme.

3. What we must give thanks for, not as the Pharisee that made all his thanksgivings terminate in his own praise (*God, I thank thee*, that I am so and so), but directing them all to God's glory. (1.) We must give thanks to God for his goodness and mercy (v. 1): *Give thanks to the Lord*, not only because he does good, but because he is good (all the streams must be traced up to the fountain), not only because he is merciful to us, but because his mercy endures for ever, and will be drawn out to those that shall come after us. We must give thanks to God, not only for that mercy which is now handed out to us here on earth, but for that which shall endure for ever in the glories and joys of heaven. (2.) We must give God thanks for the instances of his power and wisdom. In general (v. 4), *he alone does great wonders*. The contrivance is wonderful, the design being laid by infinite wisdom; the performance is wonderful, being acted in execution by infinite power. He alone does marvellous things; none besides can do such things, and he does them without the assistance or advice of any other. More particularly, [1.] He made the heavens, and stretched them out, and in them we not only taste his wisdom and power, but we taste his mercy in their benign influences; as long as the heavens endure the mercy of God endures to them, v. 5. [2.] He raised the earth out of the waters when he caused the dry land to appear, that it might be fit to be a habitation for man, and therein also his mercy to man is manifest (v. 6); *for the earth hath he given to the children of men*, and all its products. [3.] Having made both heaven and earth, he settled a correspondence between them, notwithstanding their distance, by making the sun, moon, and stars, which he placed in the firmament of heaven, to shed their light and influences upon this earth, v. 7—9. These are called the *great lights* because they appear out to us, for otherwise astronomers tell us that the moon is less than many of the stars, but, being nearer to the earth, it seems much greater. They are said to *rule*, not only because they govern the seasons of the year, but because they are useful to the world, and benefactors are the best rulers, Luke xxii. 25. But the empire is divided, *one rules by day*, the other *by night* (at least, the stars), and yet

all are subject to God's direction and disposal. Those rulers, therefore, which the Gentiles idolized, are the world's servants and God's subjects. *Sun, stand thou still, and thou moon.*

10 To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: 11 And brought out Israel from among them: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: 12 With a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: 13 To him which divided the Red sea into parts: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: 14 And made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: 15 But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. 16 To him which led his people through the wilderness: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. 17 To him which smote great kings: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: 18 And slew famous kings: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: 19 Sihon king of the Amorites: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: 20 And Og the king of Bashan: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: 21 And gave their land for a heritage: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: 22 *Even* a heritage unto Israel his servant: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

The great things God did for Israel, when he first formed them into a people, and set up his kingdom among them, are here mentioned, as often elsewhere in the psalms, as instances both of the power of God and of the particular kindness he had for Israel. See cxxxv. 8, &c. 1. He brought them out of Egypt, v. 10—12. That was a mercy which endured long to them, and our redemption by Christ, which was typified by that, does indeed endure for ever, for it is an eternal redemption. Of all the plagues of Egypt, none is mentioned but the death of the first-born, because that was the conquering plague; by that God, who in all the plagues distinguished the Israelites from the Egyptians, brought them at last from among them, not by a wile, but with a strong hand and an arm stretched out to reach far and do great things. These miracles of mercy, as they proved Moses's commission to give law to Israel, so they laid Israel under lasting obligations to obey that law, Exod. xx. 2. 2. He forced them a way through the Red Sea, which obstructed them at their first setting out. By the power he has to control the common course of nature he divided the sea into two parts, between

which he opened a path, and made Israel to pass between the parts, now that they were to enter into covenant with him; see Jer. xxxiv. 18. He not only divided the sea, but gave his people courage to go through it when it was divided, which was an instance of God's power over men's hearts, as the former of his power over the waters. And, to make it a miracle of justice as well as mercy, the same Red Sea that was a lane to the Israelites was a grave to their pursuers. There he shook off Pharaoh and his host. 3. He conducted them through a vast howling wilderness (v. 16); there he led them and fed them. Their camp was victualled and fortified by a constant series of miracles for forty years; though they loitered and wandered there, they were not lost. And in this the mercy of God, and the constancy of that mercy, were the more observable because they often provoked him in the wilderness and grieved him in the desert. 4. He destroyed kings before them, to make room for them (v. 17, 18), not deposed and banished them, but smote and slew them, in which appeared his wrath against them, but his mercy, his never-failing mercy, to Israel. And that which magnified it was that they were *great kings and famous kings*, yet God subdued them as easily as if they had been the least, and weakest, and meanest, of the children of men. They were wicked kings, and then their grandeur and lustre would not secure them from the justice of God. The more great and famous they were the more did God's mercy to Israel appear in giving such kings for them. Sihon and Og are particularly mentioned, because they were the first two that were conquered on the other side Jordan, v. 19, 20. It is good to enter into the detail of God's favours and not to view them in the gross, and in each instance to observe, and own, that God's *mercy endureth for ever*. 5. He put them in possession of a good land, v. 21, 22. He whose the earth is, and the fulness thereof, the world and those that dwell therein, took land from one people and gave it to another, as pleased him. The *iniquity of the Amorites was now full*, and therefore it was taken from them. *Israel was his servant*, and, though they had been provoking in the wilderness, yet he intended to have some service out of them, for to them pertained the *service of God*. As he said to the Egyptians, *Let my people go, so to the Canaanites, Let my people in*, that they may serve me. In this God's *mercy to them endureth for ever*, because it was a figure of the heavenly Canaan, the *mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life*.

23 Who remembered us in our low estate: for his mercy *endureth for ever*: 24 And hath redeemed us from our enemies: for his mercy *endureth for ever*. 25 Who giveth food to all

flesh: for his mercy *endureth for ever*. 26 O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for his mercy *endureth for ever*.

God's everlasting mercy is here celebrated. 1. In the redemption of his church, v. 23. 24. In the many redemptions wrought for the Jewish church out of the hands of their oppressors (when, in the years of their servitude, their estate was very low, God remembered them, and raised them up saviours, the judges, and David, at length, by whom God gave them rest from all their enemies), but especially in the great redemption of the universal church, of which these were types, we have a great deal of reason to say, "*He remembered us, the children of men, in our low estate, in our lost estate, for his mercy endureth for ever* ; he sent his Son to redeem us from sin, and death, and hell, and all our spiritual enemies, for his mercy *endureth for ever* ; he was sent to redeem us, and not the angels that sinned, for his mercy *endureth for ever*." 2. In the provision he makes for all the creatures (v. 25): *He gives food to all flesh*. It is an instance of the mercy of God's providence that wherever he has given life he gives food agreeable and sufficient; and he is a good housekeeper that provides for so large a family. 3. In all his glories, and all his gifts (v. 26): *Give thanks to the God of heaven*. This denotes him to be a glorious God, and the glory of his mercy is to be taken notice of in our praises. *The riches of his glory are displayed in the vessels of his mercy*, Rom. ix. 23. It also denotes him to be the great benefactor, *for every good and perfect gift is from above, from the Father of lights, the God of heaven*; and we should trace every stream to the fountain. This and that particular mercy may perhaps endure but a while, but the mercy that is in God *endures for ever*; it is an inexhaustible fountain.

PSALM CXXXVII.

There are divers psalms which are thought to have been penned in the latter days of the Jewish church, when prophecy was expiring and the canon of the Old Testament ready to be closed up, but none of them appears so plainly to be of a late date as this, which was penned when the people of God were captives in Babylon, and there insulted over by their proud oppressors; probably it was towards the latter end of their captivity; for now they saw the destruction of Babylon hastening on apace (ver. 8), which would be their discharge. It is a mournful psalm, a lamentation; and the Septuagint makes it one of the lamentations of Jeremiah, naming him for the author of it. Here, I. The melancholy captives cannot enjoy themselves, ver. 1, 2. II. They cannot humour their proud oppressors, ver. 3, 4. III. They cannot forget Jerusalem, ver. 5, 6. IV. They cannot forgive Edom and Babylon, ver. 7-9. In singing this psalm we must be much affected with the concerns of the church, especially that part of it that is in affliction, laying the sorrows of God's people near our hearts, comforting ourselves in the prospect of the deliverance of the church and the ruin of its enemies, in due time, but carefully avoiding all personal animosities, and not mixing the heaven of malice with our sacrifices.

BY the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. 2 We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. 3 For there they that carried us away captive required of us

song; and they that wasted us *re-
quired of us mirth, saying, Sing us
e of the songs of Zion.* 4 How shall
sing the LORD's song in a strange
land? 5 If I forget thee, O Jerusa-
lem, let my right hand forget *her
playing.* 6 If I do not remember
thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof
of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusa-
lem above my chief joy.

We have here the daughter of Zion covered
with a cloud, and dwelling with the daughter
of Babylon; the people of God in tears, but
weeping in tears. Observe,

I. The mournful posture they were in as
to their affairs and as to their spirits. 1.
They were posted *by the rivers of Babylon,*
a strange land, a great way from their own
country, whence they were brought as pri-
soners of war. The land of Babylon was
a house of bondage to that people, as
Egypt had been in their beginning. Their
querors quartered them *by the rivers,* with
design to employ them there, and keep them
at work in their galleys; or perhaps they
used it as the most melancholy place, and
therefore most suitable to their sorrowful
moods. If they must build houses there (Jer.
x. 5), it shall not be in the cities, the places
of discourse, but by the rivers, the places of
solitude, where they might mingle their tears
with the streams. We find some of them by
the *river Chebar* (Ezek. i. 3), others by the
river Ulai, Dan. viii. 2. 2. There they *sat
down* to indulge their grief by poring on their
sorrows. Jeremiah had taught them under
the yoke to *sit alone, and keep silence,* and
to *be dumb in the dust*, Lam. iii. 28, 29.
They sat down, as those that expected to
die, and were content, since it was the will
of God that it must be so." 3. Thoughts of
their sorrows drew tears from their eyes; and it was
a sudden passion of weeping, such as
is sometimes put into by a trouble that
surprises us, but they were deliberate tears
(*sat down and wept*), tears with considera-
tion—we *wept when we remembered Zion*, the
city on which the temple was built.
Their affection to God's house swallowed up
their concern for their own houses. They re-
membered Zion's former glory and the satis-
faction they had had in Zion's courts, Lam.
i. 9. *Jerusalem remembered, in the days of
her misery, all her pleasant things which she
had in the days of old*, Ps. xlii. 4. They re-
membered Zion's present desolations, and
poured the dust thereof, which was a good
remedy, that the time for God to favour it was
far off, cii. 13, 14. 4. They laid by their
instruments of music (v. 2): *We hung our
harps upon the willows.* (1.) The harps they
laid by for their own diversion and entertain-
ment. These they laid aside, both because
of their judgment that they ought not to

use them now that God called to weeping
and mourning (Isa. xxii. 12), and their spirits
were so sad that they had no hearts to use
them; they brought their harps with them,
designing perhaps to use them for the alle-
viating of their grief, but it proved so great
that it would not admit the experiment.
Music makes some people melancholy. *As
vinegar upon nitre, so is he that sings songs to
a heavy heart.* (2.) The harps they used in
God's worship, the Levites' harps. These
they did not throw away, hoping they might
yet again have occasion to use them, but
they laid them aside because they had no pre-
sent use for them; God had cut them out
of other work by *turning their feasting into
mourning and their songs into lamentations*,
Amos. viii. 10. Every thing is beautiful in
its season. They did not hide their harps in
the bushes, or the hollows of the rocks; but
hung them up in view, that the sight of them
might affect them with this deplorable change.
Yet perhaps they were faulty in doing this;
for praising God is never out of season; it is
his will that we should in *every thing give
thanks*, Isa. xxiv. 15, 16.

II. The abuses which their enemies put
upon them when they were in this melan-
choly condition, v. 3. They had *carried them
away captive* from their own land and then
wasted them in the land of their captivity,
took what little they had from them. But
this was not enough; to complete their woes
they insulted over them: They *required of us
mirth and a song.* Now, 1. This was very
barbarous and inhuman; even an enemy, in
misery, is to be pitied and not trampled upon.
It argues a base and sordid spirit to upbraid
those that are in distress either with their
former joys or with their present griefs, or
to challenge those to be merry who, we know,
are out of tune for it. This is adding afflic-
tion to the afflicted. 2. It was very profane
and impious. No songs would serve them
but the *songs of Zion*, with which God had
been honoured; so that in this demand they
reflected upon God himself as Belshazzar,
when he drank wine in temple-bowls. Their
enemies *mocked at their sabbaths*, Lam. i. 7.

III. The patience wherewith they bore
these abuses, v. 4. They had laid by their
harps, and would not resume them, no, not
to ingratiate themselves with those at whose
mercy they lay; they would not answer those
fools according to their folly. Profane scoff-
ers are not to be humoured, nor pearls cast
before swine. David prudently *kept silence
even from good* when the *wicked were before
him*, who, he knew, would ridicule what he
said and make a jest of it, Ps. xxxix. 1, 2.
The reason they gave is very mild and pious:
*How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange
land?* They do not say, "How shall we sing
when we are so much in sorrow?" If that
had been all, they might perhaps have put a
force upon themselves so far as to oblige
their masters with a song; but "It is the

Lord's song; it is a sacred thing; it is peculiar to the temple-service, and therefore we dare not sing it in the land of a stranger, among idolaters." We must not serve common mirth, much less profane mirth, with any thing that is appropriated to God, who is sometimes to be honoured by a religious silence as well as by religious speaking.

IV. The constant affection they retained for Jerusalem, the city of their solemnities, even now that they were in Babylon. Though their enemies banter them for talking so much of Jerusalem, and even doting upon it, their love to it is not in the least abated; it is what they may be jeered for, but will never be jeered out of, *v. 5, 6.* Observe,

1. How these pious captives stood affected to Jerusalem. (1.) Their heads were full of it. It was always in their minds; they remembered it; they did not forget it, though they had been long absent from it; many of them had never seen it, nor knew any thing of it but by report, and by what they had read in the scripture, yet it was graven upon the palms of their hands, and even its ruins were continually before them, which was an evidence of their faith in the promise of its restoration in due time. In their daily prayers they opened their windows towards Jerusalem; and how then could they forget it? (2.) Their hearts were full of it. They *preferred it above their chief joy*, and therefore they remembered it and could not forget it. What we love we love to think of. Those that rejoice in God do, for his sake, make Jerusalem their joy, and prefer it before that, whatever it is, which is the head of their joy, which is dearest to them in this world. A godly man will prefer a public good before any private satisfaction or gratification whatsoever.

2. How stedfastly they resolved to keep up this affection, which they express by a solemn imprecation of mischief to themselves if they should let it fall: "Let me be for ever disabled either to sing or play on the harp if I so far forget the religion of my country as to make use of my songs and harps for the pleasing of Babylon's sons or the praising of Babylon's gods. *Let my right hand forget her art*" (which the hand of an expert musician never can, unless it be withered), "nay, *let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth*, if I have not a good word to say for Jerusalem wherever I am." Though they dare not sing Zion's songs among the Babylonians, yet they cannot forget them, but, as soon as ever the present restraint is taken off, they will sing them as readily as ever, notwithstanding the long disuse.

7 Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, *Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof.* 8 O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy *shall he be*, that re-

wardeth thee as thou hast served us. 9 Happy *shall he be*, that taketh a dasheth thy little ones against thy stones.

The pious Jews in Babylon, having afflicted themselves with the thoughts of the ruins of Jerusalem, here please themselves with the prospect of the ruin of her implacable enemies; but this not from spirit of revenge, but from a holy zeal for the glory of God and the honour of his kingdom.

I. The Edomites will certainly be reckoned with, and all others that were accessaries to the destruction of Jerusalem, that were aiding and abetting, that *helped forward affliction* (Zech. i. 15) and triumphed in that *said, in the day of Jerusalem*, the day of her judgment, "*Rase it, rase it to the foundations; down with it, down with it; do not leave one stone upon another.*" Thus they made the Chaldean army more furious, who were already so enraged that they needed no spur. Thus they put shame upon Israel who would be looked upon as a people worthy to be cut off when their next neighbours had such an ill-will to them. And all this was a fruit of the old enmity of Esau against Jacob, because he got the birthright and the blessing, and a branch of that more ancient enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent: *Lord, remember them*, says the psalmist, which is an appeal to his justice against them. Far be it from us to avenge ourselves, if ever it should be in our power, but we will leave it to him who has said, *Vengeance is mine.* Note, Those that are glad at calamities, especially the calamities of Jerusalem, shall not go unpunished. Those that are confederate with the persecutors of good people, and stir them up, and set them on, and are pleased with what they do, shall certainly be called to account for it another day, and God will remember it against them.

II. Babylon is the principal, and it will come to her turn too to drink of the cup of tremblings, the very dregs of it (*v. 8, 9*): *daughter of Babylon! proud and secure thou art, we know well, by the scriptures truth, thou art to be destroyed*, or (as Hammond reads it) *who art the destroyer*. The destroyers shall be destroyed, *Rev. x. 10.* And perhaps it is with reference to that that the man of sin, the head of the New Testament Babylon, is called a *son of perdition*, 2 Thess. ii. 3. The destruction of Babylon being foreseen as a sure destruction (thou art to be destroyed), it is spoken of. As a just destruction. She shall be paid her own coin: "Thou shalt be served as thou hast served us, as barbarously used by destroyers as we have been by thee." *Rev. xviii. 6.* Let not those expect to receive mercy who, when they had power, did show mercy. 2. As an utter destruction.

very little ones of Babylon, when it is taken by storm, and all in it are put to the sword, shall be dashed to pieces by the enraged and merciless conqueror. None escape if these little ones perish. Those are the seed of another generation; so that, if they be cut off, the ruin will be not only total, as Jerusalem's was, but final. It is sunk like a millstone into the sea, never to rise. 3. As destruction which should reflect honour upon the instruments of it. Happy shall those be that do it; for they are fulfilling God's counsels; and therefore he calls Cyrus, who did it, his *servant*, his *shepherd*, his *ointed* (Isa. xlv. 28, xlv. 1), and the soldiers that were employed in it his *sanctified ones*, Isa. xliii. 3. They are making way for the enlargement of God's Israel, and happy are those who are in any way serviceable to that. The fall of the New-Testament Babylon will be the triumph of all the saints, Rev. xix. 1.

PSALM CXXXVIII.

Does not appear, nor is it material to enquire, upon what occasion David penned this psalm; but in it, 1. He looks back with thankfulness upon the experiences he had had of God's goodness to him, ver. 1—3. 2. He looks forward with comfort, in hopes, that others would go on to praise God like him, ver. 4, 5. 3. That God would go on to do good to him, ver. 6—8. In singing this psalm we must in like manner devote ourselves to God's praise and glory and repose ourselves in his power and goodness.

A psalm of David.

I WILL praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee. 2 I will worship to thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name. 3 In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul. 4 All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O LORD, when they hear the words of thy mouth. 5 Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the LORD: for great is the glory of the LORD.

I. How he would praise God, compare xxi.

1. He will praise him with sincerity and al—"With my heart, with my whole heart, with that which is within me and with all that is within me, with uprightness of intention and fervency of affection, inward expressions agreeing with outward expressions." 2. With freedom and boldness: *Before the gods will I sing praise unto thee*, before the princes, and judges, and great men, other those of other nations that visited him, and those of his own nation that attended on him, even in their presence. He will not only praise God with his heart, which we may do by pious ejaculations in any company, but will sing praise if there be occasion. Note, Praising God is work which the greatest men need not be ashamed of; it is the work of angels, the work of heaven. *Before the angels* (so some understand it), that is,

in religious assemblies, where there is a special presence of angels, 1 Cor. xi. 10. 3. In the way that God had appointed: *I will worship towards thy holy temple*. The priests alone went into the temple; the people, at the nearest, did but worship towards it, and that they might do at a distance. Christ is our temple, and towards him we must look with an eye of faith, as Mediator between us and God, in all our praises of him. Heaven is God's holy temple, and thitherward we must lift up our eyes in all our addresses to God. *Our Father in heaven*.

II. What he would praise God for. 1. For the fountain of his comforts—for thy *lovingkindness* and for thy *truth*, for thy goodness and for thy promise, mercy hidden in thee and mercy revealed by thee, that God is a gracious God in himself and has engaged to be so to all those that trust in him. *For thou hast magnified thy word* (thy promise, which is truth) *above all thy name*. God has made himself known to us in many ways in creation and providence, but most clearly by his word. The judgments of his mouth are magnified even above those of his hand, and greater things are done by them. The wonders of grace exceed the wonders of nature; and what is discovered of God by revelation is much greater than what is discovered by reason. In what God had done for David his faithfulness to his word appeared more illustriously, and redounded more to his glory, than any other of his attributes. Some good interpreters understand it of Christ, the essential Word, and of his gospel, which are magnified above all the discoveries God had before made of himself to the fathers. He that magnified the law, and made that honourable, magnifies the gospel much more. 2. For the streams flowing from that fountain, in which he himself had tasted that the Lord is gracious, v. 3. He had been in affliction, and he remembers, with thankfulness, (1.) The sweet communion he then had with God. He cried, he prayed, and prayed earnestly, and God answered him, gave him to understand that his prayer was accepted and should have a gracious return in due time. The intercourse between God and his saints is carried on by his promises and their prayers. (2.) The sweet communications he then had from God: *Thou strengthenedst me with strength in my soul*. This was the answer to his prayer, for God gives more than good words, xx. 6. Observe, [1.] It was a speedy answer: *In the day when I cried*. Note, Those that trade with heaven by prayer grow rich by quick returns. *While we are yet speaking God hears*, Isa. lxv. 24. [2.] It was a spiritual answer. God gave him strength in his soul, and that is a real and valuable answer to the prayer of faith in the day of affliction. If God give us strength in our souls to bear the burdens, resist the temptations, and do the duties of an afflicted state, if he strengthen us to keep hold of himself

by faith, to maintain the peace of our own minds and to wait with patience for the issue, we must own that he has answered us, and we are bound to be thankful.

III. What influence he hoped that his praising God would have upon others, v. 4, 5. David was himself a king, and therefore he hoped that kings would be wrought upon by his experiences, and his example, to embrace religion; and, if kings became religious, their kingdoms would be every way better. Now, 1. This may have reference to the kings that were neighbours to David, as Hiram and others. "They shall all praise thee." When they visited David, and, after his death, when they sought the presence of Solomon (as *all the kings of the earth* are expressly said to have done, 2 Chron. ix. 23), they readily joined in the worship of the God of Israel. 2. It may look further, to the calling of the Gentiles and the discipling of all nations by the gospel of Christ, of whom it is said that *all kings shall fall down before him*, Ps. lxxii. 11. Now it is here foretold, (1.) That the *kings of the earth shall hear the words of God*. All that came near David should hear them from him, cxix. 46. In the latter days the preachers of the gospel should be sent into all the world. (2.) That then they shall praise God, as all those have reason to do that hear his word, and receive it in the light and love of it, Acts xiii. 48. (3.) That they shall *sing in the ways of the Lord*, in the ways of his providence and grace towards them; they shall rejoice in God, and give glory to him, however he is pleased to deal with them in the ways of their duty and obedience to him. Note, Those that walk in the ways of the Lord have reason to sing in those ways, to go on in them with a great deal of cheerfulness, for they are ways of pleasantness, and it becomes us to be pleasant in them; and, if we are so, *great is the glory of the Lord*. It is very much for the honour of God that kings should walk in his ways, and that all those who walk in them should sing in them, and so proclaim to all the world that he is a good Master and his work its own wages.

6 Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off. 7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me. 8 The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands.

David here comforts himself with three things:—

I. The favour God bears to his humble

people (v. 6): *Though the Lord be high*, and neither needs any of his creatures nor can be benefited by them, *yet has he respect unto the lowly*, smiles upon them as well pleased with them, overlooks heaven and earth to cast a gracious look upon them (Isa. lvii. 15, lvi. 1), and, sooner or later, he will put honour upon them, while *he knows the proud afar off*, knows them, but disowns them and rejects them, how proudly soever they pretend to his favour. Dr. Hammond makes this to be the sum of that gospel which the kings of the earth shall hear and welcome—that penitent sinners shall be accepted of God, but the impenitent cast out; witness the instance of the Pharisee and the publican, Luke xviii.

II. The care God takes of his afflicted or pressed people, v. 7. David, though a great and good man, expects to *walk in the midst of trouble*, but encourages himself with hope. 1. That God would comfort him: "Wilt thou revive me, and make me easy and cheerful under my troubles." Divine consolation have enough in them to revive us even when we walk in the midst of troubles and are ready to die away for fear. 2. That he would protect him, and plead his cause: "*Thou shalt stretch forth thy hand*, though not against mine enemies to destroy them, yet *against the wrath of my enemies*, to restrain that and set bounds to it." 3. That he would in due time work deliverance for him: *Thy right hand shall save me*. As he has one hand to stretch out against his enemies, so he has another to save his own people. Christ is the right hand of the Lord, that shall save all those who serve him.

III. The assurance we have that whatever good work God has begun in and for his people he will perform it (v. 8): *The LORD will perfect that which concerns me*. 1. That which is most needful for me; and he knows best what is so. We are *careful andumbered about many things* that do not concern us, but he knows what are the things that really are of consequence to us (Matt. vi. 33) and he will order them for the best. 2. That which we are most concerned about. Every good man is most concerned about his duty to God and his happiness in God, that the former may be faithfully done and the latter effectually secured; and if indeed these are the things that our hearts are most upon, and concerning which we are most solicitous, there is a good work begun in us, and he that has begun it will perfect it, we may be confident he will, Phil. i. 6. Observe, (1.) Where the psalmist builds this confidence upon: *Thy mercy, O Lord! endureth for ever*. This he had made very much the matter of his praise (xiii. 6), and therefore he could help with the more assurance make it the matter of his hope. For, if we give God the glory of his mercy, we may take to ourselves the comfort of it. Our hopes that we shall persevere must be founded, not upon our own

strength, for that will fail us, but upon the mercy of God, for that will not fail. It is well leaded, "*Lord, thy mercy endures for ever* ; let me be for ever a monument of it." (2.) What use he makes of this confidence ; it does not supersede, but quicken prayer ; he turns his expectation into a petition : "*Forsake not, do not let go, the work of thy own hands.*" Lord, I am the work of thy own hands, my soul is so, do not forsake me ; my concerns are so, do not lay by thy care of them." Whatever good there is in us it is the work of God's own hands ; *he works in us both to will and to do* ; it will fail if he forsake it ; but his glory, as Jehovah, a perfecting God, is so much concerned in the progress of it to the end that we may in faith pray, "Lord, do not forsake it." Whom he loves he loves to the end ; and, as for God, his work is perfect.

PSALM CXXXIX.

Some of the Jewish doctors are of opinion that this is the most excellent of all the psalms of David ; and a very pious devout meditation is it upon the doctrine of God's omniscience, which we should therefore have our hearts fixed upon and filled with in singing this psalm. I. This doctrine is here asserted, and fully laid down, ver. 1—6. II. It is confirmed by two arguments :—1. God is every where present ; therefore he knows all, ver. 7—12. 2. He made us, therefore he knows us, ver. 13—16. III. Some inferences are drawn from this doctrine. 1. It may fill us with pleasing admiration of God, ver. 17, 18. 2. With a holy dread and detestation of sin and sinners, ver. 19—22. 3. With a holy satisfaction in our own integrity, concerning which we may appeal to God, ver. 23, 24. This great and self-evident truth, That God knows our hearts and the hearts of all the children of men, if we did but mix faith with it and seriously consider it and apply it, would have a great influence upon our holiness and upon our comfort.

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. 2 Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. 3 Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. 4 For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. 5 Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. 6 Much knowledge is too wonderful for me ; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.

David here lays down this great doctrine, that the God with whom we have to do has perfect knowledge of us, and that all the motions and actions both of our inward and our outward man are naked and open before him.

I. He lays down this doctrine in the way of address to God ; he says it to him, acknowledging it to him, and giving him the glory of it. Divine truths look fully as well when they are prayed over as when they are preached over, and much better than when they are spouted over. When we speak of God to him himself we shall find ourselves concerned to speak with the utmost degree both of sincerity and reverence, which will be likely to make the impressions the deeper.

II. He lays it down in a way of application

to himself, not, "Thou hast known *all*," but "Thou hast known *me* ; that is it which I am most concerned to believe and which it will be most profitable for me to consider." Then we know these things for our good when we know them for ourselves, Job v. 27. When we acknowledge, "Lord, all souls are thine," we must add, "My soul is thine ; thou that hatest all sin hatest my sin ; thou that art good to all, good to Israel, art good to me." So here, "*Thou hast searched me, and known me* ; known me as thoroughly as we know that which we have most diligently and exactly searched into." David was a king, and the hearts of kings are unsearchable to their subjects (Prov. xxv. 3), but they are not so to their Sovereign.

III. He descends to particulars : "Thou knowest me wherever I am and whatever I am doing, me and all that belongs to me." 1. "*Thou knowest me and all my motions, my down-sitting to rest, my up-rising to work, with what temper of mind I compose myself when I sit down and stir up myself when I rise up, what my soul reposes itself in as its stay and support, what it aims at and reaches towards as its felicity and end.*" Thou knowest me when I come home, how I walk before my house, and when I go abroad, on what errands I go." 2. "Thou knowest all my imaginations. Nothing is more close and quick than thought ; it is always unknown to others ; it is often unobserved by ourselves, and yet *thou understandest my thought afar off.*" Though my thoughts be ever so foreign and distant from one another, thou understandest the chain of them, and canst make out their connexion, when so many of them slip my notice that I myself cannot." Or, "*Thou understandest them afar off*, even before I think them, and long after I have thought them and have myself forgotten them." Or, "*Thou understandest them from afar* ; from the height of heaven thou seest into the depths of the heart," xxxiii. 14. 3. "Thou knowest me and all my designs and undertakings ; *thou compassest every particular path ; thou siftest (or winnowest) my path*" (so some), "so as thoroughly to distinguish between the good and evil of what I do," as by sifting we separate between the corn and the chaff. All our actions are ventilated by the judgment of God, xvii. 3. God takes notice of every step we take, every right step and every by-step. He is acquainted with all our ways, intimately acquainted with them ; he knows what rule we walk by, what end we walk towards, what company we walk with. 4. "*Thou knowest me in all my retirements ; thou knowest my lying down ; when I am withdrawn from all company, and am reflecting upon what has passed all day and composing myself to rest, thou knowest what I have in my heart and with what thoughts I go to bed.*" 5. "Thou knowest me, and all I say (v. 4) : *There is not a word in my tongue, not a vain word, nor a good word, but thou knowest it altogether*

knowest what it meant, from what thought it came, and with what design it was uttered. There is not a word at my tongue's end, ready to be spoken, yet checked and kept in, but thou knowest it." *When there is not a word in my tongue, O Lord! thou knowest all* (so some read it); for thoughts are words to God. 6. "Thou knowest me in every part of me: *Thou hast beset me behind and before*, so that, go which way I will, I am under thy eye and cannot possibly escape it. Thou hast *laid thy hand upon me*, and I cannot run away from thee." Wherever we are we are under the eye and hand of God. Perhaps it is an allusion to the physician's laying his hand upon his patient to feel how his pulse beats or what temper he is in. God knows us as we know not only what we see, but what we feel and have our hands upon. *All his saints are in his hand.*

IV. He speaks of it with admiration (v. 6): *It is too wonderful for me; it is high.* 1. "Thou hast such a knowledge of me as I have not of myself, nor can have. I cannot take notice of all my own thoughts, nor make such a judgment of myself as thou makest of me." 2. "It is such a knowledge as I cannot comprehend, much less describe. That thou knowest all things I am sure, but how I cannot tell." We cannot by searching find out how God searches and finds out us; nor do we know how we are known.

7 Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? 8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou *art* there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou *art there*. 9 If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; 10 Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. 11 If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. 12 Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light *are* both alike *to thee*. 13 For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. 14 I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous *are* thy works; and *that* my soul knoweth right well. 15 My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. 16 Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfected; and in thy book all my members were written, *which in*

continuance were fashioned, when *yet there was none of them.*

It is of great use to us to know the certainty of the things wherein we have been instructed, that we may not only believe them, but be able to tell why we believe them, and to give a reason of the hope that is in us. David is sure that God perfectly knows him and all his ways,

I. Because he is always under his eye. God is omnipresent, he must needs be omniscient; but he is omnipresent; this supposes the infinity and immensity of his being, from which follows the ubiquity of his presence; heaven and earth include the whole creation, and the Creator fills both (Jer. xxxi. 24); he not only knows both, and governs both, but he fills both. Every part of the creation is under God's intuition and influence. David here acknowledges this also with appreciation and sees himself thus open before God.

1. No flight can remove us out of God's presence: "*Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, from thy presence*, that is, from thy spirit's presence, from thyself, who art a Spirit. *God is a Spirit*, and therefore it is folly to think that because we cannot see him he cannot see us: *Whither shall I flee from thy presence?* Not that he desired to go away from God; no, he desired nothing more than to be near him; but he only puts the case, "Suppose I should be so foolish as to think of getting out of thy sight, that I might shake off the awe of thee, suppose I should think of revolting from my obedience to thee, or of disowning a dependence on thee and of shifting for myself, alas! whither can I go?" The heathen could say, *Quocunque te flexeris ibi Deum videbis occurrentem tibi*—*Whithersoever thou turnest thyself, thou wilt see God meeting thee*. Seneca. He specifies the most remote and distant places, and counts upon meeting God in them. (1.) In heaven: "*If I ascend thither*, as I hope to do shortly, *thou art there*, and it will be an eternal bliss to be with thee there." Heaven is a vast large place, replenished with an innumerable company, and yet there is no escaping God's eye there, in any corner, or in any crowd. The inhabitants of that world have as necessary a dependence upon God and lie as open to his strict scrutiny, as the inhabitants of this. (2.) In hell—in Sheol, which may be understood of the depth of the earth, the very centre of it. Should we descend as deep as we can under ground, and thither to hide ourselves there, we should be mistaken; God knows that path which the vulture's eye never saw, and to him the earth is all surface. Or it may be understood of the state of the dead. When we are removed out of the sight of all living, yet not out of the sight of the living God; from his eye we cannot hide ourselves in the grave. Or it may be understood of the place of the damned: "*If I make my bed in hell* (an uncomfortable

ace to make a bed in, where there is no rest
y or night, yet thousands will make their
ed for ever in those flames), behold, thou art
ere, in thy power and justice. God's wrath
the fire which will there burn everlastingly,
v. xiv. 10. (3.) In the remotest corners
this world: "*If I take the wings of the
orning, the rays of the morning-light (called
e wings of the sun, Mal. iv. 2), than which
othing more swift, and flee upon them to
e uttermost parts of the sea, or of the earth
ob xxxviii. 12, 13), should I flee to the
ost distant and obscure islands (the ultima
ule, the Terra incognita), I should find thee
ere; there shall thy hand lead me, as far as
go, and thy right hand shall hold me, that I
n go no further, that I cannot go out of thy
ach.*" God soon arrested Jonah when he
d to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

2. No veil can hide us from God's eye, no,
ot that of the thickest darkness, v. 11, 12.
*If I say, Yet the darkness shall cover me,
hen nothing else will, alas! I find myself
ceived; the curtains of the evening will
and me in no more stead than the wings of
e morning; even the night shall be light
out me.* That which often favours the es-
ape of a pursued criminal, and the retreat
a beaten army, will do me no kindness in
eing from thee." When God divided be-
een the light and darkness it was with a
ervation of this prerogative, that to him-
lf the darkness and the light should still be
th alike. "*The darkness darkeneth not
om thee, for there is no darkness nor shadow
death where the workers of iniquity may
de themselves.*" No hypocritical mask or
sguise, how specious soever, can save any
erson or action from appearing in a true
ght before God. Secret haunts of sin are
open before God as the most open and
refaced villanies.

II. Because he is the work of his hands.
e that framed the engine knows all the
otions of it. God made us, and therefore
o doubt he knows us; he saw us when we
ere in the forming, and can we be hidden
om him now that we are formed? This ar-
ument he insists upon (v. 13—16): "*Thou
st possessed my reins; thou art Master of
y most secret thoughts and intentions and
e innermost recesses of my soul; thou not
ly knowest, but governest, them, as we do
at which we have possession of; and the
possession thou hast of my reins is a right-
l possession, for thou coveredst me in my
other's womb, that is, thou madest me (Job
11), thou madest me in secret. The soul
ncealed from all about us. Who knows
e things of a man, save the spirit of a man?"*
Cor. ii. 11. Hence we read of the hidden
an of the heart. But it was God himself
at thus covered us, and therefore he can,
hen he pleases, discover us; when he hid
from all the world he did not intend to
de us from himself. Concerning the forma-
on of man, of each of us,

1. The glory of it is here given to God,
entirely to him; for it is he that has made us
and not we ourselves. "*I will praise thee, the
author of my being; my parents were only
the instruments of it. It was done, (1.)
Under the divine inspection: My substance,
when hid in the womb, nay, when it was yet
but in fieri—in the forming, an unshapen em-
bryo, was not hidden from thee; thy eyes did
see my substance. (2.) By the divine opera-
tion. As the eye of God saw us then, so his
hand wrought us; we were his work. (3.)
According to the divine model: In thy book
all my members were written. Eternal wis-
dom formed the plan, and by that, almighty
power raised the noble structure.*

2. Glorious things are here said concern-
ing it. The generation of man is to be con-
sidered with the same pious veneration as
his creation at first. Consider it, (1.) As a
great marvel, a great miracle we might call
it, but that it is done in the ordinary course
of nature. We are fearfully and wonderfully
made; we may justly be astonished at the
admirable contrivance of these living tem-
ples, the composition of every part, and the
harmony of all together. (2.) As a great
mystery, a mystery of nature: *My soul knows
right well* that it is marvellous, but how to
describe it for any one else I know not; for
*I was made in secret, and curiously wrought
in the womb as in the lowest parts of the
earth, so privately, and so far out of sight.*
(3.) As a great mercy, that all our members
in continuance were fashioned, according as
they were written in the book of God's wise
counsel, when as yet there was none of them;
or, as some read it, and none of them was left
out. If any of our members had been want-
ing in God's book, they would have been
wanting in our bodies, but, through his
goodness, we have all our limbs and senses,
the want of any of which might have made
us burdens to ourselves. See what reason
we have then to praise God for our creation,
and to conclude that he who saw our sub-
stance when it was unfashioned sees it now
that it is fashioned.

17 How precious also are thy
thoughts unto me, O God! how great
is the sum of them! 18 *If I should
count them, they are more in number
than the sand: when I awake, I am
still with thee.* 19 Surely thou wilt
slay the wicked, O God: depart from
me therefore, ye bloody men. 20 For
they speak against thee wickedly, and
thine enemies take thy name in vain.
21 Do not I hate them, O LORD, that
hate thee? and am not I grieved with
those that rise up against thee? 22 I
hate them with perfect hatred: I count
them mine enemies. 23 Search me, O

God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: 24 And see if *there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

Here the psalmist makes application of the doctrine of God's omniscience, divers ways.

I. He acknowledges, with wonder and thankfulness, the care God had taken of him all his days, *v. 17, 18.* God, who knew him, thought of him, and his thoughts towards him were thoughts of love, *thoughts of good, and not of evil, Jer. xxix. 11.* God's omniscience, which might justly have watched over us to do us hurt, has been employed for us, and has watched over us to do us good, *Jer. xxxi. 28.* God's counsels concerning us and our welfare have been, 1. Precious to admiration: *How precious are they!* They are deep in themselves, such as cannot possibly be fathomed and comprehended. Providence has had a vast reach in its dispensations concerning us, and has brought things about for our good quite beyond our contrivance and foresight. They are dear to us; we must think of them with a great deal of reverence, and yet with pleasure and thankfulness. Our thoughts concerning God must be delightful to us, above any other thoughts. 2. Numerous to admiration: *How great is the sum of them!* We cannot conceive how many God's kind counsels have been concerning us, how many good turns he has done us, and what variety of mercies we have received from him. *If we would count them,* the heads of them, much more the particulars of them, *they are more in number than the sand,* and yet every one great and very considerable, *xl. 5.* We cannot conceive the multitude of God's compassions, which are all new every morning. 3. Constant at all times: *"When I awake, every morning, I am still with thee, under thy eye and care, safe and easy under thy protection."* This bespeaks also the continual devout sense David had of the eye of God upon him: *When I awake I am with thee,* in my thoughts; and it would help to keep us in the fear of the Lord all the day long if, when we awake in the morning, our first thoughts were of him and we did then set him before us.

II. He concludes from this doctrine that ruin will certainly be the end of sinners. God knows all the wickedness of the wicked, and therefore he will reckon for it: *"Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God! for all their wickedness is open before thee, however it may be artfully disguised and coloured over, to hide it from the eye of the world. However thou suffer them to prosper for a while, surely thou wilt slay them at last."* Now observe, 1. The reason why God will punish them, because they daringly affront him and set him at defiance (*v. 20*): *They speak against thee wickedly; they set their mouth against the heavens (lxxiii. 9),*

and shall be called to account for the haughty speeches they have spoken against him, *Ju. 15.* They are his enemies, and declare the enmity by taking his name in vain, as we show our contempt of a man if we make by-word of his name, and never mention him but in a way of jest and banter. That that profane the sacred forms of swearing, praying by using them in an impertinent or irreverent manner take God's name in vain, and thereby show themselves enemies to him. Some make it to be a description of hypocrites: "They speak of thee for their chief; they talk of God, pretending to piety, but it is with some ill design, for a cloak of maliciousness; and, being enemies to God while they pretend friendship, they take his name in vain; they swear falsely." 2. That David makes of this prospect which he has of the ruin of the wicked. (1.) He defines them: *"Depart from me, you bloody men; you shall not debauch me, for I will not admit your friendship nor have fellowship with you; and you cannot destroy me, for, being under God's protection, he shall force you to depart from me."* (2.) He defines them (*v. 21, 22*): "Lord, thou knowest the heart, and canst witness for me; *do not I hate those that hate thee,* and for that reason because they hate thee? I hate them because I love thee, and hate to see such affronts and indignities put upon thy blessed name. *Am I not I grieved with those that rise up against thee,* grieved to see their rebellion and to foresee their ruin, which it will certainly end in?" Note, Sin is hated, and sinners are lamented, by all that fear God. *"I hate them (that is, I hate the work of them that turn aside,"* as he explains himself, *ci. 3*) *"with sincere and perfect hatred; I count those that are enemies to God as enemies to me, and will not have any intimacy with them," lxxix. 8.*

III. He appeals to God concerning his sincerity, *v. 23, 24.* 1. He desires that as far as he was in the wrong God would discover it to him. Those that are upright can take comfort in God's omniscience as a witness of their uprightness, and can with a humble confidence beg of him to search and try them, to discover them to themselves (for a good man desires to know the worst of himself) and to discover them to others. He that means honestly could wish he had a window in his breast that any man may look into his heart: "Lord, I hope I am not in a wicked way, but see if there be any wicked way in me, any corrupt inclination remaining; let me see it; and root it out of me, for I do not allow it." 2. He desires that, as far as he was in the right, he might be forwarded in it, which he that knows the heart knows how to do effectually: *Lead me in the way everlasting.* Note, (1.) The way of godliness is an everlasting way; it is everlastingly true and good, pleasing to God and profitable to us, and will end in everlasting

e. *It is the way of antiquity* (so some), *the good old way.* (2.) All the saints desire to be kept and led in this way, that they may not miss it, turn out of it, nor tire in it.

PSALM CXL.

is and the four following psalms are much of a piece, and the scope of them the same with many that we met with in the beginning and middle of the book of Psalms, though with but few (I hate). They were penned by David (as it should seem) when he was persecuted by Saul; one of them is said to be his prayer when he was in the cave,¹ and it is probable that all the rest were penned about the same time. In this psalm, I. David complains of the malice of his enemies, and prays to God to preserve him from them, ver. 1—5. II. He encourages himself in God as his God, ver. 6, 7. III. He prays for, and prophesies, the destruction of his persecutors, ver. 8—11. IV. He assures all God's afflicted people that their troubles would in due time end well (ver. 12, 13), with which assurance we must comfort ourselves, and one another, in singing this psalm.

to the chief musician. A psalm of David.

DELIVER me, O LORD, from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man; 2 Which imagine mischiefs in *their heart*; continually are they gathered together *for war*. 3 They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison is under their lips. Selah. 4 Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked; preserve me from the violent man; so have purposed to overthrow my lifings. 5 The proud have hid a snare for me, and cords; they have spread a net by the wayside; they have set snares for me. Selah. 6 I said unto the LORD, Thou *art* my God: hear the voice of my supplications, O LORD. O God the Lord, the strength of my salvation, thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.

In *this*, as in other things, David was a type of Christ, that he suffered before he reigned, was humbled before he was exalted, and that there were many who loved and valued him, and sought to do him honour, so there were many who hated and envied him, and sought to do him mischief, as appears by these verses, where,

I. He gives a character of his enemies, and paints them out in their own colours, as dangerous men, whom he had reason to be afraid of; but wicked men, whom he had no reason to think the righteous God would countenance. There was one that seems to have been the ring-leader of them, whom he calls *the evil man* and *the man of violences* (v. 1, 4), probably he means Saul. The Chaldee paraphrast (v. 9) names both Doeg and Abitholai; but between them there was a great distance of time. Violent men are evil men. At there were many besides this one who were confederate against David, who are here presented as the genuine offspring and seed of the serpent. For, 1. They are very subtle, apt to do mischief; they have imagined it (v. 2), have laid the scheme with all the art and cunning imaginable. They have purposed and

plotted to overthrow the goings of a good man (v. 4), to draw him into sin and trouble, to ruin him by blasting his reputation, crushing his interest, and taking away his life. For this purpose *they have*, like mighty hunters, *hidden a snare*, and *spread a net*, and *set gins* (v. 5), that their designs against him, being kept undiscovered, might be the more likely to take effect, and he might fall into their hands ere he was aware. Great persecutors have often been great politicians, which has indeed made them the more formidable; but *the Lord preserves the simple* without all those arts. 2. They are very spiteful, as full of malice as Satan himself: *They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent*, that infuses his venom with his tongue; and there is so much malignity in all they say that one would think there was nothing under their lips but *adders' poison*, v. 3. With their calumnies, and with their counsels, they aimed to destroy David, but secretly, as a man is stung with a serpent, or a snake in the grass. And they endeavoured likewise to infuse their malice into others, and to make them seven times more the children of hell than themselves. A malignant tongue makes men like the old serpent; and poison in the lips is a certain sign of poison in the heart. 3. They are confederate; they are many of them; but they are all *gathered together* against me *for war*, v. 2. Those who can agree in nothing else can agree to persecute a good man. Herod and Pilate will unite in this, and in this they resemble Satan, who is not divided against himself, all the devils agreeing in Beelzebub. 4. They are *proud* (v. 5), conceited of themselves and confident of their success; and herein also they resemble Satan, whose reigning ruining sin was pride. The pride of persecutors, though at present it be the terror, yet may be the encouragement, of the persecuted, for the more haughty they are the faster are they ripening for ruin. *Pride goes before destruction*.

II. He prays to God to keep him from them and from being swallowed up by them: "*Lord, deliver me, preserve me, keep me* (v. 1, 4); let them not prevail to take away my life, my reputation, my interest, my comfort, and to prevent my coming to the throne. *Keep me* from doing as they do, or as they would have me do, or as they promise themselves I shall do." Note, The more malice appears in our enemies against us the more earnest we should be in prayer to God to take us under his protection. In him believers may count upon a security, and may enjoy it and themselves with a holy serenity. Those are safe whom God preserves. If he be for us, who can be against us?

III. He triumphs in God, and thereby, in effect, he triumphs over his persecutors, v. 6, 7. When his enemies sharpened their tongues against him, did he sharpen his against them? No; *adders' poison was under their lips*, but grace was poured into his lips, witness what

he here said unto the Lord, for to him he looked, to him he directed himself, when he saw himself in so much danger, through the malice of his enemies: and it is well for us that we have a God to go to. He comforted himself, 1. In his interest in God: "*I said, Thou art my God*; and, if my God, then my shield and mighty protector." In troublous dangerous times it is good to claim relation to God, and by faith to keep hold of him. 2. In his access to God. This comforted him, that he was not only taken into covenant with God, but into communion with him, that he had leave to speak to him, and might expect an answer of peace from him, and could say, with a humble confidence, *Hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord!* 3. In the assurance he had of help from God and happiness in him: "*O God the Lord—Jehovah Adonai!* as *Jehovah* thou art self-existent and self-sufficient, an infinitely perfect being; as *Adonai* thou art my stay and support, my ruler and governor, and therefore the *strength of my salvation*, my strong Saviour; nay, not only my Saviour, but my salvation itself, from whom, in whom, my salvation is; not only a strong Saviour, but the very strength of my salvation, on whom the stress of my hope is laid; all in all, to make me happy, and to preserve me to my happiness." 4. In the experience he had had formerly of God's care of him: *Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle*. As he pleaded with Saul, that, for the service of his country, he many a time jeopardied his life in the high places of the field, so he pleads with God that, in those services, he had wonderfully protected him, and provided him a better helmet for the securing of his head than Goliath's was: "*Lord, thou hast kept me in the day of battle with the Philistines, suffer me not to fall by the treacherous intrigues of false-hearted Israelites.*" God is as able to preserve his people from secret fraud as from open force; and the experience we have had of his power and care, in dangers of one kind, may encourage us to trust in him and depend upon him in dangers of another nature; for nothing can shorten the Lord's right hand.

8 Grant not, O LORD, the desires of the wicked: further not his wicked device; lest they exalt themselves. Selah. 9 *As for the head of those that compass me about, let the mischief of their own lips cover them.* 10 Let burning coals fall upon them: let them be cast into the fire; into deep pits, that they rise not up again. 11 Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth: evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him. 12 I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the

poor. 13 Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name: the upright shall dwell in thy presence.

Here is the believing foresight David had, I. Of the shame and confusion of persecutors.

1. Their disappointment. This he prays for (v. 8), that their lusts might not be gratified, their lust of ambition, envy, and revenge: "*Grant not, O Lord! the desires of the wicked, but frustrate them*; let them not see the ruin of my interest, which they so earnestly wish to see; but *hear the voice of my supplications*. He prays that their projects might not take effect, but be blasted: "*O further not his wicked device*; let not Providence favour any of his designs, but cross them; suffer not his wicked device to proceed, but chain his wheels, and stop him in the career of his pursuits. Thus we are to pray against the enemies of God's people, that they may not succeed in any of their enterprises. Such was David's prayer against Ahithophel, that God would turn his counsels into foolishness. The plea is, *lest they exalt themselves*, value themselves upon their success as if it were an evidence that God favoured them. Proud men, when they prosper, are made prouder, grow more impudent against God and insolent against his people, and therefore, "*Lord, do not prosper them.*"

2. Their destruction. This he prays for (as we read it); but some choose to read it rather as a prophecy, and the original will bear it. If we take it as a prayer, that proceeds from a spirit of prophecy, which comes all to one. He foretels the ruin,

(1.) Of his own enemies: "*As for those that compass me about, and seek my ruin,*" [1.] "*The mischief of their own lips shall cover their heads* (v. 9); the evil they have wished to me shall come upon themselves, their curses shall be blown back into their own faces, and the very designs which they have laid against me shall turn to their own ruin," vii. 15, 16. Let those that make mischief, by slandering, tale-bearing, misrepresenting their neighbours, and spreading ill-natured characters and stories, dread the consequence of it, and think how sad their condition will be when all the mischief they have been accessory to shall be made to return upon themselves. [2.] The judgments of God shall fall upon them, compared here to *burning coals*, in allusion to the destruction of Sodom; nay, as in the deluge the waters from above, and those from beneath, met for the drowning of the world, both the windows of heaven were opened and the fountains of the great deep were broken up, so here, to complete the ruin of the enemies of Christ and his kingdom, they shall not only have *burning coals* cast upon them from above (Job xx. 23; xxvii. 22), but they themselves shall be cast into the fire beneath; both heaven and hell, the wrath of God the Judge

and the rage of Satan the tormentor, shall concur to make them miserable. And therefore they shall be cast into is not a furnace of fire, out of which perhaps they might escape, but a *deep pit*, out of which they cannot rise. The prophet is said to be *deep and large*, Isa. xxx. 33.

(2.) Of all others that are like them, v. 11. [1.] Evil speakers must expect to be shaken, for they shall never be established in the earth.

What is got by fraud and falsehood, by calumny and unjust accusation, will not prosper, will not last. Wealth gotten by vanity will be diminished. Let not such men as beg think to reign long, for his doom will be theirs, ii. 5. A lying tongue is but for a moment, but the *lip of truth shall be established for ever*. [2.] Evil doers must expect to be destroyed: *Evil shall hunt the violent man*, as the blood-hound hunts the murderer to discover him, as the lion hunts his prey to tear it to pieces. Mischievous men will be brought to light, and brought to ruin; the destruction appointed shall run them down and overthrow them. *Evil pursues sinners*.

II. Here is his foresight of the deliverance and comfort of the persecuted, v. 12.

1. God will do those justice, in delivering them, who, being wronged, commit themselves to him: "*I know that the Lord will maintain the just and injured cause of his afflicted people, and will not suffer might always to prevail against right, though it be at the right of the poor, who have but little that they can pretend a right to.*" God is, and will be, the patron of oppressed innocence, much more of persecuted piety; those that know him cannot but know this. 2. They will do him justice (if I may so speak), ascribing the glory of their deliverance to him: "*Surely the righteous (who make conscience of rendering to God his due, as well as to men theirs) shall give thanks unto thy name when they find their cause pleaded with alousy and prosecuted with effect.*" The closing words, *The upright shall dwell in thy presence*, denote both God's favour to them ("Thou shalt admit them to dwell in thy presence in grace here, in glory hereafter, and shall be their safety and happiness") and their duty to God: "*They shall attend upon thee as servants that keep in the presence of their masters, both to do them honour and to receive their commands.*" This is true thanksgiving, even thanksgiving; and this use we should make of all our deliverances, we should serve God the more closely and cheerfully.

PSALM CXLI.

David was in distress when he penned this psalm, pursued, it is most likely, by Saul, that violent man. Is any distressed? Let him pray: David did so, and had the comfort of it. 1. He prays for God's favourable acceptance, ver. 1, 2. II. For his powerful assistance, ver. 3, 4. III. That others might be instrumental of good to his soul, as he hoped to be to the souls of others, ver. 5, 6. IV. That he and his friends being now brought to the last extremity God would graciously appear for their relief and rescue, ver. 7-10. The mercy and grace of God are as necessary to us as they were to him, and therefore we should be humbly earnest for them in singing this psalm.

A psalm of David.

LORD, I cry unto thee: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee. 2 Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. 3 Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips. 4 Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practise wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties.

Mercy to accept what we do well, and grace to keep us from doing ill, are the two things which we are here taught by David's example to pray to God for.

I. David loved prayer, and he begs of God that his prayers might be heard and answered, v. 1, 2. *David cried unto God*. His crying denotes fervency in prayer; he prayed as one in earnest. His crying to God denotes faith and fixedness in prayer. And what did he desire as the success of his prayer? 1. That God would take cognizance of it: "*Give ear to my voice*"; let me have a gracious audience." Those that cry in prayer may hope to be heard in prayer, not for their loudness, but their liveliness. 2. That he would visit him upon it: *Make haste unto me*. Those that know how to value God's gracious presence will be importunate for it and humbly impatient of delays. He that believes does not make haste, but he that prays may be earnest with God to make haste. 3. That he would be well pleased with him in it, well pleased with his *praying* and the *lifting up of his hands in prayer*, which denotes both the elevation and enlargement of his desire and the out-goings of his hope and expectation, the lifting up of the hand signifying the lifting up of the heart, and being used instead of lifting up the sacrifices which were heaved and waved before the Lord. Prayer is a spiritual sacrifice; it is the offering up of the soul, and its best affections, to God. Now he prays that this may be set forth and directed before God as the incense which was daily burnt upon the golden altar, and as the evening sacrifice, which he mentions rather than the morning sacrifice, perhaps because this was an evening prayer, or with an eye to Christ, who, in the evening of the world and in the evening of the day, was to offer up himself a sacrifice of atonement, and establish the spiritual sacrifices of acknowledgment, having abolished all the carnal ordinances of the law. Those that pray in faith may expect it will please God better than an ox or bullock. David was now banished from God's court, and could not attend the sacrifice and incense, and therefore begs that his prayer might be instead of them. Note, Prayer is of a sweet-smelling savour to God, as incense, which yet has no savour without

fire; nor has prayer without the fire of holy love and fervour.

II David was in fear of sin, and he begs of God that he might be kept from sin, knowing that his prayers would not be accepted unless he took care to watch against sin. We must be as earnest for God's grace in us as for his favour towards us. 1. He prays that he might not be surprised into any sinful words (c. 5): "*Set a watch, O Lord! before my mouth, and, nature having made my lips to be a door to my words, let grace keep that door, that no word may be suffered to go out which may in any way tend to the dishonour of God or the hurt of others.*" Good men know the evil of tongue-sins, and how prone they are to them (when enemies are provoking we are in danger of carrying our resentment too far, and of speaking unadvisedly, as Moses did, though the meekest of men), and therefore they are earnest with God to prevent their speaking amiss, as knowing that no watchfulness or resolution of their own is sufficient for the governing of their tongues, much less of their hearts, without the special grace of God. We must keep our mouths as with a bridle; but that will not serve: we must pray to God to keep them. Nehemiah prayed to the Lord when he set a watch, and so must we, for without him the watchman waketh but in vain. 2. That he might not be inclined to any sinful practices (c. 4): "*Incline not my heart to any evil thing; whatever inclination there is in me to sin, let it be not only restrained, but mortified, by divine grace.*" The example of those about us, and the provocations of those against us, are apt to stir up and draw out corrupt inclinations. We are ready to do as others do, and to think that if we have received injuries we may return them; and therefore we have need to pray that we may never be left to ourselves to practise any wicked work, either in confederacy with or in opposition to the men that work iniquity. While we live in such an evil world, and carry about with us such evil hearts, we have need to pray that we may neither be drawn in by any allurements nor driven on by any provocation to do any sinful thing. 3. That he might not be ensnared by any sinful pleasures: "*Let me not eat of their dainties.* Let me not join with them in their feasts and sports, lest thereby I be inveigled into their sins." Better is a dinner of herbs, out of the way of temptation, than a stalled ox in it. Sinners pretend to find dainties in sin. Stolen waters are sweet; forbidden fruit is pleasant to the eye. But those that consider how soon the dainties of sin will turn into wormwood and gall, how certainly it will, at last, bite like a serpent and sting like an adder, will dread those dainties, and pray to God by his providence to take them out of their sight, and by his grace to turn them against them. Good men will pray even against the sweets of sin.

5 Let the righteous smite me; if

shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities. 6 When their judges are overthrown in stony places, they shall hear my words; for they are sweet. 7 Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth. 8 But mine eyes are unto thee, O God the Lord: in thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute. 9 Keep me from the snares which they have laid for me, and the gins of the workers of iniquity. 10 Let the wicked fall into their own nets, whilst that I withal escape.

Here, I. David desires to be told of his faults. His enemies reproached him with that which was false, which he could not but complain of; yet, at the same time, he desired his friends would reprove him for that which was really amiss in him, particularly if there was any thing that gave the least colour to those reproaches (c. 5): "*Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness.* The righteous God (so some); "I will welcome the rebukes of his providence, and be so far from quarrelling with them that I will receive them as tokens of love and improve them as means of grace, and will pray for those that are the instruments of my trouble." But it is commonly taken for the reproofs given by righteous men: and it best becomes those that are themselves righteous to reprove the unrighteousness of others, and from them a reproof will be best taken. But if the reproof be just, though the reprover be not so, we must make a good use of it and learn obedience by it. We are here taught how to receive the reproofs of the righteous and wise. 1. We must desire to be reproofed for whatever is amiss in us, or is done amiss by us: "Lord, put it into the heart of the righteous to smite me and reprove me. If my own heart does not smite me, as it ought, let my friend do it. let me never fall under that dreadful judgment of being let alone in sin." 2. We must account it a piece of friendship. We must not only bear it patiently, but take it as a kindness; for reproofs of instruction are the way of life (Prov. vi. 23), are means of good to us, to bring us to repentance for the sins we have committed, and to prevent relapses into sin. Though reproofs cut, it is in order to a cure, and therefore they are much more desirable than the kisses of an enemy (Prov. xxvii. 6) or the song of fools, Eccl. vii. 5. David blessed God for Abigail's seasonable admonition, 1 Sam. xxv. 32. 3. We must reckon ourselves helped and healed by it: It shall be as an excellent oil to a wound, to mollify it and

lose it up; *it shall not break my head*, as some reckon it to do, who could as well bear to have their heads broken as to be told of their faults; but, says David, "I am not of that mind; it is my sin that has broken my head, that has broken my bones, Ps. li. 8. The reproof is an excellent oil, to cure the bruises, and has given me. It shall not break my head, it may but help to break my heart." 4. We must requite the kindness of those that deal thus faithfully, thus friendly with us, at least by our prayers for them in their calamities, and hereby we must show that we take kindly. Dr. Hammond gives quite another reading of this verse: "*Reproach will bruise me that am righteous, and rebuke me; but that poisonous oil shall not break my head shall not destroy me, shall not do me the mischief intended, for yet my prayer shall in their mischiefs, that God would preserve me from them, and my prayer shall not be vain.*"

II. David hopes his persecutors will, some one or other, bear to be told of their faults, as he was willing to be told of his (v. 6): "*When their judges*" (Saul and his officers who judged and condemned David, and would themselves be sole judges) "*are overthrown in stony places, among the rocks in the wilderness, then they shall hear my words, for they are sweet.*" Some think this refers to the censurings that were in Saul's breast when he died, with tears, *Is this thy voice, my son David?* 1 Sam. xxiv. 16; xxvi. 21. Or we may take it more generally: even judges, great as they are, may come to be overthrown. Those that make the greatest figure in this world do not always meet with level smooth ways through it. And those that slighted the word of God before will relish it, and be glad of it, when they are in affliction, for that opens the ear to instruction. When the world is bitter the word is sweet. Oppressed innocency cannot gain a hearing with those that live in pomp and pleasure, but when they come to be overthrown themselves they will have more compassionate thoughts of the afflicted.

III. David complains of the great extremity to which he and his friends were reduced (v. 7): "*Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, out of which they are thrown up, so long have we been dead, or into which they are ready to be thrown, so near are we to the pit; and they are as little regarded as chips among the hewers of wood, which are thrown in neglected heaps: As one that cuts and leaves the earth (so some read it), alluding to the ploughman who tears the earth in pieces with his plough-share, cxxix. 3. Can these dry bones live?*"

IV. David casts himself upon God, and depends upon him for deliverance: "*But my eyes are unto thee (v. 8); for, when the case is ever so deplorable, thou canst redress all my grievances. From thee I expect relief, and as things are, and in thee is my trust.*"

Those that have their eye towards God may have their hopes in him.

V. He prays that God would succour and relieve him as his necessity required. 1. That he would comfort him: "*Leave not my soul desolate and destitute*; still let me see where my help is." 2. That he would prevent the designs of his enemies against him (v. 9): "*Keep me from being taken in the snare they have laid for me*; give me to discover it and to evade it." Be the gin placed with ever so much subtlety, God can and will secure his people from being taken in it. 3. That God would, in justice, turn the designs of his enemies upon themselves, and, in mercy, deliver him from being ruined by them (v. 10): "*Let the wicked fall into their own net, the net which, intentionally, they procured for me, but which, meritoriously, they prepared for themselves.* *Nec lex est justior ulla quam necis artifices arte perire sua*—No law can be more just than that the architects of destruction should perish by their own contrivances. All that are bound over to God's justice are held in the cords of their own iniquity. But let me at the same time obtain a discharge. The entangling and ensnaring of the wicked sometimes prove the escape and enlargement of the righteous.

PSALM CXLII.

This psalm is a prayer, the substance of which David offered up to God when he was forced by Saul to take shelter in a cave, and which he afterwards penned in this form. Here is, I. The complaint he makes to God (ver. 1, 2) of the subtlety, strength, and malice, of his enemies (ver. 3, 6), and the coldness and indifference of his friends, ver. 4. II. The comfort he takes in God that he knew his case (ver. 3) and was his refuge, ver. 5. III. His expectation from God that he would hear and deliver him, ver. 6, 7. IV. His expectation from the righteous that they would join with him in praises, ver. 7. Those that are troubled in mind, body, or estate, may, in singing this psalm (if they sing it in some measure with David's spirit), both warrant his complaints and fetch in his comforts.

Maschil of David. A prayer when he was in the cave.

I CRIED unto the LORD with my voice; with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication. 2 I poured out my complaint before him; I showed before him my trouble. 3 When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path. In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.

Whether it was in the cave of *Adullam*, or that of *Engedi*, that David prayed this prayer, is not material; it is plain that he was in distress. It was a great disgrace to so great a soldier, so great a courtier, to be put to such shifts for his own safety, and a great terror to be so hotly pursued and every moment in expectation of death; yet then he had such a presence of mind as to pray this prayer, and, wherever he was, still he had his religion about him. Prayers and tears were his weapons, and, when he durst not stretch forth his hands against his prince, he lifted them up to his God. There is no cave so deep, so dark, but we may out of it send up our

prayers, and our souls in prayer, to God. He calls this prayer *Maschil*—a psalm of instruction, because of the good lessons he had himself learnt in the cave, learnt on his knees, which he desired to teach others. In these verses observe,

I. How David complained to God, v. 1, 2. When the danger was over he was not ashamed to own (as great spirits sometimes are) the fright he had been in and the application he had made to God. Let not men of the first rank think it any diminution or disparagement to them, when they are in affliction, to cry to God, and to cry like children to their parents when any thing frightens them. *David poured out his complaint*, which denotes a free and full complaint; he was copious and particular in it. His heart was as full of his grievances as it could hold, but he made himself easy by pouring them out before the Lord; and this he did with great fervency: *He cried unto the Lord with his voice*, with the voice of his mind (so some think), for, being hidden in the cave, he durst not speak with an audible voice, lest that should betray him; but mental prayer is vocal to God, and he hears the groanings which cannot, or dare not, be uttered, Rom. viii. 26. Two things David laid open to God, in this complaint:—1. His distress. He exhibited a remonstrance or memorial of his case: *I showed before him my trouble*, and all the circumstances of it. He did not prescribe to God, nor show him his trouble, as if God did not know it without his showing; but as one that put a confidence in God, desired to keep up communion with him, and was willing to refer himself entirely to him, he unbosomed himself to him, humbly laid the matter before him, and then cheerfully left it with him. We are apt to show our trouble too much to ourselves, aggravating it, and poring upon it, which does us no service, whereas by showing it to God we might cast the care upon him who careth for us, and thereby ease ourselves. Nor should we allow of any complaint to ourselves or others which we cannot with due decency and sincerity of devotion make to God, and stand to before him. 2. His desire. When he made his complaint he made his supplication (v. 1), not claiming relief as a debt, but humbly begging it as a favour. Claimants must be suppliants, for God will be sought unto.

II. What he complained of: "*In the way wherein I walked, suspecting no danger, have they privily laid a snare for me, to entrap me.*" Saul gave Michal his daughter to David on purpose that she might be a snare to him, 1 Sam. xviii. 21. This he complains of to God, that every thing was done with a design against him. If he had gone out of his way, and met with snares, he might have thanked himself; but when he met with them in the way of his duty he might with humble boldness tell God of them.

III. What comforted him in the midst of these complaints (v. 3): "*When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, and ready to sink under the burden of grief and fear, when I was quite at a loss and ready to despair, thou knewest my path*, that is, then it was pleasure to me to think that thou knewest it. Thou knewest my sincerity, the right path which I have walked in, and that I am not such a one as my persecutors represent me. Thou knewest my condition in all particulars of it; when my spirit was overwhelmed that I could not distinctly show it, this comforted me, that thou knewest it." Job xxiii. 10. Thou knewest it, that is, thou didst protect, preserve, and secure it," Ps. xxxi. 7; Deut. ii. 7.

4 I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but *there was no man that would know me*: refuge failed me, no man cared for my soul. 5 I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living. 6 Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I. 7 Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me.

The psalmist here tells us, for our instruction, 1. How he was disowned and deserted by his friends, v. 4. When he was in favour at court he seemed to have a great interest; but when he was made an out-law, and was dangerous for any one to harbour him (witness Ahimelech's fate), then *no man would know him*, but every body was shy of him. He looked on his right hand for an advocate (cix. 31), some friend or other to speak a good word for him; but, since Jonathan's appearing for him had like to have cost him his life, nobody was willing to venture in defence of his innocency, but all were ready to say they knew nothing of the matter. He looked round to see if any would open their doors to him; but *refuge failed him*. None of all his old friends would give him a night's lodging, or direct him to an place of secrecy and safety. How many good men have been deceived by such swallow friends, who are gone when winter comes. David's life was exceedingly precious, and yet, when he was unjustly proscribed, *no man cared for it*, nor would move a hand for the protection of it. Herein he was a type of Christ, who, in his sufferings for us, was forsaken of all men, even of his own disciples, and trod the wine-press alone, for there was *none to help, none to uphold*, Isa. lxiii. 5. 2. How he then found satisfaction in God, v. 5. Lovers and friends stood aloof from him, and it was in vain to call to them "But," said

me, "I cried unto thee, O Lord! who knowest me, and carest for me, when none else will, and wilt not fail me nor forsake me when men do;" for God is constant in his love. David tells us what he said to God in the cave: "Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living; I depend upon thee to be so, my refuge to save me from being miserable, my portion to make me happy. The cave I am in is but a poor refuge. Lord, thy name is the strong tower that I run into. Thou art my refuge, in whom alone I shall think myself safe. The crown I am in hopes of is but a poor portion; I can never think myself well provided for till I know that the Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup." Those who in sincerity take the Lord for their God shall find him all-sufficient both as a refuge and as a portion, so that, as no evil shall hurt them, so no good shall be wanting to them; and they may humbly claim their interest: *Lord, thou art my refuge and my portion*; every thing else is a refuge of lies and a portion of no value. Thou art so *in the land of the living*, that is, while I live and have my being, whether in this world or in a better." There is enough in God to answer all the necessities of this present time. We live in a world of dangers and wants; but what danger need we fear if God is our refuge, or what wants if he be our portion? Heaven, which alone deserves to be called *the land of the living*, will be to all believers both a refuge and a portion. 3. How, in this satisfaction, he addressed himself to God (v. 6, 7): *Lord, give a gracious ear to my cry*, the cry of my affliction, the cry of my supplication, *for I am brought very low*, and, if thou help me not, I shall be quite sunk. *Lord, deliver me from my persecutors*, either tie their hands or burn their hearts, break their power or blast their projects, restrain them or rescue me, *for they are stronger than I*, and it will be thy honour to take part with the weakest. Deliver me from them, or I shall be ruined by them, for I am not yet myself a match for them. *Lord, bring my soul out of prison*, not only bring me safe out of this cave, but bring me out of all my perplexities." We may apply it spiritually: the souls of good men are often straitened by doubts and fears, cramped and fettered through the weakness of faith and the prevalency of corruption; and it is then their duty and interest to apply themselves to God, and beg of him to set them at liberty and to enlarge their hearts, that they may *run the way of his commandments*. 4. How much he expected his deliverance would redound to the glory of God. 1.) By his own thanksgivings, into which is present complaints would then be turned: *Bring my soul out of prison*, not that I may enjoy myself and my friends and live at ease, but, nor that I may secure my country, but that I may praise thy name." This we should have an eye to, in all our prayers to God for

deliverance out of trouble, that we may have occasion to praise God and may live to his praise. This is the greatest comfort of temporal mercies that they furnish us with matter, and give us opportunity, for the excellent duty of praise. (2.) By the thanksgivings of many on his behalf (2 Cor. i. 11): "When I am enlarged *the righteous shall encompass me about*; for my cause they shall make thee a crown of praise, so the Chaldee. They shall flock about me to congratulate me on my deliverance, to hear my experiences, and to receive (Maschil) instructions from me; they shall encompass me, to join with me in my thanksgivings, *because thou shalt have dealt bountifully with me.*" Note, The mercies of others ought to be the matter of our praises to God; and the praises of others, on our behalf, ought to be both desired and rejoiced in by us.

PSALM CXLIII.

This psalm, as those before, is a prayer of David, and full of complaints of the great distress and danger he was in, probably when Saul persecuted him. He did not only pray in that affliction, but he prayed very much and very often, not the same over again, but new thoughts. In this psalm, 1. He complains of his troubles, through the oppression of his enemies (ver. 3) and the weakness of his spirit under it, which was ready to sink notwithstanding the likely course he took to support himself, ver. 4, 5. 2. He prays, and prays earnestly (ver. 6), 1. That God would hear him, ver. 1-7. 2. That he would not deal with him according to his sins, ver. 2. 3. That he would not hide his face from him (ver. 7), but manifest his favour to him, ver. 8. 4. That he would guide and direct him in the way of his duty (ver. 8, 10) and quicken him in it, ver. 11. 5. That he would deliver him out of his troubles, ver. 9, 11. 6. That he would in due time reckon with his persecutors, ver. 12. We may more easily accommodate this psalm to ourselves, in the singing of it, because most of the petitions in it are for spiritual blessings (which we all need at all times), mercy and grace.

A psalm of David.

HEAR my prayer, O LORD, give ear to my supplications: in thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness. 2 And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified. 3 For the enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground; he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead. 4 Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate. 5 I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands. 6 I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul *thirsteth* after thee, as a thirsty land. Selah.

Here, I. David humbly begs to be heard (v. 1), not as if he questioned it, but he earnestly desired it, and was in care about it, for, having directed his prayer, he looked up to see how it sped, Hab. ii. 1. He is a suppliant to his God, and he begs that his requests may be granted: *Hear my prayer; give ear to my supplications.* He is an appellant against his persecutors, and he begs that his case may be brought to hearing and that God will give judgment upon it, in his faithfulness

and righteousness, as the Judge of right and wrong. Or, "Answer my petitions in thy faithfulness, according to the promises thou hast made, which thou wilt be just to." We have no righteousness of our own to plead, and therefore must plead God's righteousness, the word of promise which he has freely given us and caused us to hope in.

II. He humbly begs not to be proceeded against in strict justice, v. 2. He seems here, if not to correct, yet to explain, his plea (v. 1), Deliver me *in thy righteousness*: "I mean," says he, "the righteous promises of the gospel, not the righteous threatenings of the law; if I be answered according to the righteousness of this broken covenant of innocency, I am quite undone;" and therefore, 1. His petition is, "*Enter not into judgment with thy servant*;" do not deal with me in strict justice, as I deserve to be dealt with." In this prayer we must own ourselves to be God's servants, bound to obey him, accountable to him, and solicitous to obtain his favour, and we must approve ourselves to him. We must acknowledge that in many instances we have offended him, and have come short of our duty to him, that he might justly enquire into our offences, and proceed against us for them according to law, and that, if he should do so, judgment would certainly go against us; we have nothing to move in arrest or mitigation of it, but execution would be taken out and awarded and then we should be ruined for ever. But we must encourage ourselves with a hope that there is mercy and forgiveness with God, and be earnest with him for the benefit of that mercy. "*Enter not into judgment with thy servant*, for thou hast already entered into judgment with thy Son, and laid upon him the iniquity of us all. *Enter not into judgment with thy servant*, for thy servant enters into judgment with himself;" and, if we will judge ourselves, we shall not be judged. 2. His plea is, "*In thy sight shall no man living be justified upon those terms*, for no man can plead innocency nor any righteousness of his own, either that he has not sinned or that he does not deserve to die for his sins; nor that he has any satisfaction of his own to offer;" nay, if God contend with us, *we are not able to answer him for one of a thousand*, Job ix. 3; xv. 20. David, before he prays for the removal of his trouble, prays for the pardon of his sin, and depends upon mere mercy for it.

III. He complains of the prevalency of his enemies against him (v. 3): "Saul, that great enemy, has persecuted my soul, sought my life, with a restless malice, and has carried the persecution so far that he has already smitten it down to the ground. Though I am not yet under ground, I am struck to the ground, and that is next door to it; he has forced me to dwell in darkness, not only in dark caves, but in dark thoughts and apprehensions, in the clouds of melancholy, as helpless and hopeless as those that have been

long dead. Lord, let me find mercy with thee, for I find no mercy with men. They condemn me; but, Lord, do not thou condemn me. Am not I an object of thy compassion, fit to be appeared for; and is not my enemy an object of thy displeasure, fit to be appeared against?"

IV. He bemoans the oppression of his mind, occasioned by his outward trouble (v. 4): *Therefore is my spirit overpowered, and overwhelmed within me*, and I am almost plunged in despair; when without are fightings within are fears, and those fears greater tyrants and oppressors than Saul himself and not so easily out-run. It is sometimes the lot of the best men to have their spirits for a time almost overwhelmed and their hearts desolate, and doubtless it is their infirmity. David was not only a great saint, but a great soldier, and yet even he was sometimes ready to faint in a day of adversity. *Howl, fir-trees, if the cedars be shaken*.

V. He applies himself to the use of proper means for the relief of his troubled spirit. He had no force to muster up against the oppression of the enemy, but, if he can keep possession of nothing else, he will do what he can to keep possession of his own soul and to preserve his inward peace. In order to this, 1. He looks back, and remembers the days of old (v. 5), God's former appearances for his afflicted people and for him in particular. It has been often a relief to the people of God in their straits to think of the wonders which their fathers told them of, lxxvii. 5, 11. 2. He looks round, and takes notice of the works of God in the visible creation, and the providential government of the world: *I meditate on all thy works*. Many see them, but do not see the footsteps of God's wisdom, power, and goodness in them, and do not receive the benefit they might by them because they do not meditate upon them; they do not dwell on that copious curious subject, but soon quit it, as if they had exhausted it, when they have scarcely touched upon it. *I muse on*, or (as some read it) *I discourse of*, the operation of thy hands, how great, how good, it is! The more we consider the power of God the less we shall fear the face or force of man, Isa. li. 12, 13. 3. He looks up with earnest desires towards God and his favour (v. 6): *I stretch forth my hands unto thee*, as one begging an alms, and big with expectation to receive something great, standing ready to lay hold on it and bid it welcome. *My soul thirsteth after thee; it is to thee* (so the word is), entire for thee, intent on thee; it is as a thirsty land, which, being parched with excessive heat, gapes for rain; so do I need, so do I crave, the support and refreshment of divine consolations under my afflictions, and nothing else will relieve me." This is the best course we can take when our spirits are overwhelmed; and justly do those sink under their load who will not take such a ready way as this to ease themselves.

7 Hear me speedily, O LORD: my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit. 8 Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee. 9 Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies; I flee unto thee to hide me. 10 Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness. 11 Quicken me, O LORD, for thy name's sake: for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble. 12 And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I am thy servant.

David here tells us what he said when he stretched forth his hands unto God; he begins not only as one in earnest, but as one in haste: "*Hear me speedily, and defer no longer, for my spirit faileth.*" I am just ready to faint; reach the cordial—quickly, quickly, or I am gone." It was not a haste of unbelief, but of vehement desire and holy love. *Make haste, O God! to help me.* Three things David here prays for:—

I. The manifestations of God's favour towards him, that God would be well pleased with him and let him know that he was so; his he prefers before any good, iv. 6. 1. He reads God's frowns: "Lord, *hide not thy face from me*; Lord, be not angry with me, do not turn from me, as we do from one we are displeased with; Lord, let me not be left under the apprehensions of thy anger or in doubt concerning thy favour; if I have thy favour, let it not be hidden from me." Those that have the truth of grace cannot but desire the evidence of it. He pleads the wretchedness of his case if God withdrew from him: "Lord, let me not lie under thy wrath, for when I am *like those that go down to the pit*, that is, down to the grave (I am a dead man, weak, and pale, and ghastly; thy frowns are worse than death), or down to hell, the bottomless pit." Even those who through grace are delivered from going down to the pit may sometimes, when the terrors of the Almighty set themselves in array against them, look like those who are going to the pit. Discouraged saints have sometimes cried out of the wrath of God, as if they had been damned sinners, Job vi. 4; Ps. lxxviii. 6. 2. He entreats God's favour (v. 8): *Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning.* He cannot but think that God has a kindness for him, that he has some kind things to say to him, some good words and comfortable words; but the present hurry of his affairs, and tur-

mult of his spirits, drowned those pleasing whispers; and therefore he begs, "Lord, do not only speak kindly to me, but cause me to hear it, to *hear joy and gladness*," li. 8. God speaks to us by his word and by his providence, and in both we should desire and endeavour to *hear his lovingkindness* (cvii. 43), that we may set that always before us: "*Cause me to hear it in the morning*, every morning; let my waking thoughts be of God's lovingkindness, that the sweet relish of that may abide upon my spirits all the day long." His plea is, "*For in thee do I trust*, and in thee only; I look not for comfort in any other." God's goodness is commonly wrought for those who trust in him (xxxix. 8), who by faith draw it out.

II. The operations of God's grace in him. Those he is as earnest for as for the tokens of God's favour to him, and so should we be. He prays,

1. That he might be enlightened with the knowledge of God's will; and this is the first work of the Spirit, in order to his other works, for God deals with men as men, as reasonable creatures. Here are three petitions to this effect:—(1.) *Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk.* Sometimes those that are much in care to walk right are in doubt, and in the dark, which is the right way. Let them come boldly to the throne of grace, and beg of God, by his word, and Spirit, and providence, to show them the way, and prevent their missing it. A good man does not ask what is the way in which he must walk, or in which is the most pleasant walking, but what is the right way, the way in which he should walk. He pleads, "*I lift up my soul unto thee*, to be moulded and fashioned according to thy will." He did not only importunately, but impartially, desire to know his duty; and those that do so shall be taught. (2.) "*Teach me to do thy will*, not only show me what thy will is, but teach me how to do it, how to turn my hand dexterously to my duty." It is the desire and endeavour of all God's faithful servants to know and to do his will, and to stand complete in it. He pleads, "*Thou art my God*, and therefore my oracle, by whom I may expect to be advised—my God, and therefore my ruler, whose will I desire to do." If we do in sincerity take God for our God, we may depend upon him to teach us to do his will, as a master does his servant. (3.) *Lead me into the land of uprightness*, into the communion of saints, that pleasant land of the upright, or into a settled course of holy living, which will lead to heaven, that land of uprightness where holiness will be in perfection, and he that is holy shall be holy still. We should desire to be led, and kept safe, to heaven, not only because it is a land of blessedness, but because it is a land of uprightness; it is the perfection of grace. We cannot find the way that will bring us to that land unless God show us, nor go in that way unless he take us by the hand and lead us, as

we lead those that are weak, or lame, or timorous, or dim-sighted; so necessary is the grace of God, not only to put us into the good way, but to keep us and carry us on in it. The plea is, "*Thy Spirit is good, and able to make me good,*" good and willing to help those that are at a loss. *Let thy good Spirit lead me,* so some read it. Those that have the Lord for their God have his Spirit for their guide; and it is both their character and their privilege that they are *led by the Spirit*.

2. He prays that he might be enlivened to do his will (v. 11): "*Quicken me, O Lord! quicken my graces, that they may be active—quicken my devotions, that they may be lively; quicken me to my duty, and quicken me in it; and this for thy name's sake.*" The best saints often find themselves dull, and dead, and slow, and therefore pray to God to quicken them.

III. The appearance of God's providence for him, 1. That God would, in his own way and time, give him rest from his troubles (v. 9): "*Deliver me, O Lord! from my enemies, that they may not have their will against me; for I flee unto thee to hide me; I trust to thee to defend me in my trouble, and therefore to rescue me out of it.*" Preservations are pledges of salvation, and those shall find God their hiding-place who by faith make him such. He explains himself (v. 11): "*For thy righteousness-sake, bring my soul out of trouble, for thy promise-sake, nay, for thy mercy-sake*" (for some by *righteousness* understand *kindness and goodness*); "*do not only deliver me from my outward trouble, but from the trouble of my soul, the trouble that threatens to overwhelm my spirit. Whatever trouble I am in, Lord, let not my heart be troubled,*" John xiv. 1. 2. That he would reckon with those that were the instruments of his trouble (v. 12): "*Of thy mercy to me cut off my enemies, that I may be no longer in fear of them; and destroy all those, whoever they be, how numerous, how powerful, soever, who afflict my soul, and create vexation to that; for I am thy servant, and am resolved to continue such, and therefore may expect to be owned and protected in thy service.*" This prayer is a prophecy of the utter destruction of all the impenitent enemies of Jesus Christ and his kingdom, who will not have him to reign over them, who grieve his Spirit and afflict his soul, by afflicting his people, in whose afflictions he is afflicted.

PSALM CXLIV.

The four preceding psalms seem to have been penned by David before his accession to the crown, when he was persecuted by Saul; this seems to have been penned afterwards, when he was still in trouble (for there is no condition in this world privileged with an exemption from trouble), the neighbouring nations molesting him and giving him disturbance, especially the Philistines, 2 Sam. v. 17. In this psalm, I. He acknowledges, with triumph and thankfulness, the great goodness of God to him in advancing him to the government, ver. 1-4. II. He prays to God to help him against the enemies who threatened him, ver. 5-8, and again ver. 11. III. He rejoices in the assurance of victory over them, ver. 9, 10. IV. He prays for the prosperity of his own kingdom, and pleases himself with the hopes of it, ver. 12-15. In singing this psalm we may give God the glory of our spiritual privileges and advancements, and fetch in help from him against our spiritual enemies; we may pray for the pros-

perity of our souls, of our families, and of our land; and, in the opinion of some of the Jewish writers, we may refer the psalm to the Messiah and his kingdom.

A psalm of David.

BLESSED be the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight. 2 My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and he in whom I trust; who subdueth my people under me. LORD, what is man, that thou takes knowledge of him! or the son of man, that thou makest account of him! Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away. Bow thy heavens, O LORD, and come down: touch the mountains, and they shall smoke. 6 Cast forth lightning, and scatter them: shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them. 7 Send thine hand from above; rid me, and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of strange children; 8 Whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.

Here, I. David acknowledges his dependence upon God and his obligations to him, v. 1, 2. A prayer for further mercy is fitly begun with a thanksgiving for former mercy; and when we are waiting upon God to bless us we should stir up ourselves to bless him. He gives to God the glory of two things:—

1. What he was to him: *Blessed be the Lord my rock* (v. 1), *my goodness, my fortress*, v. 2. He has in the covenant engaged himself to be so, and encouraged us, accordingly, to depend upon him; all the saints, who by faith have made him theirs, have found him not only to answer but to outdo their expectations. David speaks of it here as the matter of his trust, and that which made him easy, as the matter of his triumph, and that which made him glad, and in which he gloried. See how he multiplies words to express the satisfaction he had in God and his interest in him. (1.) "*He is my strength,* on whom I stay, and from whom I have power both for my work and for my warfare, my rock to build on, to take shelter in." Even when we are weak we may be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. (2.) "*My goodness, not only good to me, but my chief good, in whose favour I place my felicity, and who is the author of all the goodness that is in me, and from whom comes every good and perfect gift.*" (3.) "*My fortress, and my high tower, in whom I think myself as safe as ever any prince thought himself in a castle or strong-hold.*" David had formerly sheltered himself in strong-holds at En-gedi (1 Sam. xxiii. 29), which

perhaps were natural fastnesses. He had entirely made himself master of the strong-hold of Zion, which was fortified by art, and he dwelt in the fort (2 Sam. v. 7, 9), but he depends not on these. "Lord," says he, "thou art my fortress and my high tower." The divine attributes and promises are fortifications to a believer, far exceeding those of nature or art. (4.) *My deliverer*, and, as it is in the original, very emphatically, *my deliverer to me*, "not only a deliverer I have interest in, but who is always nigh unto me and makes all my deliverances turn to my real benefit." (5.) "*My shield*, to guard me against all the malignant darts that my enemies let fly at me, not only my fortress at home, but my shield abroad in the field of battle." Wherever a believer goes he carries his protection along with him. *Fear not, O Lord, I am thy shield.*

2. What he had done for him. He was made a shepherd, and seems not to have been assigned by his parents or himself for any thing more. But, (1.) God had made him a soldier. His hands had been used to the book and his fingers to the harp, but God taught his hands to war and his fingers to fight, because he designed him for Israel's champion; and what God calls men to he either aids them or makes them fit for. Let the men of war give God the glory of all their military skill; the same that teaches the earnest husbandman his art teaches the earnest general his. It is a pity that any whose fingers God has taught to fight should fight against him or his kingdom among men. Those have special reason to acknowledge God with thankfulness who prove to be qualified for services which they themselves never thought of. (2.) God had made him a sovereign prince, had taught him to wield the sceptre as well as the sword, to rule as well as fight, the harder and nobler part of the two: He *subdueth my people under me*. The providence of God is to be acknowledged in making people subject to their prince, and so preserving the order and benefit of societies. There was a special hand of God inclining the people of Israel to be subject to David, pursuant to the promise God had made him; and it was typical of that great act of divine grace, the bringing of Jews into subjection to the Lord Jesus and making them willing in the day of his power.

II. He admires God's condescension to him and to himself in particular (v. 3, 4): *Lord, what is man, what a poor little thing art thou, that thou takest knowledge of him, that thou makest account of him*, that he falls so much under thy cognizance and care, and that thou hast such a tender regard to any of that mean and worthless race as thou hast had to me!" Considering the many disgraces which the human nature lies under, we have reason to admire the honours God has put upon mankind in general (the saints especially, some in a particular manner, as

David) and upon the Messiah (to whom those words are applied, Heb. ii. 6), who was *highly exalted because he humbled himself to be found in fashion as a man, and has authority to execute judgment because he is the Son of man*. A question to this purport David asked (viii. 4), and he illustrated the wonder by the consideration of the great dignity God has placed upon man in (viii. 5), *Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour*. Here he illustrates it by the consideration of the meanness and mortality of man, notwithstanding the dignity put upon him (v. 4): *Man is like to vanity*; so frail is he, so weak, so helpless, compassed about with so many infirmities, and his continuance here so very short and uncertain, that he is as like as may be to vanity itself. Nay, he is vanity, he is so at his best estate. His days have little substance in them, considering how many of the thoughts and cares of an immortal soul are employed about a poor dying body; they are as a shadow, dark and fitting, transitory and finishing with the sun, and, when that sets, resolving itself into all shadow. They are as a shadow that passeth away, and there is no loss of it. David puts himself into the number of those that are thus mean and despicable.

III. He begs of God to strengthen him and give him success against the enemies that invaded him, v. 5—8. He does not specify who they were that he was in fear of, but says, *Scatter them, destroy them*. God knew whom he meant, though he did not name them. But afterwards he describes them (v. 7, 8): "*They are strange children, Philistines, aliens, bad neighbours to Israel, heathens, whom we are bound to be strange to and not to make any leagues with, and who therefore carry it strangely towards us.*" Notwithstanding the advantages with which God had blessed David's arms against them, they were still vexatious and treacherous, and men that one could put no confidence in: "One cannot take their word, for their mouth speaketh vanity; nay, if they give their hand upon it, or offer their hand to help you, there is no trusting them; for their right hand is a right hand of falsehood." Against such as these we cannot defend ourselves, but we may depend on the God of truth and justice, who hates falsehood, to defend us from them. 1. David prays that God would appear, that he would do something extraordinary, for the conviction of those who preferred their dunghill-deities before the God of Israel (v. 5): "*Bow thy heavens, O Lord!* and make it evident that they are indeed thine, and that thou art the Lord of them, Isa. lxiv. 1. Let thy providence threaten my enemies, and look black upon them, as the clouds do on the earth when they are thick, and hang very low, big with a storm. Fight against those that fight against us, so that it may visibly appear that thou art for us. *Touch the mountains*, our strong and stately enemies, *and let them smoke*. Show thyself by the ministry

of thy angels, as thou didst upon Mount Sinai." 2. That he would appear against his enemies, that he would fight from heaven against them, as sometimes he had done, by lightnings, which are his arrows (his fiery darts, against which the hardest steel is no armour of proof, so penetrating is the force of lightning), that he himself would shoot these arrows, who, we are sure, never misses his mark, but hits where he aims. 3. That he would appear for him, v. 7. He begs for their destruction, in order to his own deliverance and the repose of his people: "*Send thy hand, thy power, from above, for that way we look for help; rid me and deliver me out of these great waters that are ready to overflow me.*" God's time to help his people is when they are sinking and all other helps fail.

9 I will sing a new song unto thee, O God: upon a psaltery *and* an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee. 10 *It is he that giveth salvation unto kings: who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword.* 11 Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood: 12 That our sons *may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace:* 13 *That our garners may be full, affording all manner of store: that our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets:* 14 *That our oxen may be strong to labour; that there be no breaking in, nor going out; that there be no complaining in our streets.* 15 *Happy is that people, that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the LORD.*

The method is the same in this latter part of the psalm as in the former; David first gives glory to God and then begs mercy from him.

I. He praises God for the experiences he had had of his goodness to him and the encouragements he had to expect further mercy from him, v. 9, 10. In the midst of his complaints concerning the power and treachery of his enemies, here is a holy exultation in his God: *I will sing a new song to thee, O God!* a song of praise for new mercies, for those compassions that are new every morning. Fresh favours call for fresh returns of thanks; nay, we must praise God for the mercies we hope for by his promise as well as those we have received by his providence, 2 Chron. xx. 20, 21. He will join music with his songs of praise, to express and excite his

holy joy in God; he will praise God upon a psaltery of ten strings, in the best manner thinking all little enough to set forth the praises of God. He tells us what this new song shall be (v. 10): *It is he that giveth salvation unto kings.* This intimates, 1. That great kings cannot save themselves without him. Kings have their life-guards, and have armies at command, and all the means of safety that can be devised; but, after all, it is God that gives them their salvation, and secures them by those means, which he could do, if there were occasion, without them xxxiii. 16. Kings are the protectors of their people, but it is God that is their protector. How much service do they owe him then with their power who gives them all their salvations! 2. That good kings, who are his ministers for the good of their subjects, shall be protected and saved by him. He has engaged to give salvation to those kings that are his subjects and rule for him; witness the great things he had done for David his servant, whom he had many a time delivered from the hurtful sword, to which Saul's malice, and his own zeal for the service of his country, had often exposed him. This may refer to Christ the Son of David, and then it is a new song indeed, a New-Testament song. God delivered him from the hurtful sword, upheld him as his servant, and brought him off a conqueror over all the powers of darkness, Isa. xlii. 1; xlix. 8. To him he gave salvation, not for himself only, but for us, raising him up to be a horn of salvation.

II. He prays for the continuance of God's favour.

1. That he might be delivered from the public enemies, v. 11. Here he repeats his prayer and plea, v. 7, 8. His persecutors were still of the same character, false and perfidious, and who would certainly overreach an honest man and be too hard for him: "Therefore, Lord, do thou deliver me from them, for they are a strange sort of people."

2. That he might see the public peace and prosperity: "Lord, let us have victory, that we may have quietness, which we shall never have while our enemies have it in their power to do us mischief." David, as a king, here expresses the earnest desire he had of the welfare of his people, wherein he was a type of Christ, who provides effectually for the good of his chosen. We have here,

(1.) The particular instances of that public prosperity which David desired for his people. [1.] A hopeful progeny (v. 12): "*That our sons and our daughters may be in all respects such as we could wish.*" He means not those only of his own family, but those of his subjects, that are the seed of the next generation. It adds much to the comfort and happiness of parents in this world to see their children promising and likely to do well. First, It is pleasant to see our sons as plants grown up in their youth, as olive-plants

(xviii. 3), the planting of the Lord (Isa. 3),—to see them as plants, not as weeds, but as thorns,—to see them as plants growing great, not withered and blasted,—to see them of a healthful constitution, a quick capacity, a towardly disposition, and especially a pious inclination, likely to bring forth fruit unto God in their day,—to see them in their youth, their growing time, increasing in every thing that is good, growing wiser and better, till they grow strong in spirit. Secondly, It is no less desirable to see our daughters as corner-stones, or corner-pillars, polished after the similitude of a palace, or temple. By daughters families are united and connected, to their mutual strength, as the parts of a building are by the corner-stones; and when they are graceful and beautiful both in body and mind they are as polished after the similitude of a nice and curious structure. When we see our daughters well-established and stayed with wisdom and discretion, as corner-stones are settled in the building,—when we see them in faith united to Christ, as the chief corner-stone, adorned with the graces of God's Spirit, which are the polishing of that which is naturally rough, and become women professing holiness,—when we see them purified and consecrated to God as living temples, we think ourselves happy in them. [2.] Great plenty. Numerous families increase the care, perhaps more than the comfort, where there is not sufficient for their maintenance; and therefore he prays for a growing estate with a growing family. First, That their store-houses might be well-replenished with the fruits and products of the earth: *That our barns may be full*, like those of the good husband, who brings out of them things new and old (those things that are best new has in that state, those that are best when they are kept he has in that state),—that we may have in them *all manner of stores*, for ourselves and our friends,—that, living plentifully, we may live not luxuriously, for then we abuse our plenty, but cheerfully and usefully,—that, having abundance, we may be thankful to God, generous to our friends, and charitable to the poor; otherwise, what profit is it to have our garners full? Jam. v. 3. Secondly, That their flocks might greatly increase: *That our sheep may bring forth thousands, and ten thousands, in our folds*. Much the wealth of their country consisted in their flocks (Prov. xxvii. 26), and this is the case with ours too, else wool would not be, if it is, a staple commodity. The increase of our cattle is a blessing in which God is to be acknowledged. Thirdly, That their beasts signed for service might be fit for it: *That our oxen may be strong to labour in the plough, and they may be fat and fleshy* (so some), in good working case. We were none of us made to be idle, and therefore we should pray for bodily health, not that we may be idle and take our pleasures, but that we may

be strong to labour, that we may do the work of our place and day, else we are worse than the beasts; for when they are strong it is for labour. [3.] An uninterrupted peace. First, That there be no war, *no breaking in of invaders, no going out of deserters*. "Let not our enemies break in upon us; let us not have occasion to march out against them." War brings with it abundance of mischiefs, whether it be offensive or defensive. Secondly, That there be no oppression nor faction—*no complaining in our streets*, that the people may have no cause to complain either of their government or of one another, nor may be so peevish as to complain without cause. It is desirable thus to dwell in quiet habitations.

(2.) His reflection upon this description of the prosperity of the nation, which he so much desired (v. 15): *Happy are the people that are in such a case* (but it is seldom so, and never long so), *yea, happy are the people whose God is the Lord*. The relation of a people to God as theirs is here spoken of either, [1.] As that which is the fountain whence all those blessings flow. Happy are the Israelites if they faithfully adhere to the Lord as their God, for they may expect to be in such a case. National piety commonly brings national prosperity; for nations as such, in their national capacity, are capable of rewards and punishments only in this life. Or, [2.] As that which is abundantly preferable to all these enjoyments. The psalmist began to say, as most do, *Happy are the people that are in such a case*; those are blessed that prosper in the world. But he immediately corrects himself: *Yea, rather, happy are the people whose God is the Lord*, who have his favour, and love, and grace, according to the tenour of the covenant, though they have not abundance of this world's goods. As all this, and much more, cannot make us happy, unless the Lord be our God, so, if he be, the want of this, the loss of this, nay, the reverse of this, cannot make us miserable.

PSALM CXLV.

The five foregoing psalms were all of a piece, all full of prayers; this, and the following to the end of the book, are all of a piece too, all full of praises; and though only this is entitled David's psalm, yet we have no reason to think but that they were all his as well as all the foregoing prayers. And it is observable, 1. That after five psalms of prayer follow six psalms of praise; for those that are much in prayer shall not want matter for praise, and those that have sped in prayer must abound in praise. Our thanksgivings for mercy, when we have received it, should even exceed our supplications for it when we were in pursuit of it. David, in the last of his begging psalms, had promised to praise God (cxliv. 9), and here he performs his promise. 2. That the book of Psalms concludes with psalms of praise, all praise, for praise is the conclusion of the whole matter: it is that in which all the psalms centre. And it intimates that God's people, towards the end of their life, should abound much in praise, and the rather because, at the end of their life, they hope to remove to the world of everlasting praise, and the nearer they come to heaven the more they should accustom themselves to the work of heaven. This is one of those psalms which are composed alphabetically (as Ps. xlv. and xxxiv., &c.), that it might be the more easily committed to memory, and kept in mind. The Jewish writers justly extol this psalm as a star of the first magnitude in this bright constellation; and some of them have an extravagant saying concerning it, not much unlike some of the popish superstitions, that whosoever will sing this psalm constantly three times a day shall certainly be happy in the world to come. In this psalm, I. David engages himself and others to praise God, ver. 1, 2, 4—7, 10—12. II. He fastens upon those things that are proper matter for praise, God's greatness

(ver. 3), his goodness (ver. 8, 9), the proofs of both in the administration of his kingdom (ver. 13), the kingdom of providence (ver. 14—16), the kingdom of grace (ver. 17—20), and then he concludes with a resolution to continue praising God (ver. 21), with which resolution our hearts must be filled, and in which they must be fixed, in singing this psalm.

David's *psalm of praise*.

I WILL extol thee, my God, O king; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever. 2 Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever. 3 Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable. 4 One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts. 5 I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works. 6 And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts: and I will declare thy greatness. 7 They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness. 8 The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. 9 The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.

The entitling of this *David's psalm of praise* may intimate not only that he was the penman of it, but that he took a particular pleasure in it and sung it often; it was his companion wherever he went. In this former part of the psalm God's glorious attributes are praised, as, in the latter part of the psalm, his kingdom and the administration of it. Observe,

I. Who shall be employed in giving glory to God.

1. Whatever others do, the psalmist will himself be much in praising God. To this good work he here excites himself, engages himself, and has his heart much enlarged in it. What he does, that he will do, having more and more satisfaction in it. It was his duty; it was his delight. Observe, (1.) How he expresses the work itself: "*I will extol thee, and bless thy name* (v. 1); I will speak well of thee, as thou hast made thyself known, and will therein express my own high thoughts of thee and endeavour to raise the like in others." When we speak honourably of God, this is graciously interpreted and accepted as an extolling of him. Again (v. 2): *I will bless thee, I will praise thy name*; the repetition intimates the fervency of his affection to this work, the fixedness of his purpose to abound in it, and the frequency of his performances therein. Again (v. 5): *I will speak of thy honour*, and (v. 6) *I will declare thy greatness*. He would give glory to God, not only in his solemn devotions,

but in his common conversation. If thine heart be full of God, out of the abundance of that the mouth will speak with reverence to his praise, upon all occasions. What subject of discourse can we find more noble, more copious, more pleasant, useful, and unexceptionable, than the glory of God? (2.) How he expresses his resolution to persevere in it. [1.] He will be constant to this work: *Every day will I bless thee*. Praising God must be our daily work. No day must pass though ever so busy a day, though ever so sorrowful a day, without praising God. We ought to reckon it the most needful of our daily employments, and the most delightful of our daily comforts. God is every day blessing us, doing well for us; there is therefore reason that we should be every day blessing him, speaking well of him. [2.] He will continue in it: *I will bless thee for ever and ever*, v. 1 and again v. 2. This intimates, *First*, That he resolved to continue in this work to the end of his life, throughout his *ever* in this world. *Secondly*, That the psalms he penned should be made use of in praising God by the church to the end of time, 2 Chron. xxix. 30. *Thirdly*, That he hoped to be praising God to all eternity in the other world. Those that make praise their constant work on earth shall have their everlasting bliss in heaven.

2. He doubts not but others also would be forward to this work. (1.) "They shall concur in it now; they shall join with me in it: When *I declare thy greatness men shall speak of it* (v. 6); *they shall abundantly utter it*" (v. 7), or *pour it out* (as the word is), they shall praise God with a gracious fluency better than the most curious oratory. David's zeal would provoke many, and it had done so. (2.) "They shall keep it up when I am gone, in an uninterrupted succession" (v. 4): *One generation shall praise thy work to another*." The generation that is going off shall tell them to that which is rising up shall tell what they have seen in their day and what they have heard from their fathers: *they shall fully and particularly declare thy mighty acts* (lxxviii. 3); and the generation that is rising up shall follow the example of that which is going off: so that the death of God's worshippers shall be no diminution of his worship, for a new generation shall rise up in their room to carry on that good work more or less, to the end of time, when it shall be left to that world to do it in which there is no succession of generations.

II. What we must give to God the glory of

1. Of his greatness and his great works. We must declare, *Great is the Lord*, his presence infinite, his power irresistible, his brightness insupportable, his majesty awful, his dominion boundless, and his sovereignty uncontestable; and therefore there is no dispute, but *great is the Lord*, and, if great then *greatly to be praised*, with all that is within us, to the utmost of our power, and

in all the circumstances of solemnity im-
prehended. His greatness indeed cannot be
conceive or express how great God is?
then it is so much the more to be praised.
en we cannot, by searching, find the bot-
tom, we must sit down at the brink, and
reach the depth, Rom. xi. 33. God is great,
(1.) His majesty is glorious in the upper
world, above the heavens, where he has set
his glory; and when we are declaring his
greatness we must not fail to *speak of the glo-
rious honour of his majesty*, the splendour of
his glory of his majesty (v. 5), how brightly
shines in the upper world, so as to dazzle
the eyes of the angels themselves, and oblige
them to cover their faces, as unable to bear
the lustre of it. (2.) His works are won-
derful in this lower world. The preservation,
maintenance, and government of all the crea-
tures, proclaim the Creator very great. When
before we declare his greatness we must
give the unquestionable proofs of it, and
declare his mighty acts (v. 4), *speak of
his wondrous works* (v. 5), *the might of his
mighty acts*, v. 6. We must see God acting
and working in all the affairs of this lower
world. Various instruments are used, but in
all events God is the supreme director; it
is he that performs all things. Much of
his power is seen in the operations of his
mighty acts (they are *mighty acts*, such as
cannot be paralleled by the strength of any
creature), and much of his justice—they
are *terrible acts*, awful to saints, dreadful
to sinners. These we should take all oc-
asions to speak of, observing the finger of
his hand, his arm, in all, that we may
rel.

Of his goodness; this is his glory, Exod.
xv. 19. It is what he glories in (Exod.
xv. 6, 7), and it is what we must give him
glory of: *They shall abundantly utter the
praise of thy great goodness*, v. 7. God's
goodness is great goodness, the treasures of
his grace never be exhausted, nay, they can-
not be lessened, for he ever will be as rich
in mercy as he ever was. It is memorable
goodness; it is what we ought always to lay
before us, always to have in mind and pre-
pare the memorials of, for it is *worthy to be
remembered in everlasting remembrance*; and the re-
membrance we retain of God's goodness we
should utter, we should *abundantly utter*, as
those who are full of it, very full of it, and
rejoice that others may be acquainted and
rejoice with it. But, whenever we utter
his great goodness, we must not forget,
at the same time, to *sing of his righteousness*;
as he is gracious in rewarding those that
love him faithfully, so he is righteous in
punishing those that rebel against him. Im-
partial and inflexible justice is as surely in
him as inexhaustible goodness; and we must
sing of both together, Rom. xi. 22. (1.)
There is a fountain of goodness in God's na-
ture (v. 8): *The Lord is gracious to those*

that serve him; he is full of compassion to
those that need him, *slow to anger to those
that have offended him, and of great mercy
to all that seek him and sue to him*. He is
ready to give, and ready to forgive, more
ready than we are to ask, than we are to re-
pent. (2.) There are streams of goodness
in all the dispensations of his providence,
v. 9. As he is good, so he does good; he
is good to all, to all his creatures, from the
highest angel to the meanest worm, to all
but devils and damned sinners, that have
shut themselves out from his goodness. *His
tender mercies are over all his works*. [1.]
All his works, all his creatures, receive the
fruits of his merciful care and bounty. It is
extended to them all: he hates nothing that
he has made. [2.] The works of his mercy
out-shine all his other works, and declare
him more than any of them. In nothing
will the glory of God be for ever so illustri-
ous as in the vessels of mercy ordained to
glory. To the divine goodness will the ever-
lasting hallelujahs of all the saints be sung.

10 All thy works shall praise thee,
O LORD; and thy saints shall bless
thee. 11 They shall speak of the glory
of thy kingdom, and talk of thy
power; 12 To make known to the
sons of men his mighty acts, and the
glorious majesty of his kingdom. 13
Thy kingdom is an everlasting king-
dom, and thy dominion *endureth*
throughout all generations. 14 The
LORD upholdeth all that fall, and
raiseth up all *those that be bowed*
down. 15 The eyes of all wait upon
thee; and thou givest them their
meat in due season. 16 Thou openest
thine hand, and satisfiest the desire
of every living thing. 17 The LORD
is righteous in all his ways, and holy
in all his works. 18 The LORD is
nigh unto all them that call upon him,
to all that call upon him in truth. 19
He will fulfil the desire of them that
fear him: he also will hear their cry,
and will save them. 20 The LORD
preserveth all them that love him:
but all the wicked will he destroy. 21
My mouth shall speak the praise of
the LORD: and let all flesh bless his
holy name for ever and ever.

The greatness and goodness of him who is
 optimus et maximus—the best and greatest of
beings, were celebrated in the former part
of the psalm; here, in these verses, we are
taught to give him *the glory of his kingdom*,
in the administration of which his greatness

and goodness shines so clearly, so very brightly. Observe, as before,

I. From whom the tribute of praise is expected (v. 10): *All God's works shall praise him*. They all minister to us matter for praise, and so praise him according to their capacity; even those that refuse to give him honour he will get himself honour upon. But his *saints* do *bless* him, not only as they have peculiar blessings from him, which other creatures have not, but as they praise him actively, while his other works praise him only objectively. They *bless* him, for they collect the rent or tribute of praise from the inferior creatures, and pay it into the treasury above. All God's works do praise him, as the beautiful building praises the builder or the well-drawn picture praises the painter; but the saints *bless* him as the children of prudent tender parents rise up and call them blessed. Of all God's works, his saints, the workmanship of his grace, the first-fruits of his creatures, have most reason to bless him.

II. For what this praise is to be given: *They shall speak of thy kingdom*. The kingdom of God among men is a thing to be often thought of and often spoken of. As, before, he had magnified God's greatness and goodness in general, so here he magnifies them with application to his kingdom. Consider then,

1. The greatness of his kingdom. It is great indeed, for all the kings and kingdoms of the earth are under his control. To show the greatness of God's kingdom, he observes, (1.) The pomp of it. Would we by faith look within the veil, we should see, and, believing, we should *speak of the glory of his kingdom* (v. 11), *the glorious majesty of it* (v. 12), for he has prepared his throne in the heavens, and it is high and lifted up, and surrounded with an innumerable company of angels. The courts of Solomon and Ahasuerus were magnificent; but, compared with the glorious majesty of God's kingdom, they were but as glow-worms to the sun. The consideration of this should strike an awe upon us in all our approaches to God. (2.) The power of it: When they *speak of the glory of God's kingdom* they must *talk of his power*, the extent of it, the efficacy of it—his power, by which he can do any thing and does every thing he pleases (v. 11); and, as a proof of it, let them *make known his mighty acts* (v. 12), that the *sons of men* may be invited to yield themselves his willing subjects and so put themselves under the protection of such a mighty potentate. (3.) The perpetuity of it, v. 13. The thrones of earthly princes totter, and the flowers of their crowns wither, monarchies come to an end; but, Lord, *thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom*. God will govern the world to the end of time, when the Mediator, who is now entrusted with the administration of his kingdom, shall deliver it up to God, even the Father that he may be all in

all to eternity. His *dominion endures through all generations*, for he himself is eternal and his counsels are unchangeable and eternal; and Satan, who has set up a kingdom in opposition to him, is conquered and in chain.

2. The goodness of his kingdom. royal style and title are, *The Lord God, gracious and merciful*; and his government answers to his title. The goodness of God appears in what he does,

(1.) For all the creatures in general (v. 16): He *provides food for all flesh*, therein appears his everlasting mercy, ex. 25. All the creatures live upon God, and they had their being from him at first, from him they have all the supports of being and on him they depend for the continuance of it. [1.] The eye of their expectation attends upon him: *The eyes of all wait on thee*. The inferior creatures indeed have not the knowledge of God, nor are capable of it, and yet they are said to *wait upon God* because they seek their food according to instinct which the God of nature has put in them (and *they sow not, neither do they reap* Matt. vi. 26), and because they take what God of nature has provided for them, in time and way that he has appointed, and content with it. [2.] The hand of his bounty is stretched out to them: *Thou givest them meat in due season*, the meat proper for them and in the proper time, when they need it so that none of the creatures ordinarily perish for want of food, no, not in the winter. *Thou openest thy hand freely and liberally, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing*, even some of the unreasonable children of men that will be satisfied with nothing, but still complaining, still crying, *Give, give*.

(2.) For the children of men in particular whom he governs as reasonable creatures.

[1.] He does none of them any wrong, (v. 17) *the Lord is righteous in all his works* and not unrighteous in any of them; he is *holy*, and acts like himself, with a perfect rectitude in all his works. In all the acts of government he is just, injurious to none, administering justice to all: *The ways of the Lord are equal*, though ours are unequal. giving laws, in deciding controversies, in compensing services, and punishing offences he is incontestably just, and we are bound to own that he is so.

[2.] He does all of them good, his goodness to people in a special manner.

First, He supports those that are sinking and it is his honour to help the weak, v. 18. He *upholds all that fall*, in that, though they fall, they are not utterly cast down. Many the children of men are brought very low by sickness and other distresses, and seem ready to drop into the grave, and yet Providence wonderfully upholds them, raises them up, says, *Return*, xc. 3. If all had died who seemed dying, the world would have been very thin. Many of the children of God, who have

ready to fall into sin, to fall into despair, he experienced his goodness in preventing our falls, or recovering them speedily by his mercies and comforts, so that, though they fell, they were *not utterly cast down*, xxvii. 24. If we who were *bowed down* by oppression and affliction are *raised up*, it was God that raised us. And, with respect to all those *that are heavy-laden* under the burden of sin, if they come to Christ by faith, he will ease them, he will raise them.

Secondly, He is very ready to hear and answer the prayers of his people, v. 18, 19. This appears the grace of his kingdom, that his subjects have not only liberty of petition, but all the encouragement that can be to petition. 1. The grant is very sure, that God will be *nigh to all that call on him*; he will be always within call in their prayers, and they shall always find themselves within reach of his help. If a *neighbour that is near is better than a brother far off* (Prov. xxvii. 10), much more a God is near. Nay, he will not only be *nigh to them*, that they may have the satisfaction of being heard, but *he will fulfil their desires*; they shall have what they ask and find what they seek. It was said (v. 16) that he *satisfies the desire of every living thing*, much more *he fulfils the desire of those that fear him*; he that feeds his birds will not starve his fishes. *He will hear their call and will save them*; that is hearing them to purpose, as he saved David (that is, saved him) *from the mouth of the unicorn*, xxii. 21. 2. The proviso is very reasonable. He will hear and help (1.) *If we fear him*, if we worship and love him with a holy awe of him; for otherwise how can we expect that he should accept of our prayers?

(2.) *If we call upon him in truth*; for he desires truth in the inward part. We must be faithful to God, and sincere in our professions of dependence on him, and devotedness to him. In all devotions inward impressions must be answerable to the outward expressions, else they are not performed in truth. Thirdly, He takes those under his special protection who have a confidence and competency in him (v. 20): *The Lord preserves those that love him*; they lie exposed in this world, but he, by preserving them in their integrity, will effectually secure them, that real evil shall befall them.

3.] If any are destroyed they may thank themselves: *All the wicked he will destroy*, they have by their wickedness fitted themselves for destruction. This magnifies his goodness in the protection of the righteous, *that with their eyes they shall see the reward of the wicked* (xci. 8); and God will by this preserve his people, even by destroying the wicked that would do them a mischief. Lastly, The psalmist concludes, 1. With resolution to give glory to God himself (v. 21): *My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord*. When we have said what we can, praising God, still there is more to be said,

and therefore we must not only begin our thanksgivings with this purpose, as he did (v. 1), but conclude them with it, as he does here, because we shall presently have occasion to begin again. As the end of one mercy is the beginning of another, so should the end of one thanksgiving be. While I have breath to draw, my mouth shall still speak God's praises. 2. With a call to others to do so too: *Let all flesh, all mankind, bless his holy name for ever and ever*. Some of mankind shall be blessing God for ever; it is a pity but that they should be all so engaged.

PSALM CXLVI.

This and all the rest of the psalms that follow begin and end with Hallelujah, a word which puts much of God's praise into a little compass; for in it we praise him by his name Jah, the contraction of Jehovah. In this excellent psalm of praise, 1. The psalmist engages himself to praise God, v. 1, 2. 2. He engages others to trust in him, which is one necessary and acceptable way of praising him. 1. He shows why we should not trust in men, ver. 3, 4. 2. Why we should trust in God (ver. 5), because of his power in the kingdom of nature (ver. 6), his dominion in the kingdom of providence (ver. 7), and his grace in the kingdom of the Messiah (ver. 8, 9), that everlasting kingdom (ver. 10), to which many of the Jewish writers refer this psalm, and to which therefore we should have an eye, in the singing of it.

PRAISE ye the LORD. Praise the LORD, O my soul. 2 While I live will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being. 3 Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. 4 His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.

David is supposed to have penned this psalm; and he was himself a prince, a mighty prince; as such, it might be thought, 1. That he should be exempted from the service of praising God, that it was enough for him to see that his priests and people did it, but that he needed not to do it himself in his own person. Michal thought it a disparagement to him to *dance before the ark*; but he was so far from being of this mind that he would himself be first and foremost in the work, v. 1, 2. He considered his dignity as so far from excusing him from it that it rather obliged him to lead in it, and he thought it so far from lessening him that it really magnified him; therefore he stirred up himself to it and to make a business of it: *Praise the Lord, O my soul!* and he resolved to abide by it: "I will praise him with my heart, *I will sing praises* to him with my mouth. Herein I will have an eye to him as *the Lord*, infinitely blessed and glorious in himself, and as *my God*, in covenant with me." Praise is most pleasant when, in praising God, we have an eye to him as ours, whom we have an interest in and stand in relation to. This I will do constantly while I live, every day of my life, and to my life's end; nay, I will do it *while I have any being*, for when I have no being on earth I hope to have a being in heaven, a better being, to be doing it better." That which is the great end of our being ought to be our great employment and delight while we have any being. "In thee

must our time and powers be spent." 2. It might be thought that he himself, having been so great a blessing to his country, should be adored, according to the usage of the heathen nations, who deified their heroes, that they should all come and *trust in his shadow* and make him their *stay and strong-hold*. "No," says David, "*Put not your trust in princes* (v. 3), not in me, not in any other; do not repose your confidence in them; do not raise your expectations from them. Be not too sure of their sincerity; some have thought they knew better how to reign by knowing how to dissemble. Be not too sure of their constancy and fidelity; it is possible they may both change their minds and break their words." But, though we suppose them very wise and as good as David himself, yet we must not be too sure of their ability and continuance, for they are sons of Adam, weak and mortal. There is indeed a Son of man in whom there is help, in whom there is salvation, and who will not fail those that trust in him. But all other sons of men are like the man they are sprung of, who, being in honour, did not abide. (1.) We cannot be sure of their ability. Even the power of kings may be so straitened, cramped, and weakened, that they may not be in a capacity to do that for us which we expect. David himself owned (2 Sam. iii. 39), *I am this day weak, though anointed king*. So that in the son of man there is often no help, no salvation; he is at a loss, at his wits' end, as a man astonished, and then, though a mighty man, he cannot save, Jer. xiv. 9. (2.) We cannot be sure of their continuance. Suppose he has it in his power to help us while he lives, yet he may be suddenly taken off when we expect most from him (v. 4): *His breath goes forth*, so it does every moment, and comes back again, but that is an intimation that it will shortly go for good and all, and then *he returns to his earth*. The earth is his, in respect of his original as a man, the earth out of which he was taken, and to which therefore he must return, according to the sentence, Gen. iii. 19. It is his, if he be a worldly man, in respect of choice, his earth which he has chosen for his portion, and on the things of which he has set his affections. He shall go to his own place. Or, rather, it is his earth because of the property he has in it; and though he has had large possessions on earth a grave is all that will remain to him. *The earth God has given to the children of men*, and great striving there is about it, and, as a mark of their authority, men call their lands by their own names. But, after a while, no part of the earth will be their own but that in which the dead body shall make its bed, and that shall be theirs while the earth remains. But, when he returns to his earth, *in that very day his thoughts perish*; all the projects and designs he had of kindness to us vanish and are gone, and he cannot take one step further in them; all his purposes are cut off and buried with

him, Job xvii. 11. And then what become of our expectations from him? Princes a mortal, as well as other men, and therefore we cannot have that assurance of help from them which we may have from that Potentate who hath immortality. *Cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils and will not be there long*.

5 *Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob* for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God: 6 Which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which keepeth truth for ever: 7 Which executeth judgment for the oppressed: which giveth food to the hungry. The LORD looseth the prisoners: 8 The LORD openeth the eyes of the blind: the LORD raiseth them that are bowed down: the LORD loveth the righteous: The LORD preserveth the strangers: he relieveth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down. 10 The LORD shall reign for ever, *even thy God, O Zion* unto all generations. Praise ye the LORD.

The psalmist, having cautioned us not to trust in princes (because, if we do, we shall be miserably disappointed), here encourages us to put our confidence in God, because, if we do so, we shall be happily secured: *Happy is he that has the God of Jacob for his help*, that has an interest in his attributes and promises, and has them engaged for him, and whose hope is in the Lord his God.

I. Let us take a view of the character here given of those whom God will uphold. These shall have God for their help, 1. Who take him for their God, and serve and worship him accordingly. 2. Who have their hope in him, and live a life of dependence upon him, who have good thoughts of him, and encourage themselves in him, when all other support fail. Every believer may look upon him as the God of Jacob, of the church in general, and therefore may expect relief from him, in reference to public distresses, and as his God in particular, and therefore may depend upon him in all personal wants and straits. We must hope, (1.) In the providence of God for all the good things we need, which relate to the life that now is. (2.) In the grace of Christ for all the good things which relate to the life that is to come. To this especially the learned Dr. Hammond refers this and the following verses, looking upon the latter part of this psalm to have a most visible remarkable aspect towards the eternal Son of God in his incarnation. He quotes one of the rabbies, who says of v. 10 that it belongs to the days of the Messiah. And that it does

he thinks will appear by comparing v. 7, 8, with the characters Christ gives of the Messiah (Matt. xi. 5, 6), *The blind receive their sight, the lame walk; and the closing words here, Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me, he thinks may very well be supposed to refer to v. 5. Happy is the man that hopes in the Lord his God, and who is not offended in him.*

II. Let us take a view of the great encouragements here given us to hope in the Lord our God. 1. He is the *Maker of the world*, and therefore has all power in himself, and the command of the powers of all the creatures, which, being derived from him, depend upon him (v. 6): *He made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and therefore his arm is not shortened, that it cannot save. It is very applicable to Christ, by whom God made the world, and without whom was not any thing made that was made.* It is a great support to faith that the Redeemer of the world is the same that was the Creator of it, and therefore has a good-will to it, a perfect knowledge of its state, and power to help it. 2. He is a God of inviolable fidelity. *We may venture to take God's word, for he *keepeth truth forever*, and therefore no word of his shall fall to the ground; it is true *from the beginning*, and therefore true *to the end*. Our Lord Jesus is the Amen, the faithful witness, as well as the beginning, the author and principle, of the creation of God, Rev. iii. 14. The keeping of God's truth for ever is committed to him, for *all the promises are in him yea and amen*. 3. He is the patron of injured innocency: *He pleads the cause of the oppressed*, and (as we read it) he *executes judgment* for them. He often does it in his providence, giving redress to those that suffer wrong and clearing up their integrity. He will do it in the judgment of the great day. The Messiah came to rescue the children of men out of the hands of Satan the great oppressor, and, all judgment being committed to him, the executing of judgment upon persecutors is so among the rest, Jude 15. 4. He is a bountiful benefactor to the necessitous: *He gives food to the hungry*; so God does in an ordinary way for the answering of the cravings of nature; so he has done sometimes in an extraordinary way, as when heaven fed Elijah; so Christ did more than once when he fed thousands miraculously with that which was intended but for one meal or two for his own family. This encourages us to hope in him as the nourisher of our souls with the bread of life. He is the author of liberty to those that were bound: *The Lord looseth the prisoners*. He brought Israel out of the house of bondage in Egypt and afterwards in Babylon. The miracles Christ wrought, in making the dumb speak and the deaf to hear with that one word, *Epaphthai*—*Be opened*, his cleansing lepers, and so discharging them from their

confinement, and his raising the dead out of their graves, may all be included in this one of *loosing the prisoners*; and we may take encouragement from those to hope in him for that spiritual liberty which he came to proclaim, Isa. lxi. 1, 2. 6. He gives sight to those that have been long deprived of it: *The Lord can open the eyes of the blind*, and has often given to his afflicted people to see that comfort which before they were not aware of; witness Gen. xxi. 19, and the prophet's servant, 2 Kings vi. 17. But this has special reference to Christ; for *since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind till Christ did it* John ix. 32, and thereby encouraged us to hope in him for spiritual illumination. 7. He sets that straight which was crooked, and makes those easy that were pained and ready to sink: *He raises those that are bowed down*, by comforting and supporting them under their burdens, and, in due time, removing their burdens. This was literally performed by Christ when he made a poor woman straight that had been bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself (Luke xiii. 12); and he still does it by his grace, giving rest to those that were weary and heavily laden, and raising up with his comforts those that were humbled and cast down by convictions. 8. He has a constant kindness for all good people: *The Lord loveth the righteous*, and they may with the more confidence depend upon his power when they are sure of his good-will. Our Lord Jesus showed his love to the righteous by fulfilling all righteousness. 9. He has a tender concern for those that stand in special need of his care: *The Lord preserves the strangers*. It ought not to pass without remark that the name of *Jehovah* is repeated here five times in five lines, to intimate that it is an almighty power (that of *Jehovah*) that is engaged and exerted for the relief of the oppressed, and that it is as much the glory of God to succour those that are in misery as it is to ride on the heavens by his name *Jah*, lxxviii. 4. (1.) Strangers are exposed, and are commonly destitute of friends, but *the Lord preserves them*, that they be not run down and ruined. Many a poor stranger has found the benefit of the divine protection and been kept alive by it. (2.) *Widows and fatherless children*, that have lost the head of the family, who took care of the affairs of it, often fall into the hands of those that make a prey of them, that will not do them justice, nay, that will do them injustice; but *the Lord relieveth them*, and riseth up friends for them. See Exod. xxiii. 22, 23. Our Lord Jesus came into the world to help the helpless, to receive Gentiles, strangers, into his kingdom, and that with him poor sinners, that are as fatherless, may find mercy, Hos. xiv. 3. 10. He will appear for the destruction of all those that oppose his kingdom and oppress the faithful subjects of it: *The way of the wicked he turns upside*

down, and therefore let us hope in him, and not be afraid of the fury of the oppressor, as though he were ready to destroy. It is the glory of the Messiah that he will subvert all the counsels of hell and earth that militate against his church, so that, having him for us, we need not fear any thing that can be done against us. 11. His kingdom shall continue through all the revolutions of time, to the utmost ages of eternity, v. 10. Let this encourage us to trust in God at all times that the Lord shall reign for ever, in spite of all the malignity of the powers of darkness, even thy God, O Zion! unto all generations. Christ is set King on the holy hill of Zion, and his kingdom shall continue in an endless glory. It cannot be destroyed by an invader; it shall not be left to a successor, either to a succeeding monarch or a succeeding monarchy, but it shall stand for ever. It is matter of unspeakable comfort that the Lord reigns as Zion's God, as Zion's king, that the Messiah is head over all things to the church, and will be so while the world stands.

PSALM CXLVII.

This is another psalm of praise. Some think it was penned after the return of the Jews from their captivity; but it is so much of a piece with Ps. cxlv. that I rather think it was penned by David, and what is said ver. 2, 13, may well enough be applied to the first building and fortifying of Jerusalem in his time, and the gathering in of those that had been outcasts in Saul's time. The Septuagint divides it into two; and we may divide it into the first and second part, but both of the same import. 1. We are called upon to praise God, ver. 1, 7, 12. 2. We are furnished with matter for praise, for God is to be glorified, 1. As the God of nature, and so he is very great, ver. 4, 5, 8, 9, 15—18. 2. As the God of grace, comforting his people, ver. 3, 6, 10, 11. 3. As the God of Israel, Jerusalem, and Zion, settling their civil state (ver. 2, 13, 14), and especially settling religion among them, ver. 19, 20. It is easy, in singing this psalm, to apply it to ourselves, both as to personal and national mercies, were it but as easy to do so with suitable affections.

PRAISE ye the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely. 2 The LORD doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel. 3 He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. 4 He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names. 5 Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite. 6 The LORD lifteth up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground. 7 Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God: 8 Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains. 9 He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry. 10 He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. 11 The LORD taketh pleasure in them that

fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.

Here, I. The duty of praise is recommended to us. It is not without reason that we are thus called to it again and again: *Praise you the Lord* (v. 1), and again (v. 7), *Sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving, sing praise upon the harp to our God* (let all our praise be directed to him and centre in him), *for it is good to do so*; it is our duty, and therefore good in itself; it is our interest, and therefore good for us. It is acceptable to our Creator and it answers the end of our creation. The law for it is holy, just, and good; the practice of it will turn to a good account. It is good, for, 1. It is pleasant. Holy joy or delight are required as the principle of it, and that is pleasant to us as men giving glory to God is the design and business of it, and that is pleasant to us as saints that are devoted to his honour. Praising God is work that is its own wages; it is heaven upon earth; it is what we should be in our element. 2. It is comely; it is that which becomes us as reasonable creature much more as people in covenant with God. In giving honour to God we really do ourselves a great deal of honour.

II. God is recommended to us as the proper object of our most exalted and enlarged praises, upon several accounts.

1. The care he takes of his chosen people v. 2. Is Jerusalem to be raised out of small beginnings? Is it to be recovered out of ruins? In both cases, *The Lord builds up Jerusalem*. The gospel-church, the Jerusalem that is from above, is of his building. He framed the model of it in his own counsels; he founded it by the preaching of his gospel; he adds to it daily such as shall be saved, and so increases it. He will build it up unto perfection, build it up as high as heaven. Are any of his people outcasts? Have they made themselves so by their own folly? He gathers them by giving them repentance and bringing them again into communion of saints. Have they been forced out by war, famine, or persecution? He opens a door for their return; many that were missing, and thought to be lost, are brought back, and those that were scattered in the cloud and dark day are gathered together again.

2. The comforts he has laid up for true penitents, v. 3. They are broken in heart and wounded, humbled, and troubled, for sin, inwardly pained at the remembrance of it, as a man is that is sorely wounded. The very hearts are not only pricked, but removed under the sense of the dishonour they have done to God and the injury they have done to themselves by sin. To those whom God heals with the consolations of his Spirit he speaks peace, assures them that their sins are pardoned and that he is reconciled to them, and so makes them easy, pours the balm of God's love into the bleeding wounds, and then binds

em up, and makes them to rejoice. Those who have had experience of this need not be filled upon to praise the Lord; for when he brought them out of the horrible pit, and set their feet upon a rock, he put a new song into their mouths, xl. 2, 3. And for this let others praise him also.

3. The sovereign dominion he has over the heights of heaven, v. 4, 5. The stars are innumerable, many of them being scarcely discernible with the naked eye, and yet he counts them, and knows the exact number of them, and they are all the work of his hands and the instruments of his providence. Their bulk and power are very great; but he calleth them by their names, which shows his dominion over them and the command he has them at, to make what use of them he pleases. They are his servants, his soldiers; he musters them, he marshals them; they come and go at his bidding, and all their motions are under his direction. He mentions this as one instance of many, to show that *great is our Lord and of great power* (he can do what he pleases), and of *his understanding there is no computation*, so that he can contrive everything for the best. Man's knowledge is soon attained, and you have his utmost length; but his wisdom can reach and no further. But God's knowledge is a depth that can never be fathomed.

4. The pleasure he takes in humbling the proud and exalting those of low degree (v. 6): *The Lord lifts up the meek*, who abase themselves before him, and whom men trample upon; but *the wicked*, who conduct themselves violently towards God and scornfully towards mankind, who lift up themselves in pride and folly, *he casteth down to the ground*, sometimes by very humbling providences in this world, at furthest in the day when their eyes shall be filled with everlasting shame. And proves himself to be God by looking on the proud and abasing them, Job xl. 12.

5. The provision he makes for the inferior creatures. Though he is so great as to command the stars, he is so good as not to forget even the fowls, v. 8, 9. Observe in what method he feeds man and beast. (1.) *He covereth the heaven with clouds*, which darken the air and intercept the beams of the sun, and yet in them he *prepareth that rain for the earth* which is necessary to its fruitfulness. Clouds look melancholy, and yet without them we could have no rain and consequently no fruit. Thus afflictions, for the present, look black, and dark, and unpleasant, and we are in heaviness because of them, as sometimes when the sky is overcast it makes us dull; but they are necessary, for from these clouds of affliction come those powers that make the harvest to yield the acceptable fruits of righteousness (Heb. xii.), which should help to reconcile us to them. Observe the necessary dependence which the earth has upon the heavens, which directs us to earth to depend on God in heaven. All

the rain with which the earth is watered is of God's preparing. (2.) By the rain which distils on the earth he *makes grass to grow upon the mountains*, even the high mountains, which man neither takes care of nor reaps the benefit of. The mountains, which are not watered with the springs and rivers, as the valleys are, are yet watered so that they are not barren. (3.) This grass he *gives to the beast for his food*, the beast of the mountains which runs wild, which man makes no provision for. And even the *young ravens*, which, being forsaken by their old ones, cry, are heard by him, and ways are found to feed them, so that they are kept from perishing in the nest.

6. The complacency he takes in his people, v. 10, 11. In times when great things are doing, and there are great expectations of the success of them, it concerns us to know (since the issue proceeds from the Lord) whom, and what, God will delight to honour and crown with victory. It is not the strength of armies, but the strength of grace, that God is pleased to own. (1.) Not the strength of armies—not in the cavalry, *for he delighteth not in the strength of the horse*, the war-horse, noted for his courage (Job xxxix. 19, &c.)—nor in the infantry, *for he taketh no pleasure in the legs of a man*; he does not mean the swiftness of them for flight, to quit the field, but the steadiness of them for charging, to stand the ground. If one king, making war with another king, goes to God to pray for success, it will not avail him to plead, "Lord, I have a gallant army, the horse and foot in good order; it is a pity that they should suffer any disgrace;" for that is no argument with God, Ps. xx. 7. Jehoshaphat's was much better: *Lord, we have no might*, 2 Chron. xx. 12. But, (2.) God is pleased to own the strength of grace. A serious and suitable regard to God is that which is, in the sight of God, of great price in such a case. The Lord accepts and *takes pleasure* in those that *fear him and that hope in his mercy*. Observe, [1.] A holy fear of God and hope in God not only may consist, but must concur. In the same heart, at the same time, there must be both a reverence of his majesty and a complacency in his goodness, both a believing dread of his wrath and a believing expectation of his favour; not that we must hang in suspense between hope and fear, but we must act under the gracious influences of hope and fear. Our fear must save our hope from swelling into presumption, and our hope must save our fear from sinking into despair: thus must we take our work before us. [2.] We must *hope in God's mercy*, his general mercy, even when we cannot find a particular promise to stay ourselves upon. A humble confidence in the goodness of God's nature is very pleasing to him, as that which turns to the glory of that attribute in which he most glories. Every man of honour loves to be trusted.

12 Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion. 13 For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; he hath blessed thy children within thee. 14 He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat. 15 He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth: his word runneth very swiftly. 16 He giveth snow like wool: he scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes. 17 He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold? 18 He sendeth out his word, and melteth them: he causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow. 19 He showeth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. 20 He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the LORD.

Jerusalem, and Zion, the holy city, the holy hill, are here called upon to praise God, v. 12. For where should praise be offered up to God but where his altar is? Where may we expect that glory should be given to him but in the beauty of holiness? Let the inhabitants of Jerusalem praise the Lord in their own houses; let the priests and Levites, who attend in Zion, the city of their solemnities, in a special manner praise the Lord. They have more cause to do it than others, and they lie under greater obligations to do it than others; for it is their business, it is their profession. "Praise thy God, O Zion! he is thine, and therefore thou art bound to praise him; his being thine includes all happiness, so that thou canst never want matter for praise." Jerusalem and Zion must praise God,

1. For the prosperity and flourishing state of their civil interests, v. 13, 14. 1. For their common safety. They had gates, and kept their gates barred in times of danger; but that would not have been an effectual security to them if God had not strengthened the bars of their gates and fortified their fortifications. The most probable means we can devise for our own preservation will not answer the end, unless God give his blessing with them; we must therefore, in the careful and diligent use of those means, depend upon him for that blessing, and attribute the undisturbed repose of our land more to the wall of fire than to the wall of water round about us, Zech. ii. 5. 2. For the increase of their people. This strengthens the bars of the gates as much as any thing: *He hath blessed thy children within thee*, with that first and great blessing, *Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the land*. It is a comfort to parents to see their children blessed of the Lord (Isa. lxi. 9), and a comfort to the generation that

is going off to see the rising generation numerous and hopeful, for which blessing God must be blessed. 3. For the public tranquillity, that they were delivered from the terrors and desolations of war: *He makes peace in thy borders*, by putting an end to the wars that were, and preventing the wars that were threatened and feared. *He makes peace within thy borders*, that is, in all parts of the country, by composing differences among neighbours, that there may be no intestine broils and animosities, and upon thy borders, that they may not be attacked by invasions from abroad. If there be trouble any where, it is in the borders, the marches of a country: the frontier-towns lie most exposed, so that, if there be peace in the borders, there is a universal peace, a mercy we can never be sufficiently thankful for. 4. For great plenty, the common effect of peace: *He filleth thee with the finest of the wheat*—wheat, the most valuable grain, the fat, the finest of that, and a fulness thereof. What would they more? Canaan abounded with the best wheat (Deut. xxxii. 14) and exported it to the countries abroad, as appears, Ezek. xxvii. 17. The land of Israel was not enriched with precious stones nor spices, but with the finest of the wheat, with bread, which strengthens man's heart. This made it the glory of all lands, and for this God was praised in Zion.

II. For the wonderful instances of his power in the weather, particularly the winter weather. He that protects Zion and Jerusalem is that God of power from whom all the powers of nature are derived and on whom they depend, and who produces all the changes of the seasons, which, if they were not common, would astonish us.

1. In general, whatever alterations there are in this lower world (and it is that world that is subject to continual changes) they are produced by the will, and power, and providence of God (v. 15): *He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth*, as one that has an incontestable authority to give orders, and innumerable attendants ready to carry his orders and put them in execution. As the world was at first made, so it is still upheld and governed, by a word of almighty power. *God speaks and it is done*, for all are his servants. That word takes effect, not only surely, but speedily. *His word runneth very swiftly*, for nothing can oppose or retard it. As the lightning, which passes through the air in an instant, such is the word of God's providence, and such the word of his grace when it is sent forth with commission, Luke xvii. 24. Angels, who carry his word and fulfil it, *fly swiftly*, Dan. ix. 21.

2. In particular, frosts and thaws are both of them wonderful changes, and in both we must acknowledge the word of his power.

(1.) Frosts are from God. With him are the treasures of the snow and the hail (Job xxxviii. 22, 23), and out of these treasures he draws as he pleases. [1.] *He giveth snow*

like wool. It is compared to wool for its whiteness (Isa. i. 18), and its softness; it falls silently, and makes no more noise than the fall of a lock of wool; it covers the earth, and keeps it warm like a fleece of wool, and so promotes its fruitfulness. See how God can work by contraries, and bring meat out of the eater, can warm the earth with cold now. [2.] *He scatters the hoar-frost*, which is dew congealed, as the snow and hail are rain congealed. This looks like ashes scattered upon the grass, and is sometimes prejudicial to the products of the earth and blasts them as if it were hot ashes, Ps. lxxviii. 47. [3.] *He casts forth his ice like morsels*, which may be understood either of large hail-stones, which are as ice in the air, or of the ice which covers the face of the waters, and when it is broken, though naturally it was as drops of brim, it is as morsels of meat, or crusts of bread. [4.] When we see the frost, and now, and ice, we feel it in the air: *Who can stand before his cold?* The beasts cannot; they retire into dens (Job xxxvii. 8); they are easily conquered then, 2 Sam. xxiii. 20. Men cannot, but are forced to protect themselves by fires, or furs, or both, and all little enough where and when the cold is in extremity. We see not the causes when we feel the effects; and therefore we must call it *his cold*; it is of his sending, and therefore we must bear it patiently, and be thankful for warm houses, and clothes, and beds, to relieve us against the rigour of the season, and must give him the glory of his wisdom and sovereignty, his power and faithfulness, which appear in the winter-weather, which shall not cease any more than summer, Gen. viii. 22. And let us also infer from it, If we cannot stand before the cold of his frosts, how can we stand before the heat of his wrath?

[2.] Thaws are from God. When he pleases (v. 18) *he sends out his word and melts them*; the frost, the snow, the ice, are all dissolved quickly, in order to which he *causes the wind, the south wind, to blow, and the waters*, which were frozen, *flow again* as they did before. We are soon sensible of the change, but we see not the causes of it, but must resolve it into the will of the First Cause. And in it we must take notice not only of the power of God, that he can so suddenly, so insensibly, make such a great and universal alteration in the temper of the air and the face of the earth (what cannot he do that does this every winter, perhaps often every winter?) but also of the goodness of God. Hard weather does not always continue; it would be sad if it should. He does not contend for ever, but *renews the face of the earth*. As he remembered Noah, and released him (Gen. viii. 1), so he remembers the earth, and his covenant with the earth, Cant. ii. 11, 12. This thawing word may represent the gospel of Christ, and this thawing wind the Spirit of Christ (for the Spirit is compared to the wind, John iii. 8); both are sent for the melting of frozen

souls. Converting grace, like the thaw, softens the heart that was hard, moistens it, and melts it into tears of repentance; it warms good affections, and makes them to flow, which, before, were chilled and stopped up. The change which the thaw makes is universal and yet gradual; it is very evident, and yet how it is done is unaccountable: such is the change wrought in the conversion of a soul, when God's word and Spirit are sent to melt it and restore it to itself.

III. For his distinguishing favour to Israel, in giving them his word and ordinances, a much more valuable blessing than their peace and plenty (v. 14), as much as the soul is more excellent than the body. Jacob and Israel had God's statutes and judgments among them. They were under his peculiar government; the municipal laws of their nation were of his framing and enacting, and their constitution was a theocracy. They had the benefit of divine revelation; the great things of God's law were written to them. They had a priesthood of divine institution for all things pertaining to God, and prophets for all extraordinary occasions. No people besides went upon sure grounds in their religion. Now this was, 1. A preventing mercy. They did not find out God's statutes and judgments of themselves, but *God showed his word unto Jacob*, and by that word he made known to them his statutes and judgments. It is a great mercy to any people to have the word of God among them; for *faith comes by hearing* and reading that word, that faith without which it is impossible to please God. 2. A distinguishing mercy, and upon that account the more obliging: "*He hath not dealt so with every nation, not with any nation; and, as for his judgments, they have not known them, nor are likely to know them till the Messiah shall come and take down the partition-wall between Jew and Gentile, that the gospel may be preached to every creature.*" Other nations had plenty of outward good things; some nations were very rich, others had pompous powerful princes and polite literature, but none were blessed with God's statutes and judgments as Israel were. Let *Israel therefore praise the Lord* in the observance of these statutes. *Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not to the world! Even so, Father, because it seemed good in thy eyes.*

PSALM CXLVIII.

This psalm is a most solemn and earnest call to all the creatures, according to their capacity, to praise their Creator, and to show forth his eternal power and Godhead, the invisible things of which are manifested in the things that are seen. Thence the psalmist designs to express his great affection to the duty of praise; he is highly satisfied that God is praised, in very desirous that he may be more praised, and therefore does all he can to engage all about him in this pleasant work, yea, and all who shall come after him, whose hearts must be very dead and cold if they be not raised and enlarged, in praising God, by the lofty flights of divine poetry which we find in this psalm. I. He calls upon the higher house, the creatures that are placed in the upper world, to praise the Lord, both those that are intellectual beings, and are capable of doing it actively (ver. 1, 2), and those that are not, and are therefore capable of doing it only objectively, ver. 3-6. II. He calls upon the lower house, the creatures of this lower world, both those that can only minister matter of praise (ver. 7-10) and those that, being endued with reason, are capable of offering up this sacrifice (ver. 11-12), especially his

own people, who have more cause to do it, and are more concerned to do it, than any other, ver. 14.

PRAISE ye the LORD, Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights. 2 Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts. 3 Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light. 4 Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. 5 Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created. 6 He hath also established them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass.

We, in this dark and depressed world, know but little of the world of light and exaltation, and, conversing within narrow confines, can scarcely admit any tolerable conceptions of the vast regions above. But this we know,

I. That there is above us a world of blessed angels by whom God is praised, an innumerable company of them. *Thousand thousands minister unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before him;* and it is his glory that he has such attendants, but much more his glory that he neither needs them, nor is, nor can be, any way benefited by them. To that bright and happy world the psalmist has an eye here, v. 1, 2. In general, *to the heavens, to the heights.* The heavens are the heights, and therefore we must lift up our souls above the world unto God in *the heavens*, and on *things above* we must set *our affections*. It is his desire that God may be praised *from the heavens*, that thence a praising frame may be transmitted to this world in which we live, that from the inhabitants of that world we may learn this blessed work. It is his delight to think that God is praised *in the heights*, that while we are so cold, and low, and flat, in praising God, there are those above who are doing it in a better manner, and that while we are so often interrupted in this work they rest not day nor night from it. In particular, he had an eye to God's *angels*, to *his hosts*, and calls upon them to praise God. That God's angels are his hosts is plain enough; as soon as they were made they were enlisted, armed, and disciplined; he employs them in fighting his battles, and they keep ranks, and know their place, and observe the word of command as his hosts. But what is meant by the psalmist's calling upon them, and exciting them to praise God, is not so easy to account for. I will not say, They do not heed it, because we find that *to the principalities and powers is known by the church the manifold wisdom of God* (Eph. iii. 10); but I will say, They do not need it, for they are continually praising God and there is no defi-

ciency at all in their performances; and therefore when, in singing this psalm, we call upon the angels to praise God (as did, ciii. 20), we mean that we desire God may be praised by the ablest hands and the best manner,—that we are sure it is he should be so,—that we are pleased to think he is so,—that we have a spiritual communion with those that dwell in his heights above and are still praising him,—and that we have come by faith, and hope, and love, to the innumerable company of angels Heb. xii. 22.

II. That there is above us not only an assembly of blessed spirits, but a system of vast bodies too, and those bright ones, which God is praised, that is, which may give us occasion (as far as we know anything of them) to give to God the glory not only of their being, but of their beneficence to mankind. Observe,

1. What these creatures are that thus show us the way in praising God, and, whenever we look up and consider the heavens, furnish us with matter for his praises. (1.) There are the *sun, moon, and stars*, which continually, either day or night, present themselves to our view, as looking-glasses, in which we may see a faint shadow (for so I must call it, not a resemblance) of the glory of him that is *the Father of lights*, v. 3. The great lights, the sun and moon, are not too gross, too bright, to praise him; and the praise of the less lights, the stars, shall not be slighted. Idolaters made the sun, moon, and stars their gods, and praised them, worshipping and serving the creature, because it is seen more than the Creator, because he is not seen; but we, who worship the true God, only, make them our fellow-worshippers, and call upon them to praise him with us, nay, as Levites to attend us, who, as priests, offer this spiritual sacrifice. (2.) There are the *heavens of heavens* above the sun and stars, the seat of the blessed; from the vastness and brightness of these unknown worlds of abundance of glory redounds to God, for *the heavens of heavens are the Lord's* (cxv. 1) and yet they cannot contain him, 1 Kings vi. 27. The learned Dr. Hammond understands here, by *the heavens of heavens*, the upper regions of the air, or all the regions of it, Ps. lxxviii. 33. We read of the *heavens of heavens*, whence *God sends forth his voice* and *that a mighty voice*, meaning the thunder. (3.) There are the *waters that are above the heavens*, the clouds that hang above in the air, where they are reserved *against the day of battle and war*, Job xxxviii. 23. We have reason to praise God, not only that the waters do not drown the earth, but that they do water it and make it fruitful. The Chaldean paraphrase reads it, *Praise him, you heavens of heavens, and you waters that depend on the word of him who is above the heaven* for the key of the clouds is one of the keys which God has in his hand, wherewith

ens and none can shut, he shuts and none open.

2. Upon what account we are to give God glory of them: *Let them praise the name of the Lord*, that is, let us praise the name of the Lord for them, and observe what content and fresh matter for praise may be fetched from them. (1.) Because he made men, gave them their powers and assigned them their places: *He commanded them* (great they are) out of nothing, *and they were created* at a word's speaking. God created, and therefore may command; for he commanded, and so created; his authority must always be acknowledged and acquiesced in, because he once spoke with such authority. (2.) Because he still upholds and preserves them in their beings and posts, their powers and motions (v. 6): *He hath established them for ever*, never, that is, to the end of time, a short ever, it is their ever; they shall last as long as there is occasion for them. *He hath made a decree*, the law of creation, *which shall not pass*; it is enacted by the wisdom of God, and therefore needs not be altered, by his sovereignty and inviolable fidelity, and therefore cannot be altered. All the creatures that praised him at first for their creation must praise him still for their continuance. And we have reason to praise him that they are kept within the bounds of a decree; for to that it is owing that the waters above the heavens have a second time drowned the earth.

7. Praise the LORD from the earth, dragons, and all deeps: 8 Fire, and hail; snow, and vapours; stormy wind fulfilling his word: 9 Mountains, and hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars: 10 Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl: 11 Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth: 12 Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children: 13 Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven. 14 He also exeth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him. Praise ye the LORD.

Considering that this earth, and the atmosphere that surrounds it, are the very sediment of the universe, it concerns us to enquire whether those considerations that may be of use to reconcile us to our place in it; and I know none more likely than this (next to the visitation of the Son of God once made to it), that when in this world, dark and as bad as it is, and is praised: *Praise you the Lord from the earth*, v. 7. As the rays of the sun, which have darted directly from heaven, reflect back (though more weakly) from the earth, so

should the praises of God, with which this cold and infected world should be warmed and perfumed.

I. Even those creatures that are not dignified with the powers of reason are summoned into this concert, because God may be glorified in them, v. 7—10. Let the *dragons* or *whales*, that sport themselves in the mighty waters (civ. 26), dance before the Lord, to his glory, who largely proves his own omnipotence by his dominion over the leviathan or whale, Job xli. 1, &c. *All deeps*, and their inhabitants, praise God—the sea, and the animals there—the bowels of the earth, and the animals there. *Out of the depths* God may be praised as well as prayed unto. If we look up into the atmosphere we meet with a great variety of meteors, which, being a kind of new productions (and some of them unaccountable), do in a special manner magnify the power of the great Creator. There are fiery meteors; lightning is fire, and there are other blazes sometimes kindled which may be so called. There are watery meteors, *hail*, and *snow*, and the *vapours* of which they are generated. There are airy meteors, *stormy winds*; we know not whence they come nor whither they go, whence their mighty force comes nor how it is spent; but this we know, that, be they ever so strong, so stormy, they *fulfil God's word*, and do that, and no more than that, which he appoints them; and by this Christ showed himself to have a divine power, that he *commanded even the winds and the seas*, and they *obeyed him*. Those that will not fulfil God's word, but rise up in rebellion against it, show themselves to be more violent and headstrong than even the stormy winds, for they fulfil it. Take a view of the surface of the earth (v. 9), and there are presented to our view the exalted grounds, *mountains and all hills*, from the barren tops of some of which, and the fruitful tops of others, we may fetch matter for praise; there are the exalted plants, some that are exalted by their usefulness, as the *fruitful trees* of various kinds, for the fruits of which God is to be praised, others by their stateliness, as *all cedars*, those *trees of the Lord*, civ. 16. Cedars, the high trees, are not the fruitful trees, yet they had their use even in God's temple. Pass we next to the animal kingdom, and there we find God glorified, even by the *beasts* that run wild, and *all cattle* that are tame and in the service of man, v. 10. Nay, even the *creeping things* have not sunk so low, nor do the *flying fowl* soar so high, as not to be called upon to *praise the Lord*. Much of the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Creator appears in the several capacities and instincts of the creatures, in the provision made for them and the use made of them. When we see all so very strange, and all so very good, surely we cannot but acknowledge God with wonder and thankfulness.

II. Much more those creatures that are

dignified with the powers of reason ought to employ them in praising God: *Kings of the earth and all people*, v. 11, 12. 1. God is to be glorified in and for these, as in and for the inferior creatures, for their hearts are in the hand of the Lord and he makes what use he pleases of them. God is to be praised in the order and constitution of kingdoms, the *pars imperans*—the part that commands, and the *pars subdita*—the part that is subject: *Kings of the earth and all people*. It is by him that kings reign, and people are subject to them; the *princes and judges of the earth* have their wisdom and their commission from him, and we, to whom they are blessings, ought to bless God for them. God is to be praised also in the constitution of families, for he is the founder of them; and for all the comfort of relations, the comfort that parents and children, brothers and sisters, have in each other, God is to be praised. 2. God is to be glorified by these. Let all manner of persons praise God. (1.) Those of each rank, high and low. The praises of kings, and princes, and judges, are demanded; those on whom God has put honour must honour him with it, and the power they are entrusted with, and the figure they make in the world, put them in a capacity of bringing more glory to God and doing him more service than others. Yet the praises of the people are expected also, and God will graciously accept of them; Christ despised not the hosannas of the multitude. (2.) Those of each sex, *young men and maidens*, who are accustomed to make merry together; let them turn their mirth into this channel; let it be sacred, that it may be pure. (3.) Those of each age. *Old men* must still bring forth this fruit in old age, and not think that either the gravity or the infirmity of their age will excuse them from it; and *children* too must begin betimes to praise God; even out of the mouth of babes and sucklings this good work is perfected. A good reason is given (v. 13) why all these should praise the name of the Lord, because *his name alone is excellent and worthy to be praised*; it is a name above every name, no name, no nature, but his, has in it all excellency. *His glory is above both the earth and the heaven*, and let all the inhabitants both of earth and heaven praise him and yet acknowledge his name to be exalted far above all blessing and praise.

III. Most of all his own people, who are dignified with peculiar privileges, must in a peculiar manner give glory to him, v. 14. Observe, 1. The dignity God has put upon his people, even the children of Israel, typical of the honour reserved for all true believers, who are God's spiritual Israel. *He exalts their horn*, their brightness, their plenty, their power. The people of Israel were, in many respects, honoured above any other nation, for to them pertained the adoption, the glory, and the covenants, Rom. ix. 4. It was their own honour that they were a people near

unto God, his *Segulla*, his peculiar treasure; they were admitted into his courts, when stranger that came nigh must be put to death. They had him nigh to them in all that which they called upon him for. This blessing has now come upon the Gentiles, through Christ for those that were afar off are by his blood made nigh, Eph. ii. 13. It is the greater honour that can be put upon a man to be brought near to God, the nearer the better; and it will be best of all when nearest of in the kingdom of glory. 2. The duty God expects from them in consideration of this. Let those whom God honours honour him. *Praise you the Lord*. Let him be the praise of all his saints, the object of their praise for he is a praise to them. *He is thy praise and he is thy God*, Deut. x. 21. Some like the horn of his people understand David, a type of Christ, whom God has exalted to be a prince and a Saviour, who is indeed the praise of all his saints and will be so forever; for it is through him that they are people near to God.

PSALM CXLIX.

The foregoing psalm was a hymn of praise to the Creator; this is a hymn of praise to the Redeemer. It is a psalm of triumph in God of Israel, and over the enemies of Israel. Probably it was penned upon occasion of some victory which Israel was blessed to honour with. Some conjecture that it was penned when David had taken the strong-hold of Zion, and settled his government there. But it looks further, to the kingdom of the Messiah, who in the chariot of the everlasting gospel, goes forth conquering and to conquer. To him, and his graces and glories, we must be an eye, in singing this psalm, which proclaims, 1. Abundance of joy to all the people of God, ver. 1-5. 2. Abundance of terror to the proudest of their enemies, ver. 6-9.

PRAISE ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints. 2 Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. 3 Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbre and harp. 4 For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation. 5 Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds.

We have here,

I. The calls given to God's Israel to praise him. All his works were, in the foregoing psalm, excited to praise him; but here his saints in a particular manner are required to bless him. Observe then, 1. Who are called upon to praise God. Israel in general, the body of the church (v. 2), the children of Zion particularly, the inhabitants of that holy hill, who are nearer to God than other Israelites; those that have the word and ordinances of God near to them, that are not required to travel far to them, are justly expected to do more in praising God than others. All true Christians may call themselves the children of Zion for in faith and hope we have come unto Mount Zion, Heb. xii. 22. The saints must praise God, saints in profession, saints in power

for this is the intention of their sanctification ; they are devoted to the glory of God, and renewed by the grace of God, that they may be unto him for a name and a praise. 2. What must be the principle of this praise, and that is holy joy in God : *Let Israel rejoice, and the children of Zion be joyful, and the saints be joyful in glory.* Our praises of God should flow from a heart filled with delight and triumph in God's attributes, and in relation to him. Much of the power of holiness in the heart consists in making God our chief joy and solacing ourselves in him ; and our faith in Christ is described by our rejoicing in him. We then give honour to God when we take pleasure in him. We must be joyful in glory, that is, in him as our glory, and in the interest we have in him ; and let us look upon it as our glory to be of those that rejoice in God. 3. What must be the expressions of this praise. We must by all proper ways show forth the praises of God : *Sing to the Lord.* We must entertain ourselves, and proclaim his name, by singing praises to him (v. 3), singing aloud (v. 5), for we should sing psalms with all our heart, as those that are not only not ashamed of it, but that are enlarged in it. We must sing a new song, newly composed upon every special occasion, sing with new affections, which make the song new, though the words have been used before, and keep them from growing threadbare. Let God be praised in the dance with timbrel and harp, according to the usage of the Old-Testament church very early (Exod. xv. 20), where we find God praised with timbrels and dances. Those who from this urge the use of music in religious worship must by the same rule introduce dancing, for they went together, as in David's dancing before the ark, and Judg. xxi. 21. But, whereas many scriptures in the New Testament keep up singing as a gospel-duties, none provide for the keeping up of music and dancing ; the gospel-canon for alms is to sing with the spirit and with understanding. 4. What opportunities must be taken for praising God, none must be let slip, but particularly, (1.) We must praise God in public, in the solemn assembly (1.), in the congregation of saints. The more the better ; it is the more like heaven. Thus God's name must be owned before the world ; as the service must have a solemnity put upon it, and we must mutually excite one another to it. The principle, end, and design of our coming together in religious assemblies is that we may join together in praising God. Other parts of the service must be in order to this. (2.) We must praise him in private. Let the saints be so transported with their joy in God as to sing aloud upon their beds, when they awake in the night, of all the praises of God, as David, cxix. 62. When God's Israel are brought to a quiet settlement, let them enjoy that, with thankfulness to God ; much more may true be-

lievers, that have entered into God's rest, and find repose in Jesus Christ, sing aloud for joy of that. Upon their sick-beds, their death-beds, let them sing the praises of their God.

II. The cause given to God's Israel for praise. Consider, 1. God's doings for them. They have reason to rejoice in God, to devote themselves to his honour and employ themselves in his service ; for it is he that made them. He gave us our being as men, and we have reason to praise him for that, for it is a noble and excellent being. He gave Israel their being as a people, as a church, made them what they were, so very different from other nations. Let that people therefore praise him, for he formed them for himself, on purpose that they might show forth his praise, Isa. xliii. 21. Let Israel rejoice in his Makers (so it is in the original) ; for God said, *Let us make man* ; and in this, some think, is the mystery of the Trinity. 2. God's dominion over them. This follows upon the former : if he made them, he is their King ; he that gave being no doubt may give law ; and this ought to be the matter of our joy and praise that we are under the conduct and protection of such a wise and powerful King. *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion ! for behold thy king comes*, the king Messiah, whom God has set upon his holy hill of Zion, let all the children of Zion be joyful in him, and go forth to meet him with their hosannas, Zech. ix. 9. 3. God's delight in them. He is a king that rules by love, and therefore to be praised ; for the Lord takes pleasure in his people, in their services, in their prosperity, in communion with them, and in the communications of his favour to them. He that is infinitely happy in the enjoyment of himself, and to whose felicity no accessions can be made, yet graciously condescends to take pleasure in his people, cxlvii. 11. 4. God's designs concerning them. Besides the present complacency he has in them, he has prepared for their future glory : *He will beautify the meek, the humble, and lowly, and contrite in heart, that tremble at his word and submit to it, that are patient under their afflictions and show all meekness towards all men.* These men vilify and asperse, but God will justify them, and wipe off their reproach ; nay, he will beautify them ; they shall appear not only clear, but comely, before all the world, with the comeliness that he puts upon them. He will beautify them with salvation, with temporal salvations (when God works remarkable deliverances for his people those that had been among the pots become as the wings of a dove covered with silver, lxviii. 13), but especially with eternal salvation. The righteous shall be beautified in that day when they shine forth as the sun. In the hopes of this, let them now, in the darkest day, sing a new song.

6 Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a twoedged sword

in their hand; 7 To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; 8 To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; 9 To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the LORD.

The Israel of God are here represented triumphing over their enemies, which is both the matter of their praise (let them give to God the glory of those triumphs) and the recompence of their praise; those that are truly thankful to God for their tranquillity shall be blessed with victory. Or it may be taken as a further expression of their praise (v. 6): *Let the high praises of God be in their mouth*, and then, in a holy zeal for his honour, let them take a *two-edged sword in their hand*, to fight his battles against the enemies of his kingdom. Now this may be applied, 1. To the many victories which God blessed his people Israel with over the nations of Canaan and other nations that were devoted to destruction. These began in Moses and Joshua, who, when they taught Israel *the high praises of the Lord*, did withal put a *two-edged sword in their hand*; David did so too, for, as he was the sweet singer of Israel, so he was the captain of their hosts, and taught the children of Judah the use of the bow (2 Sam. i. 18), taught their hands to war, as God had taught his. Thus he and they went on victoriously, fighting the Lord's battles, and avenging Israel's quarrels on those that had oppressed them; then they *executed vengeance upon the heathen* (the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, and others, 2 Sam. viii. 1, &c.) and *punishments upon the people*, for all the wrong they had done to God's people, v. 7. Their kings and nobles were taken prisoners (v. 8) and on some of them the judgment written was executed, as by Joshua on the kings of Canaan, by Gideon on the princes of Midian, by Samuel on Agag. The honour of this redounded to all the Israel of God; and to him who put it upon them they return it entirely in their hallelujahs. Jehoshaphat's army had at the same time *the high praises of God in their mouth and a two-edged sword in their hand*, for they went forth to war singing the praises of God, and then their sword did execution, 2 Chron. xx. 23. Some apply it to the time of the Maccabees, when the Jews sometimes gained great advantages against their oppressors. And if it seem strange that the meek should, notwithstanding that character, be thus severe, and upon kings and nobles too, here is one word that justifies them in it; it is *the judgment written*. They do not do it from any personal malice and revenge, or any bloody politics that they govern themselves by, but by commission from God, according to his direction, and in obedience to his command;

and Saul lost his kingdom for disobeying command of this nature. Thus the king of the earth that shall be employed in the destruction of the New-Testament Babylon will but *execute the judgment written*, Rev. xvii. 16, 17. But, since now no such special commissions can be produced, this may by no means justify the violence either subjects against their princes or of princes against their subjects, or both against neighbours, under pretence of religion; Christ never intended that his gospel should be propagated by fire and sword or his righteousness wrought by the wrath of man. When the high praises of God are in our mouth with them we should have an olive branch of peace in our hands. 2. To Christ's victories by the power of his gospel and grace over spiritual enemies, in which believers are more than conquerors. The word of God is the *two-edged sword* (Heb. iv. 12), the *sword of the Spirit* (Eph. vi. 17), which it is not enough to have in our armoury, we must have it in our hand also, our Master had, when he said, *It is written*. Now, (1.) With this two-edged sword the first preachers of the gospel obtained a glorious victory over the powers of darkness: vengeance was executed upon the gods of the heathen, by the conviction and conversion of those that had been long their worshippers, and by the consternation and confusion of those that would not repent (Rev. vi. 15); the strongholds of Satan were cast down (2 Cor. x. 4, 5); great men were made to tremble at the word, as Felix; Satan, the god of this world, was cast out, according to the judgment given against him. This is the honour of all Christians, that their holy religion has been so victorious. (2.) With this two-edged sword believers fight against their own corruptions, and, through the grace of God, subdue and mortify them; the sin that had dominion over them is crucified; so that once sat king, is bound with chains and brought into subjection to the yoke of Christ: the tempter is foiled and bruised under the feet. *This honour have all the saints*. (3.) The complete accomplishment of this will be in the judgment of the great day, when *the Lord shall come with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all*, Jud. 14, 15. Vengeance shall then be *executed upon the heathen* (Ps. ix. 17), and *punishments everlasting punishments, upon the people Kings and nobles*, that cast away the banner and cords of Christ's government (ii. 3), shall not be able to cast away the chains and fetters of his wrath and justice. Then shall *the judgment written*, for the secret of men shall be judged according to the gospel. *This honour shall all the saints have*, that as assessors with Christ, they shall judge the world, 1 Cor. vi. 2. In the prospect of this let them praise the Lord, and continue Christ's faithful servants and soldiers to the end of their lives.

PSALM CL.

The first and last of the psalms have both the same number of verses, are both short, and very memorable. But the scope of verses is very different: the first psalm is an elaborate instruction of our duty, to prepare us for the comforts of our detention; this is all rapture and transport, and perhaps was penned on purpose to be the conclusion of these sacred songs, to show what the design of them all, and that is to assist us in praising God. The psalmist had been himself full of the praises of God, and here he would fain fill all the world with them: again and again he calls, "Praise the Lord, praise him, praise him," no less than thirteen times in these six short verses. He shows, 1. For what, and upon what account, God is to be praised, ver. 1, 2. II. How, and with what expressions of joy, God is to be praised, ver. 3—5. III. Who must praise the Lord: it is every one's business, ver. 6. In singing this psalm we should endeavour to get our hearts much affected with the perfections of God and the praises which he is and shall be for ever attended, throughout all ages, world without end.

PRAISE ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power. 2 Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness. 3 Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the altery and harp. 4 Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs. Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals. 6 Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.

We are here, with the greatest earnestness imaginable, excited to praise God; if, as some suppose, this psalm was primarily intended to the Levites, to stir them up to do their duty in the house of the Lord, as singers and players on instruments, yet we must take it speaking to us, who are made to our God ritual priests. And the repeated inculcation of the call thus intimates that it is a great necessary duty, a duty which we should much employed and much enlarged in, at which we are naturally backward to and indolent, and therefore need to be brought to, and held to, by precept upon precept, and command upon line. Observe here,

I. Whence this tribute of praise arises, and of what part of his dominion it especially speaks. It comes, 1. From *his sanctuary*: praise him there. Let his priests, let his people, that attend there, attend him with their praises. Where should he be praised, but where he does, in a special manner, to manifest his glory and communicate his grace? *Praise God* upon the account of *his sanctuary*, and the privileges which we enjoy having that among us, Ezek. xxxvii. 26. *Praise God in his holy ones* (so some read it); we must take notice of the image of God as appears on those that are sanctified, and love them for the sake of that image; and when we praise them we must praise God in them. 2. From *the firmament of his power*. Praise him because of his power and glory which appear in the firmament, its vastness, its brightness, and its splendid furniture; and because of the powerful influences it has

upon this earth. Let those that have their dwelling in the firmament of his power, even the holy angels, lead in this good work. Some, by the *sanctuary*, as well as by the *firmament of his power*, understand the highest heavens, the residence of his glory; that is indeed his sanctuary, his holy temple, and there he is praised continually, in a far better manner than we can praise him. And it is a comfort to us, when we find we do it so poorly, that it is so well done there.

II. Upon what account this tribute of praise is due, upon many accounts, particularly, 1. The works of his power (v. 2): *Praise him for his mighty acts; for his mightinesses* (so the word is), for all the instances of his might, the power of his providence, the power of his grace, what he has done in the creation, government, and redemption of the world, for the children of men in general, for his own church and children in particular. 2. The glory and majesty of his being: *Praise him according to his excellent greatness, according to the multitude of his magnificence* (so Dr. Hammond reads it); not that our praises can bear any proportion to God's greatness, for it is infinite, but, since he is greater than we can express or conceive, we must raise our conceptions and expressions to the highest degree we can attain to. Be not afraid of saying too much in the praises of God, as we often do in praising even great and good men. *Deus non patitur hyperbolum*—*We cannot speak hyperbolically of God*; all the danger is of saying too little; and therefore, when we have done our utmost, we must own that though we have praised him in consideration of, yet not in proportion to, his excellent greatness.

III. In what manner this tribute must be paid, with all the kinds of musical instruments that were then used in the temple-service, v. 3—5. It is well that we are not concerned to enquire what sort of instruments these were; it is enough that they were well known then. Our concern is to know, 1. That hereby is intimated how full the psalmist's heart was of the praises of God and how desirous he was that this good work might go on. 2. That in serving God we should spare no cost nor pains. 3. That the best music in God's ears is devout and pious affections, *non musica chordula, sed cor*—*not a melodious string, but a melodious heart*. Praise God with a strong faith; praise him with holy love and delight; praise him with an entire confidence in Christ; praise him with a believing triumph over the powers of darkness; praise him with an earnest desire towards him and a full satisfaction in him; praise him by a universal respect to all his commands; praise him by a cheerful submission to all his disposals; praise him by rejoicing in his love and solacing yourselves in his great goodness; praise him by promoting the interests of the kingdom of his grace; praise him by a lively hope and expectation of the

kingdom of his glory. 4. That, various instruments being used in praising God, it should yet be done with an exact and perfect harmony; they must not hinder, but help one another. The New-Testament concert, instead of this, is *with one mind and one mouth to glorify God*, Rom. xv. 6.

IV. Who must pay this tribute (v. 6): *Let every thing that has breath praise the Lord*. He began with a call to those that had a place in his sanctuary and were employed in the temple-service; but he concludes with a call to all the children of men, in prospect of the time when the Gentiles should be taken into the church, and *in every place*, as acceptably as at Jerusalem, *this incense should be offered*, Mal. i. 11. Some think that in *every thing that has breath* here we must include the inferior creatures (as Gen. vii. 22), all *in whose nostrils was the breath of life*. They praise God according to their capacity. The singing of birds is a sort of praising God. The brutes do in effect say to man, "We would praise God if we could; do you do it for us." John in vision heard a song of praise from *every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth*, Rev. v. 13. Others think that only the children of men are meant; for into them God has in a more peculiar manner *breathed the breath of life*, and they have become *living souls*, Gen. ii. 7. Now that the gospel is ordered to be preached *to every creature*, to every human creature, it is required that every human creature praise the Lord. What have we our breath, our spirit, for, but to spend it in praising God; and how can we spend it better? Prayers are called *our breathings*, Lam. iii. 56. Let every one that breathes towards God in prayer, finding the benefit of that, breathe forth his praises too. Having breath, let the praises of God perfume our breath; let us be in this work as in our element; let it be to us as the air we breathe in, which we could not live without. Having our breath in our nostrils, let us consider that it is still going forth, and

will shortly go and not return. Since therefore we must shortly breathe our last, while we have breath let us praise the Lord, and then we shall breathe our last with comfort, and, when death runs us out of breath, we shall remove to a better state to breathe God praises in a freer better air.

The first three of the five books of psalm (according to the Hebrew division) conclude with *Amen and Amen*, the fourth with *Amen Hallelujah*, but the last, and in it the whole book, concludes with only *Hallelujah*, because the last six psalms are wholly taken up in praising God and there is not a word of complaint or petition in them. The nearer good Christians come to their end the fuller they should be of the praises of God. Some think that this last psalm is designed to represent to us the work of glorified saints in heaven, who are there continually praising God, and that the musical instruments here said to be used are no more to be understood literally than the gold, and pearls, and precious stones which are said to adorn the New Jerusalem Rev. xxi. 18, 19. But, as those intimate that the glories of heaven are the most excellent glories, so these intimate that the praises the saints offer there are the most excellent praises. Prayers will there be swallowed up in everlasting praises; there will be no intermission in praising God, and yet no weariness—hallelujahs for ever repeated, and yet still new songs. Let us often take a pleasure in thinking what glorified saints are doing in heaven, what those are doing whom we have been acquainted with on earth, but who have gone before us thither; and let it not only make us long to be among them, but quicken us to do this part of the will of God on earth as those do it that are in heaven. And let us spend as much of our time as may be in this good work because in it we hope to spend a joyful eternity. *Hallelujah* is the word there (Rev. xix. 1, 3); let us echo to it now as those that hope to join in it shortly *Hallelujah, praise you the Lord*.

AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE

P R O V E R B S .

WE have now before us,

I. A new author, or penman rather, or pen (if you will) made use of by the Holy Ghost for making known the mind of God to us, writing as moved by the *finger of God* (so the Spirit of God is called), and that is Solomon; through his hand came this book of Scripture and the two th

PROVERBS

follow it, Ecclesiastes and Canticles, a sermon and a song. Some think he wrote Canticles when he was very young, Proverbs in the midst of his days, and Ecclesiastes when he was old. In the title of his song he only writes himself *Solomon*, perhaps because he wrote it before his accession to the throne, being filled with the Holy Ghost when he was young. In the title of his Proverbs he writes himself *the son of David, king of Israel*, for then he ruled over all Israel. In the title of his Ecclesiastes he writes himself *the son of David, king of Jerusalem*, because then perhaps his influence had grown less upon the distant tribes, and he confined himself very much in Jerusalem. Concerning this author we may observe, 1. That he was a king, and a king's son. The penmen of scripture, hitherto, were most of them men of the first rank in the world, as Moses and Joshua, Samuel and David, and now Solomon; but, after him, the inspired writers were generally poor prophets, men of no figure in the world, because that dispensation was approaching in which God would choose the *weak and foolish things of the world to confound the wise and mighty* and the poor should be employed to evangelize. Solomon was a very rich king, and his dominions were very large, a king of the first magnitude, and yet he addicted himself to the study of divine things, and was a prophet and a prophet's son. It is no disparagement to the greatest princes and potentates in the world to instruct those about them in religion and the laws of it. 2. That he was one whom God endued with extraordinary measures of wisdom and knowledge, in answer to his prayers at his accession to the throne. His prayer was exemplary: *Give me a wise and an understanding heart*; the answer to it was encouraging: he had what he desired and *all other things were added to him*. Now here we find what good use he made of the wisdom God gave him; he not only governed himself and his kingdom with it, but he gave rules of wisdom to others also, and transmitted them to posterity. Thus must we trade with the talents with which we are entrusted, according as they are. 3. That he was one who had his faults, and in his latter end turned aside from those good ways of God which in this book he had directed others in. We have the story of it 1 Kings xi., and a sad story it is, that the penman of such a book as this should apostatize as he did. *Tell it not in Gath*. But let those who are most eminently useful take warning by this not to be proud or secure; and let us all learn not to think the worse of good instructions though we have them from those who do not themselves altogether live up to them.

1. A new way of writing, in which divine wisdom is taught us by Proverbs, or short sentences, which contain their whole design within themselves and are not connected with one another. We have had divine *laws, histories, and songs*, and now divine *proverbs*; such various methods has Infinite Wisdom used for our instruction, that, no stone being left unturned to do us good, we may be inexcusable if we perish in our folly. Teaching by proverbs was, 1. An ancient way of teaching. It was the most ancient way among the Greeks; each of the seven wise men of Greece had some one saying that he valued himself upon, and that made him famous. These sentences were inscribed on pillars, and had in great veneration as that which was said to come down from heaven. *A cælo descendit, ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ—Know thyself is a precept which came down from heaven*. 2. It was a plain and easy way of teaching, which cost neither the teachers nor the learners much pains, nor put their understandings nor their memories to the stretch. Long periods, and arguments far-fetched, must be laboured both by him that frames them and by him that would understand them, while a proverb, which carries both its sense and its evidence in a little compass, is quickly apprehended and subscribed to, and is easily retained. Both David's devotions and Solomon's instructions are sententious, which may recommend that way of expression to those who minister about holy things, both in praying and preaching. 3. It was a very profitable way of teaching, and served admirably well to answer the end. The word *Mushtal*, here used for a proverb, comes from a word that signifies *to rule or have dominion*, because of the commanding power and influence which wise and weighty sayings have upon the children of men; he that teaches by them *dominatur in concionibus—rules his auditory*. It is easy to observe how the world is governed by proverbs. *As saith the proverb of the ancients* (1 Sam. xxiv. 13), or (as we commonly express it) *As the old saying is*, goes very far with most men in forming their notions and fixing their resolves. Much of the wisdom of the ancients has been handed down to posterity by proverbs; and some think we may judge of the temper and character of a nation by the complexion of its vulgar proverbs. Proverbs in conversation are like axioms in philosophy, maxims in law, and postulata in the mathematics, which nobody disputes, but every one endeavours to expound so as to have them on his side. Yet there are many corrupt proverbs, which tend to debauch men's minds and harden them in sin. The devil has his proverbs, and the world and the flesh have their proverbs, which reflect reproach on God and religion (as Ezek. xii. 22; xviii. 2), to guard us against the corrupt influences of which God has his proverbs, which are all wise and good, and tend to make us so. These proverbs of Solomon were not merely a collection of the wise sayings that had been formerly delivered, as some have imagined, but were the dictates of the Spirit of God in Solomon. The very first of them (*ch. i. 7*) agrees with what God said to man in the beginning (Job xxviii. 28, *Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom*); so that though Solomon was great, and his name may serve as much as any man's to recommend his writings, yet, behold, *a greater than Solomon is here*. It is God, by Solomon, that here speaks to us: I say, to us; for these proverbs were written for our learning, and, when Solomon speaks to his son, the exhortation is said to *speak to us as unto children*, Heb. xii. 5. And, as we have no book so useful to us in our devotions as David's psalms, so have we none so serviceable to us, for the right ordering of our conversations, as Solomon's proverbs, which, as David says of the commandments, are *exceedingly broad*, containing, in a little compass, a complete body of divine ethics, politics, and economics, exposing every vice, recommending every virtue, and suggesting rules for the government of ourselves in every relation and condition, and every turn of the conversation. The learned bishop Hall has

drawn up a system of moral philosophy out of Solomon's Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. The first nine chapters of this book are reckoned as a preface, by way of exhortation to the study and practice of wisdom's rules, and caution against those things that would hinder therein. We have then the first volume of Solomon's proverbs (*ch. x.—xxiv.*); after that a second volume (*ch. xxv.—xxix.*); and then Agur's prophecy (*ch. xxx.*), and Lemuel's, *ch. xxxi.* The scope of all is one and the same, to direct us so to order our conversation aright as that in the end we may see the salvation of the Lord. The best comment on these rules is to be ruled by them

CHAP. I.

Those who read David's psalms, especially those towards the latter end, would be tempted to think that religion is all rapture; and consists in nothing but the ecstasies and transports of devotion; and doubtless there is a time for them, and if there be a heaven upon earth it is in them; but, while we are on earth, we cannot be wholly taken up with them; we have a life to live in the flesh, must have a conversation in the world, and into that we must now be taught to carry our religion, which is a rational thing, and very serviceable to the government of human life, and tends as much to make us discreet as to make us devout, to make the face shine before men, in a prudent, honest, useful conversation, as to make the heart burn towards God in holy and pious affections. In this chapter we have, I. The title of the book, showing the general scope and design of it, *ver. 1—6.* II. The first principle of it recommended to our serious consideration, *ver. 7—9.* III. A necessary caution against bad company, *ver. 10—19.* IV. A faithful and lively representation of wisdom's reasonings with the children of men, and the certain ruin of those who turn a deaf ear to those reasonings, *ver. 20—23.*

THE proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel; 2 To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; 3 To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; 4 To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. 5 A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: 6 To understand a proverb, and the interpretation: the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.

We have here an introduction to this book, which some think was prefixed by the collector and publisher, as Ezra; but it is rather supposed to have been penned by Solomon himself, who, in the beginning of his book, proposes his end in writing it, that he might keep to his business, and closely pursue that end. We are here told,

I. Who wrote these wise sayings, *v. 1.* They are the proverbs of Solomon. 1. His name signifies peaceable, and the character both of his spirit and of his reign answered to it; both were peaceable. David, whose life was full of troubles, wrote a book of devotion; for *is any afflicted? let him pray.* Solomon, who lived quietly, wrote a book of instruction; for when the churches had rest they were edified. In times of peace we should learn ourselves, and teach others, that which in troublous times both they and we must practise. 2. He was the son of David; it was his honour to stand related to that good man, and he reckoned it so with good reason, for he fared the better for it, 1 Kings xi. 12. He had been blessed with a good education, and many a good prayer had been put up for him (Ps. lxxii. 1), the effect of both which appeared in his wisdom and usefulness. The

generation of the upright are sometimes so blessed, that they are made blessings, eminent blessings, in their day. Christ is often called the Son of David, and Solomon was a type of him in this, as in other things, that he opened his mouth in parables or proverbs. 3. He was king of Israel—a king, and yet it was no disparagement to him to be an instructor of the ignorant, and a teacher of babes—king of Israel, that people among whom God was known, and his name was great; among them he learned wisdom, and to them he communicated it. All the earth sought to Solomon to hear his wisdom, which excelled all men's (1 Kings iv. 30; x. 24); it was an honour to Israel that their king was such a dictator, such an oracle. Solomon was famous for apophthegms; every word he said had weight in it, and something that was surprising and edifying. His servants who attended him, and heard his wisdom, had, among them, collected 3000 proverbs of his which they wrote in their day-books; but these were of his own writing, and do not amount to nearly a thousand. In these he was divinely inspired. Some think that out of those other proverbs of his, which were not so inspired, the apocryphal books of Ecclesiasticus and the Wisdom of Solomon were compiled, in which are many excellent sayings, and of great use; but, taken altogether, they are far short of this book. The Roman emperors had each of them his symbol or motto, as many now have with their coat of arms. But Solomon had many weighty sayings, not, as theirs, borrowed from others, but all the product of that extraordinary wisdom which God had endued him with.

II. For what end they were written (*v. 2—4*), not to gain a reputation to the author, or strengthen his interest among his subjects, but for the use and benefit of all that in every age and place will govern themselves by these dictates and study them closely. This book will help us, 1. To form right notions of things, and to possess our minds with clear and distinct ideas of them, that we may know wisdom and instruction, that wisdom which is got by instruction, by divine revelation, may know both how to speak and act wisely ourselves and to give instruction to others. 2. To distinguish between truth and falsehood, good and evil—to perceive the words of understanding, to apprehend them, to judge of them, to guard against mistakes, and to accommodate what we are taught to ourselves and our own use, that we may discern things that differ and not be imposed upon,

and may approve things that are excellent and not lose the benefit of them, as the apostle prays, Phil. i. 10. 3. To order our conversation aright in every thing, v. 3. This book will give, that we may receive, *the instruction of wisdom*, that knowledge which will guide our practice in *justice, judgment, and equity* (v. 3), which will dispose us to render to all their due, to God the things that are God's, in all the exercises of religion, and to all men what is due to them, according to the obligations which by relation, office, contract, or upon any other account, we lie under to them. Note, Those are truly wise, and none but those, who are universally conscientious; and the design of the scripture is to teach us that wisdom, *justice* in the duties of the first table, *judgment* in those of the second table, and *equity* (that is sincerity) in both; so some distinguish them.

III. For whose use they were written, v. 4. They are of use to all, but are designed especially, 1. For *the simple*, to give subtlety to them. The instructions here given are plain and easy, and level to the meanest capacity, *the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein*; and those are likely to receive benefit by them who are sensible of their own ignorance and their need to be taught, and are therefore desirous to receive instruction; and those who receive these instructions in their light and power, though they be simple, will hereby be made subtle, graciously taught to know the sin they should avoid and the duty they should do, and to escape the tempter's wiles. He that is *harmless* as the dove by observing Solomon's rules may become *wise as the serpent*; and he that has been wisely foolish when he begins to govern himself by the word of God becomes graciously wise. 2. For young people, to give them *knowledge and discretion*. Youth in the learning age, catches at instructions, receives impressions, and retains what is then received; it is therefore of great consequence that the mind be then seasoned well, nor can receive a better tincture than from Solomon's proverbs. Youth is rash, and heady, and inconsiderate; *man is born like the wild ass's colt*, and therefore needs to be broken by the restraints and managed by the rules we find here. And, if young people will but take heed to their ways according to Solomon's proverbs, they will soon gain the knowledge and discretion of the ancients. Solomon had an eye to posterity in writing this book, hoping by it to season the minds of the rising generation with the generous principles of wisdom and virtue.

IV. What good use may be made of them, v. 5, 6. Those who are young and simple may by them be made wise, and are not excluded from Solomon's school, as they were from Plato's. But is it only for such? No; there is not only milk for babes, but strong meat for strong men. This book will not only make the foolish and bad wise and good,

but the wise and good wiser and better; and though the simple and the young man may perhaps slight those instructions, and not be the better for them, yet *the wise man will hear*. Wisdom will be justified by her own children, though not by the children sitting in the market-place. Note, Even wise men must hear, and not think themselves too wise to learn. A *wise man* is sensible of his own defects (*Plurima ignoro, sed ignorantiam meam non ignoro—I am ignorant of many things, but not of my own ignorance*), and therefore is still pressing forward, that he may increase in learning, may know more and know it better, more clearly and distinctly, and may know better how to make use of it. As long as we live we should strive to increase in all useful learning. It was a saying of one of the greatest of the rabbin, *Qui non auget scientiam, amittit de ea—If our stock of knowledge be not increasing, it is wasting*; and those that would increase in learning must study the scriptures; these *perfect the man of God*. A wise man, by increasing in learning, is not only profitable to himself, but to others also, 1. As a counsellor. A *man of understanding* in these precepts of wisdom, by comparing them with one another and with his own observations, *shall by degrees attain unto wise counsels*; he stands fair for preferment, and will be consulted as an oracle, and entrusted with the management of public affairs; he shall come to *sit at the helm*, so the word signifies. Note, Industry is the way to honour; and those whom God has blessed with wisdom must study to do good with it, according as their sphere is: It is more dignity indeed to be counsellor to the prince, but it is more charity to be counsellor to the poor, as Job was with his wisdom. Job xxix. 15, *I was eyes to the blind*. 2. As an interpreter (v. 6)—*to understand a proverb*. Solomon was himself famous for expounding riddles and resolving hard questions, which was of old the celebrated entertainment of the eastern princes, witness the solutions he gave to the enquiries with which the queen of Sheba thought to puzzle him. Now here he undertakes to furnish his readers with that talent, as far as would be serviceable to the best purposes. "They shall *understand a proverb*, even *the interpretation*, without which the proverb is a nut uncracked; when they hear a wise saying, though it be figurative, they shall take the sense of it, and know how to make use of it." *The words of the wise are sometimes dark sayings*. In St. Paul's epistles there is that which is *hard to be understood*; but to those who, being well-versed in the scriptures, know how to *compare spiritual things with spiritual*, they will be easy and safe; so that, if you ask them, *Have you understood all these things?* they may answer, *Yea, Lord*. Note, It is a credit to religion when men of honesty are men of sense all good people therefore should aim to be intelligent, and *run to and fro*, take pains in the

use of means, that their knowledge may be increased.

7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction. 8 My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: 9 For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.

Solomon, having undertaken to teach a young man knowledge and discretion, here lays down two general rules to be observed in order thereunto, and those are, to fear God and honour his parents, which two fundamental laws of morality Pythagoras begins his golden verses with, but the former of them in a wretchedly corrupted state. *Primum, deos immortales cole, parentesque honora—First worship the immortal gods, and honour your parents.* To make young people such as they should be,

I. Let them have regard to God as their supreme.

1. He lays down this truth, that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (v. 7); it is the principal part of knowledge (so the margin); it is the head of knowledge; that is, (1.) Of all things that are to be known this is most evident, that God is to be feared, to be revered, served, and worshipped; this is so the beginning of knowledge that those know nothing who do not know this. (2.) In order to the attaining of all useful knowledge this is most necessary, that we fear God; we are not qualified to profit by the instructions that are given us unless our minds be possessed with a holy reverence of God, and every thought within us be brought into obedience to him. *If any man will do his will, he shall know of his doctrine*, John vii. 17. (3.) As all our knowledge must take rise from the fear of God, so it must tend to it as its perfection and centre. Those know enough who know how to fear God, who are careful in every thing to please him and fearful of offending him in any thing; this is the Alpha and Omega of knowledge.

2. To confirm this truth, that an eye to God must both direct and quicken all our pursuits of knowledge, he observes, *Fools* (atheists, who have no regard to God) *despise wisdom and instruction*; having no dread at all of God's wrath, nor any desire of his favour, they will not give you thanks for telling them what they may do to escape his wrath and obtain his favour. Those who say to the Almighty, *Depart from us*, who are so far from fearing him that they set him at defiance, can excite no surprise if they desire not the knowledge of his ways, but despise that instruction. Note, Those are fools who do not fear God and value the scriptures; and though they may pretend to be admirers of wit they are really strangers and enemies to wisdom

II. Let them have regard to their parents as their superiors (v. 8, 9): *My son, hear the instruction of thy father*. He means, not only that he would have his own children to be observant of him, and of what he said to them, nor only that he would have his pupils, and those who came to him to be taught, to look upon him as their father and attend to his precepts with the disposition of children, but that he would have all children to be dutiful and respectful to their parents, and to conform to the virtuous and religious education which they give them, according to the law of the fifth commandment.

1. He takes it for granted that parents will, with all the wisdom they have, instruct their children, and, with all the authority they have, give law to them for their good. They are reasonable creatures, and therefore we must not give them law without instruction; we must draw them with the cords of a man, and when we tell them what they must do we must tell them why. But they are corrupt and wilful, and therefore with the instruction there is need of a law. Abraham will not only catechize, but command, his household. Both the father and the mother must do all they can for the good education of their children, and all little enough.

2. He charges children both to receive and to retain the good lessons and laws their parents give them. (1.) To receive them with readiness: "*Hear the instruction of thy father*; hear it and heed it; hear it and love it welcome, and be thankful for it, and subscribe to it." (2.) To retain them with resolution: "*Forsake not their law*; think not that when thou art grown up, and no longer under tutors and governors, thou mayest live at large; no, the law of thy mother was according to the law of thy God, and therefore it must never be forsaken; thou wast trained up in the way in which thou shouldst go, and therefore, when thou art old, thou must not depart from it." Some observe that whereas the Gentile ethics, and the laws of the Persians and Romans, provided only that children should pay respect to their fathers, the divine law secures the honour of the mother also.

3. He recommends this as that which is very graceful and will put an honour upon us. "The instructions and laws of thy parents carefully observed and lived up to, shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head (v. 9) such an ornament as is, in the sight of God, of great price, and shall make thee look as great as those that wear gold chains about their necks." Let divine truths and commands be to us a coronet, or a collar of SS, which are badges of first-rate honours; let us value them, and be ambitious of them, and then they shall be so to us. Those are truly valuable, and shall be valued, who value themselves more by their virtue and piety than by their worldly wealth and dignity.

10 My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. 11 If they say, come with us, let us lay wait for good, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause: 12 Let us swallow them up alive as the grave: and whole, as those that go down to the pit: 13 We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil: 14 Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse: 15 My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path: 16 For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood. 17 Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird. 18 And they wait for their own blood; they lurk privily for their own lives. 19 So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain; which taketh away the life of the owners thereof.

Here Solomon gives another general rule to young people, in order to their finding it, and keeping in, the paths of wisdom, and that is to take heed of the snare of bad company. David's psalms begin with this caution, "so do Solomon's proverbs; for nothing more destructive, both to a lively devotion and to a regular conversation (v. 10): "My son, whom I love, and have a tender concern for, sinners entice thee, consent thou not." This is good advice for parents to give their children when they send them abroad into the world; it is the same that St. Peter gave to new converts, (Acts ii. 40), *Save yourselves from this untoward generation*. Observe, 1. How industrious wicked people are to seduce others into the paths of the destroyer: they will entice. Sinners love company in sin; the angels that fell were tempters most as soon as they were sinners. They do not threaten or argue, but entice with flattery and fair speech; with a bait they draw the unwary young man to the hook. But they mistake if they think that by bringing others to partake with them in their guilt, they will be bound, as it were, in the bond with them, they shall have the less to pay themselves; for they will have so much the more answer for. 2. How cautious young people should be that they be not seduced by them: "Consent thou not; and then, though they entice thee, they cannot force thee. Do not say as they say, nor do as they do or could have thee to do; have no fellowship with them." To enforce this caution,

I. He represents the fallacious reasonings which sinners use in their enticements, and the arts of wheedling which they have for the beguiling of unstable souls. He speci-

fies highwaymen, who do what they can to draw others into their gang, v. 11—14. See here what they would have the young man to do: "Come with us (v. 11); let us have thy company." At first they pretend to ask no more; but the courtship rises higher (v. 14): "Cast in thy lot among us; come in partner with us, join thy force to ours, and let us resolve to live and die together: thou shalt fare as we fare; and let us all have one purse, that what we get together we may spend merrily together," for that is it they aim at. Two unreasonable insatiable lusts they propose to themselves the gratification of, and therewith entice their prey into the snare:—1. Their cruelty. They thirst after blood, and hate those that are innocent and never gave them any provocation, because by their honesty and industry they shame and condemn them: "Let us therefore lay wait for their blood, and lurk privily for them; they are conscious to themselves of no crime and consequently apprehensive of no danger, but travel unarmed; therefore we shall make the more easy prey of them. And, O how sweet it will be to swallow them up alive!" v. 12. These bloody men would do this as greedily as the hungry lion devours the lamb. If it be objected, "The remains of the murdered will betray the murderers;" they answer, "No danger of that; we will swallow them whole as those that are buried." Who could imagine that human nature should degenerate so far that it should ever be a pleasure to one man to destroy another! 2. Their covetousness. They hope to get a good booty by it (v. 13): "We shall find all precious substance by following this trade. What though we venture our necks by it? we shall fill our houses with spoil." See here, (1.) The idea they have of worldly wealth. They call it *precious substance*; whereas it is neither substance nor precious; it is a shadow; it is vanity, especially that which is got by robbery, Ps. lxii. 10. It is as that which is not, which will give a man no solid satisfaction. It is cheap, it is common, yet, in their account, it is precious, and therefore they will hazard their lives, and perhaps their souls, in pursuit of it. It is the ruining mistake of thousands that they over-value the wealth of this world and look on it as *precious substance*. (2.) The abundance of it which they promise themselves: We shall fill our houses with it. Those who trade with sin promise themselves mighty bargains, and that it will turn to a vast account (All this will I give thee, says the tempter); but they only dream that they add; the housefuls dwindle into scarcely a handful, like the grass on the house-tops.

II. He shows the perniciousness of these ways, as a reason why we should dread them (v. 15): "My son, walk not thou in the way with them; do not associate with them; get, and keep, as far off from them as thou canst; refrain thy foot from their path; do not take example by them, nor do as they do." Such

is the corruption of our nature that our foot is very prone to step into the path of sin, so that we must use necessary violence upon ourselves to refrain our foot from it, and check ourselves if at any time we take the least step towards it. Consider, 1. How pernicious their way is in its own nature (v. 16): *Their feet run to evil*, to that which is displeasing to God and hurtful to mankind, for they *make haste to shed blood*. Note, The way of sin is down-hill; men not only cannot stop themselves, but, the longer they continue in it, the faster they run, and make haste in it, as if they were afraid they should not do mischief enough and were resolved to lose no time. They said they would proceed leisurely (Let us *lay wait for blood*, v. 11), but thou wilt find they are all in haste, so much has Satan *filled their hearts*. 2. How pernicious the consequences of it will be. They are plainly told that this wicked way will certainly end in their own destruction, and yet they persist in it. Herein, (1.) They are like the silly bird, that sees the net spread to take her, and yet it is in vain; she is decoyed into it by the bait, and will not take the warning which her own eyes gave her, v. 17. But we think ourselves of *more value than many sparrows*, and therefore should have more wit, and act with more caution. God has *made us wiser than the fowls of heaven* (Job xxxv. 11), and shall we then be as stupid as they? (2.) They are worse than the birds, and have not the sense which we sometimes perceive them to have; for the fowler knows it is in vain to lay his snare *in the sight of the bird*, and therefore he has arts to conceal it. But the sinner sees ruin at the end of his way; the murderer, the thief, see the jail and the gallows before them, nay, they may see hell before them; their watchmen tell them they shall surely die, but it is to no purpose; they rush into sin, and rush on in it, like the horse into the battle. For really the stone they roll will turn upon themselves, v. 18, 19. They lay wait, and lurk privily, for the blood and lives of others, but it will prove, contrary to their intention, to be for *their own blood, their own lives*; they will come, at length, to a shameful end; and, if they escape the sword of the magistrate, yet there is a divine Nemesis that pursues them. *Vengeance suffers them not to live*. Their greediness of gain hurries them upon those practices which will not suffer them to live out half their days, but will cut off the number of their months in the midst. They have little reason to be proud of their property in that which *takes away the life of the owners* and then passes to other masters; and what is a man profited, though he gain the world, if he lose his life? For then he can enjoy the world no longer; much less if he lose his soul, and that be drowned in destruction and perdition, as multitudes are by the love of money.

Now, though Solomon specifies only the

temptation to rob on the highway, yet he intends hereby to warn us against all other evils which sinners entice men to. Such are the ways of the drunkards and unclean; they are indulging themselves in those pleasures which tend to their ruin both here and for ever; and therefore consent not to them.

20 Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, *saying*, 22 How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? 23 Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. 24 Because ye have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; 25 But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: 26 I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. 28 They shall call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: 29 For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: They would none of my counsel, they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. 32 For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. 33 But whoso hearkeneth unto my voice shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.

Solomon, having shown how dangerous it is to hearken to the temptations of Satan, here shows how dangerous it is not to hearken to the calls of God, which we shall for ever rue the neglect of. Observe,

I. By whom God calls to us—by wisdom. It is *wisdom* that crieth without. The word is plural—*wisdoms*, for, as there is infinite wisdom in God, so there is the *manifest wisdom of God*, Eph. iii. 10. God speaks to the children of men by all the kinds of wisdom, and, as in every will, so in every word, God there is a counsel. 1. Human und

ing is wisdom, the light and law of nature, the powers and faculties of reason, and the office of conscience, Job xxxviii. 36. By these God speaks to the children of men, and converses with them. *The spirit of a man is the dwelling of the Lord*; and, wherever men go, they may hear a voice behind them, saying, *this is the way*; and the voice of conscience is the voice of God, and not always a still voice, but sometimes it cries. 2. Civil government is wisdom; it is God's ordinance; magistrates are his vicegerents. God David had said to the fools, *Deal not foolishly*, Ps. lxxv. 4. *In the opening of the gates, in the places of concourse*, where courts are kept, the judges, the wisdom of the nation, called to wicked people, in God's name, repent and reform. 3. Divine revelation is wisdom; all its dictates, all its laws, are as wisdom itself. God does, by the written word, by the law of Moses, which is before us the blessing and the curse, by priests' lips which keep knowledge, by servants the prophets, and all the ministers of this word, declare his mind to sinners, and give them warning as plainly as that which is proclaimed in the streets or courts of judgment by the criers. God, in his word, only opens the case, but argues it with the children of men. *Come, now, and let us reason together*, Isa. i. 18. 4. Christ himself is Wisdom, for in him are hidden the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and he is the centre of all divine revelation, not the essential Wisdom, but the eternal Word, by whom God speaks to us and to whom he has committed all judgment; he it is therefore who here both pleads with sinners and passes sentence on them. He calls himself Wisdom, Luke vii. 35.

1. How he calls to us, and in what manner. 1. Very publicly, that whosoever hath ears to hear may hear, since all are welcome to take the benefit of what is said and all are bound to heed it. The rules of wisdom are published without in the streets, not in the schools only, or in the palaces of princes, but in the chief places of concourse, among the common people that pass and repass in the opening of the gates and in the city. It is comparable casting the net of the gospel where there is a multitude of fish, in hopes that then they will be enclosed. This was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus, who taught openly in the temple, and in crowds of people, and in secret nothing (John xviii. 20), and charged his disciples to proclaim his gospel on the house-tops. Matt. x. 27. God says (Isa. xlv. 19), *I have not spoken in secret*. There is no speech of language where Wisdom's voice is not heard. It seeks not corners, nor is virtue named of itself. 2. Very pathetically; she weeps, and again she cries, as one in earnest. *She stood and cried*. She utters her voice, she utters her words with all possible clearness and affection. God is desirous to be heard and heeded.

III. What the call of God and Christ is.

1. He reproves sinners for their folly and their obstinately persisting in it, v. 22. Observe, (1.) Who they are that Wisdom here reproves and expostulates with. In general, they are such as are simple, and therefore might justly be despised, such as love simplicity, and therefore might justly be despaired of; but we must use the means even with those that we have but little hopes of, because we know not what divine grace may do. Three sorts of persons are here called to:—[1.] *Simple ones that love simplicity*. Sin is simplicity, and sinners are simple ones; they do foolishly, very foolishly; and the condition of those is very bad who love simplicity, are fond of their simple notions of good and evil, their simple prejudices against the ways of God, and are in their element when they are doing a simple thing, sporting themselves in their own deceivings and flattering themselves in their wickedness. [2.] *Scorners that delight in scorning*—proud people that take a pleasure in hectoring all about them, jovial people that banter all mankind, and make a jest of every thing that comes in their way. But scoffers at religion are especially meant, the worst of sinners, that scorn to submit to the truths and laws of Christ, and to the reproofs and admonitions of his word, and take a pride in running down every thing that is sacred and serious. [3.] *Fools that hate knowledge*. None but fools hate knowledge. Those only are enemies to religion that do not understand it aright. And those are the worst of fools that hate to be instructed and reformed, and have a rooted antipathy to serious godliness. (2.) How the reproof is expressed: "*How long will you do so?*" This implies that the God of heaven desires the conversion and reformation of sinners and not their ruin, that he is much displeased with their obstinacy and dilatoriness, that he waits to be gracious, and is willing to reason the case with them.

2. He invites them to repent and become wise, v. 23. And here, (1.) The precept is plain: *Turn you at my reproof*. We do not make a right use of the reproofs that are given us for that which is evil if we do not turn from it to that which is good; for for this end the reproof was given. Turn, that is, return to your right mind, turn to God, turn to your duty, turn and live. (2.) The promises are very encouraging. Those that love simplicity find themselves under a moral impotency to change their own mind and way; they cannot turn by any power of their own. To this God answers, "*Behold, I will pour out my Spirit into you*; set yourselves to do what you can, and the grace of God shall set in with you, and work in you both to will and to do that good which, without that grace, you could not do." Help thyself, and God will help thee; stretch forth thy withered hand, and Christ will strengthen and heal it. [1.] The author of this grace is the Spirit,

and that is promised: *I will pour out my Spirit unto you, as oil, as water; you shall have the Spirit in abundance, rivers of living water,* John vii. 38. Our heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to those that ask him. [2.] The means of this grace is the word, which, if we take it aright, will turn us; it is therefore promised, "*I will make known my words unto you, not only speak them to you, but make them known, give you to understand them.*" Note, Special grace is necessary to a sincere conversion. But that grace shall never be denied to any that honestly seek it and submit to it.

3. He reads the doom of those that continue obstinate against all these means and methods of grace. It is large and very terrible, v. 24—32. Wisdom, having called sinners to return, pauses awhile, to see what effect the call has, *hearkens and hears; but they speak not aright* (Jer. viii. 6), and therefore she goes on to tell them what will be in the end hereof.

(1.) The crime is recited and it is highly provoking. See what it is for which judgment will be given against impenitent sinners in the great day, and you will say they deserve it, and the Lord is righteous in it. It is, in short, rejecting Christ and the offers of his grace, and refusing to submit to the terms of his gospel, which would have saved them both from the curse of the law of God and from the dominion of the law of sin. [1.] Christ called to them, to warn them of their danger; he *stretched out his hand* to offer them mercy, nay, to help them out of their miserable condition, *stretched out his hand* for them to *take hold of*, but they *refused* and *no man regarded*; some were careless and never heeded it, nor took notice of what was said to them; others were wilful, and, though they could not avoid hearing the will of Christ, yet they gave him a flat denial, they refused, v. 24. They were in love with their folly, and would not be made wise. They were obstinate to all the methods that were taken to reclaim them. God *stretched out his hand* in mercies bestowed upon them, and, when those would not work upon them, in corrections, but all were in vain; they regarded the operations of his hand no more than the declarations of his mouth. [2.] Christ reproved and counselled them, not only reproved them for what they did amiss, but counselled them to do better (those are *reproofs of instruction* and evidences of love and good-will), but they *set at nought all his counsel* as not worth heeding, and would *none of his reproof*, as if it were below them to be reproved by him and as if they had never done any thing that deserved reproof, v. 25. This is repeated (v. 30): "*They would none of my counsel*, but rejected it with disdain; they called reproofs reproaches, and took them as an insult (Jer. vi. 10); nay, they *despised all my reproof*, as if it were all a jest, and not worth taking notice of." Note, Those are marked for ruin

that are deaf to reproof and good counsel. [3.] They were exhorted to submit to government of right reason and religion, they rebelled against both. *First*, Reason should not rule them, for they *hated knowledge* (v. 29), hated the light of divine truth because it discovered to them the evil of their deeds, John iii. 20. They hated to be told that which they could not bear to know. *Secondly*, Religion could not rule them, they *did not choose the fear of the Lord*, they chose to walk in the way of their heart *in the sight of their eyes*. They were pressed to set God always before them, but they chose rather to cast him and his fear behind their backs. Note, Those who do not choose the fear of the Lord show that they have knowledge.

(2.) The sentence is pronounced, and is certainly ruining. Those that will not submit to God's government will certainly perish under his wrath and curse, and the gospel itself will not relieve them. They would not take the benefit of God's mercy which it was offered them, and therefore justly they are victims to his justice, ch. xxix. 1. The threatenings here will have their full accomplishment in the judgment of the great day and the eternal misery of the impenitent, which yet there are some earnest in present judgments. [1.] Now sinners are in prosperity and secure; they live at ease, and sorrow at defiance. But, *First*, Their calamity will come (v. 26); sickness will come, and those diseases which they shall apprehend will be the very arrests and harbingers of death; other troubles will come, in mind, in estate, which will convince them of their folly, setting God at a distance. *Secondly*, Their calamity will put them into a great fright. Fear seizes them, and they apprehend that bad will be worse. When public judgments are abroad the sinners in Zion are *afraid*, *their fearfulness surprises the hypocrites*. Death the king of terrors to them (Job xv. 21, & xviii. 11, &c.); this fear will be their continual torment. *Thirdly*, According to the fright will it be to them. Their fear shall come (the thing they were afraid of shall befall them); it shall come as desolation, as mighty deluge bearing down all before it; shall be their destruction, their total and final destruction; and it shall come as a whirlwind which suddenly and forcibly drives away the chaff. Note, Those that will not admit the fear of God lay themselves open to all other fears, and their fears will not prove causeless. *Fourthly*, Their fright will then turn into despair: *Distress and anguish shall come upon them*, for, having fallen into the pit they were afraid of, they shall see no way to escape, v. 27. Saul cries out (2 Sam. i. 9), *Anguish has come upon me*; and in hell there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth for anguish, tribulation and anguish the soul of the sinner, the fruit of the indignation and wrath of the righteous God, Rom.

9. [2.] Now God pities their folly, but he will then *laugh at their calamity* (v. 26): "I also will laugh at my counsellor." Those that ridicule religion will thereby but make themselves ridiculous before all the world. The righteous will *laugh at them* (Ps. lii. 6), for God himself will. It intimates that they shall be never shut out of God's compassions; they have so long sinned against mercy that they are now quite sinned it away. *His eye shall not spare, neither will he have pity.* Nay, his justice being glorified in their ruin, he will be pleased with it, though now he would rather they should *turn and live.* Ah! *I will ease me of my adversaries.* [3.] Now God is ready to hear their prayers and to meet them with mercy, if they would but seek to him for it; but then the door will be shut, and they shall cry in vain (v. 28): "*Then shall they call upon me when it is too late, Lord, Lord, open to me.*" They would then gladly be beholden to that mercy which now they reject and make light of; but *I will not answer*, because, when called, they would not answer;" all the answer then will be, *Depart from me, I know you not.* This has been the case of some even in this life, as of Saul, whom God answered not by *Urim or prophets*; but, ordinarily, while there is life there is room for prayer and hope of speeding, and therefore this must refer to the inexorable justice of the last judgment. Then those that slighted God will *seek him early* (that is, earnestly), but in vain; *they shall not find him*, because they sought him not when he might be found, Isa. lv. 6. The rich man in hell begged, but was denied. [4.] Now they are eager upon their own way, and fond of their own devices; but then they will have enough of them (v. 31), according to the proverb, *Let men drink as they brew; they shall eat the fruit of their own way*; their ages shall be according to their work, and, as was their choice, *so shall their doom be*, al. vi. 7, 8. Note, *First*, There is a natural tendency in sin to destruction, Jam. i. 15. Sinners are certainly miserable if they do but *eat the fruit of their own way.* *Secondly*, those that perish must thank themselves, and can lay no blame upon any other. It is *their own device*; let them make their boast of it. *God chooses their delusions*, Isa. lxvi. [5.] Now they value themselves upon their worldly prosperity; but then that shall help to aggravate their ruin, v. 32. *First*, They are now proud that they can turn away from God and get clear of the restraints of religion; but that very thing shall slay them, the remembrance of it shall cut them to the heart. *Secondly*, They are now proud of their own security and sensuality; but *the ease of the temple* (so the margin reads it) *shall slay them*; the more secure they are the more destruction be, and *the prosperity of fools shall help to destroy them*, by puffing them up with pride, gluing their hearts to the world, fur-

nishing them with fuel for their lusts, and hardening their hearts in their evil ways.

4. He concludes with an assurance of safety and happiness to all those that submit to the instructions of wisdom (v. 33): "*Whoso hearkeneth unto me, and will be ruled by me, he shall,*" (1.) "*Be safe; he shall dwell under the special protection of Heaven, so that nothing shall do him any real hurt.*" (2.) "*He shall be easy, and have no disquieting apprehensions of danger; he shall not only be safe from evil, but quiet from the fear of it.*" *Though the earth be removed, yet shall not they fear.* Would we be safe from evil, and quiet from the fear of it? Let religion always rule us and the word of God be our counsellor. That is the way to *dwell safely* in this world, and to *be quiet from the fear of evil* in the other world.

CHAP. II.

Solomon, having foretold the destruction of those who are obstinate in their impiety, in this chapter applies himself to those who are willing to be taught; and, 1. He shows them that, if they would diligently use the means of knowledge and grace, they should obtain of God the knowledge and grace which they seek, ver. 1-9. 2. He shows them of what unspeakable advantage it would be to them. 1. It would preserve them from the snares of evil men (ver. 10-15) and of evil women, ver. 16-19. 2. It would direct them into, and keep them in, the way of good men, ver. 20-23. So that in this chapter we are taught both how to get wisdom and how to use it when we have it, that we may neither seek it, nor receive it, in vain.

MY son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; 2 So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; 3 Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; 4 If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; 5 Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. 6 For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. 7 He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: *he is* a buckler to them that walk uprightly. 8 He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints. 9 Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; *yea*, every good path.

Job had asked, long before this, *Where shall wisdom be found? Whence cometh wisdom?* (Job xxviii. 12, 20) and he had given this general answer (v. 23), *God knoweth the place of it*; but Solomon here goes further, and tells us both where we may find it and how we may get it. We are here told,

I. What means we must use that we may obtain wisdom.

1. We must closely attend to the word of God, for that is the word of wisdom, *which is able to make us wise unto salvation*, v. 1, 2.

(1.) We must be convinced that the words of God are the fountain and standard of wisdom and understanding, and that we need not desire to be wiser than they will make us. We must *incline our ear* and *apply our hearts* to them, as to *wisdom or understanding* itself. Many wise things may be found in human compositions, but divine revelation, and true religion built upon it, are all wisdom. (2.) We must, accordingly, receive the word of God with all readiness of mind, and bid it welcome, even the commandments as well as the promises, without murmuring or disputing. *Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears.* (3.) We must hide them with us, as we do our treasures, which we are afraid of being robbed of. We must not only receive, but retain, the word of God, and lodge it in our hearts, that it may be always ready to us. (4.) We must incline our ear to them; we must lay hold on all opportunities of hearing the word of God, and listen to it with attention and seriousness, as those that are afraid of letting it slip. (5.) We must apply our hearts to them, else inclining the ear to them will stand us in no stead.

2. We must be much in prayer, *v. 3.* We must *cry after knowledge*, as one that is ready to perish for hunger begs hard for bread. Faint desires will not prevail; we must be importunate, as those that know the worth of knowledge and our own want of it. We must cry, as new-born babes, *after the sincere milk of the word*, 1 Pet. ii. 2. We must *lift our voice for understanding*, lift it up to heaven; thence these good and perfect gifts must be expected, Jam. i. 17; Job. xxxviii. 34. We must *give our voice to understanding* (so the word is), speak for it, vote for it, submit the tongue to the command of wisdom. We must consecrate our voice to it; having applied our heart to it, we must employ our voice in seeking for it. Solomon could write *probatum est—a tried remedy*, upon this method; he prayed for wisdom and so obtained it.

3. We must be willing to take pains (*v. 4*); we must *seek it as silver*, preferring it far before all the wealth of this world, and labouring in search of it as those who dig in the mines, who undergo great toil and run great hazards, with indefatigable industry and invincible constancy and resolution, in pursuit of the ore; or as those who will be rich rise up early, and sit up late, and turn every stone to get money and fill their treasures. Thus diligent must we be in the use of the means of knowledge, following on to know the Lord.

II. What success we may hope for in the use of these means. Our labour shall not be in vain; for, 1. We shall know how to maintain our acquaintance and communion with God: "*Thou shalt understand the fear of the Lord* (*v. 5*), that is, thou shalt know how to worship him aright, shalt be led into the meaning and mystery of every ordinance,

and be enabled to answer the end of its institution." *Thou shalt find the knowledge of God*, which is necessary to our fearing him aright. It concerns us to understand how much it is our interest to know God, and to evidence it by agreeable affections towards him and adorations of him. 2. We shall know how to conduct ourselves aright towards all men (*v. 9*): "*Thou shalt understand, by the word of God, righteousness, and judgment, and equity*, shalt learn those principles of justice, and charity, and fair dealing, which shall guide and govern thee in the whole course of thy conversation, shall make thee fit for every relation, every business, and faithful to every trust. It shall give thee not only a right notion of justice, but a disposition to practise it, and to render to all their due; for those that do not do justly do not rightly understand it." This will lead them into *every good path*, for the scripture will *make the man of God perfect*. Note, Those have the best knowledge who know their duty, Ps. cxi. 10.

III. What ground we have to hope for this success in our pursuits of wisdom; we must take our encouragement herein from God only, *v. 6—8.*

1. God has wisdom to bestow, *v. 6.* *The Lord* not only is wise himself, but he *gives wisdom*, and that is more than the wisest men in the world can do, for it is God's prerogative to open the understanding. All the wisdom that is in any creature is his gift, his free gift, and he gives it liberally (Jam. i. 5), has given it to many, and is still giving it; to him therefore let us apply for it.

2. He has blessed the world with a revelation of his will. *Out of his mouth*, by the law and the prophets, by the written word and by his ministers, both which are his mouth to the children of men, *come knowledge and understanding*, such a discovery of truth and good as, if we admit and receive the impressions of it, will make us truly knowing and intelligent. It is both an engagement and encouragement to search after wisdom that we have the scriptures to search, in which we may find it if we seek it diligently.

3. He has particularly provided that good men, who are sincerely disposed to do his will, shall have that *knowledge and that understanding* which are necessary for them, John vii. 17. Let them seek wisdom, and they shall find it; let them ask, and it shall be given them, *v. 7, 8.* Observe here, (1.) Who those are that are thus favoured. They are the *righteous*, on whom the image of God is renewed, which consists in righteousness, and those who *walk uprightly*, who are honest in their dealings both with God and man and make conscience of doing their duty as far as they know it. They are *his saints*, devoted to his honour, and set apart for his service. (2.) What it is that is provided for them. [1.] Instruction. The means of wisdom are given to all, but wisdom itself, *sound wisdom*, is laid

up for the righteous, laid up in Christ their head, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and who is made of God to us wisdom. The same that is the Spirit of revelation in the word is a Spirit of wisdom in the souls of those that are sanctified, that wisdom of the prudent which is to understand his way; and it is sound wisdom, its foundations firm, its principles solid, and its products of lasting advantage. [2.] Satisfaction. Some read it, *He lays up substance for the righteous*, not only substantial knowledge, but substantial happiness and comfort, Prov. viii. 21. Riches are things that are not, and those that have them only fancy themselves happy; but what is laid up in the promises and in heaven for the righteous will make them truly, thoroughly, and eternally happy. [3.] Protection. Even those who walk uprightly may be brought into danger for the trial of their faith, but God is, and will be, a buckler to them, so that nothing that happens to them shall do them any real hurt, or possess them with any terrific apprehensions; they are safe, and they shall think themselves so. *Fear not, Abraham; I am thy shield.* It is their way, the paths of judgment in which they walk, that the Lord knows, and owns, and takes care of. [4.] Grace to persevere to the end. If we depend upon God, and seek to him for wisdom, he will uphold us in our integrity, will enable us to keep the paths of judgment, however we may be tempted to turn aside out of them; for he preserves the way of his saints, that it be not perverted, and so preserves them in it safe and blameless to his heavenly kingdom. The assurances God has given us of his grace, if duly improved, will excite and quicken our endeavours in doing our duty. *Work out your salvation, for God works in you.*

10 When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; 11 Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee: 12 To deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh froward things; 13 Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness; 14 Who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked; 15 Whose ways are crooked, and they froward in their paths: 16 To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words; 17 Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God. 18 For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead. 19 None

that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life. 20 That thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous. 21 For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it. 22 But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it.

The scope of these verses is to show, 1. What great advantage true wisdom will be of to us; it will keep us from the paths of sin, which lead to ruin, and will therein do us a greater kindness than if it enriched us with all the wealth of the world. 2. What good use we should make of the wisdom God gives us; we must use it for our own guidance in the paths of virtue, and for the arming of us against temptations of every kind. 3. By what rules we may try ourselves whether we have this wisdom or no. This tree will be known by its fruits; if we be truly wise, it will appear by our care to avoid all evil company and evil practices.

This wisdom will be of use to us,

I. For our preservation from evil, from the evil of sin, and, consequently, from the evil of trouble that attends it.

1. In general (v. 10, 11), "When wisdom has entire possession of thee, it will keep thee." And when has it an entire possession of us? (1.) When it has dominion over us. When it not only fills the head with notions, but enters into the heart and has a commanding power and influence upon that,—when it is upon the throne there, and gives law to the affections and passions,—when it enters into the heart as the leaven into the dough, to diffuse its relish there, and to change it into its own image—then it is likely to do us good. (2.) When we have delight in it, when knowledge becomes pleasant to the soul: "When thou beginnest to relish it as the most agreeable entertainment, and art subject to its rules, of choice, and with satisfaction,—when thou callest the practice of virtue, not a slavery and a task, but liberty and pleasure, and a life of serious godliness the most comfortable life a man can live in this world,—then thou wilt find the benefit of it." Though its restraints should be in some respects unpleasant to the body, yet even those must be pleasant to the soul. When it has come to this, with us, discretion shall preserve us and keep us. God keeps the way of his saints (v. 8), by giving them discretion to keep out of harm's way, to keep themselves that the wicked one touch them not. Note, A principle of grace reigning in the heart will be a powerful preservative both against corruptions within and temptations without, Eccl. ix. 16, 18.

2. More particularly, wisdom will preserve us,

(1.) From men of corrupt principles, athe-

istical profane men, who make it their business to debauch young men's judgments, and instil into their minds prejudices against religion and arguments for vice: "It will deliver thee from the way of the evil man (v. 12), and a blessed deliverance it will be, as from the very jaws of death, from the way in which he walks, and in which he would persuade thee to walk." The enemy is spoken of as one (v. 12), an *evil man*, but afterwards as many (v. 13); there is a club, a gang of them, that are in confederacy against religion, and join hand in hand for the support of the devil's kingdom and the interests of it. [1.] They have a spirit of contradiction to that which is good: They *speak froward things*; they say all they can against religion, both to show their own enmity to it and to dissuade others from it. They are advocates for Satan; they plead for Baal, and *pervert the right ways of the Lord*. How peevishly will profane wits argue for sin, and with what frowardness will they carp at the word of God! Wisdom will keep us either from conversing with such men or at least from being ensnared by them. [2.] They are themselves apostates from that which is good, and such are commonly the most malicious and dangerous enemies religion has, witness Julian (v. 13): They *leave the paths of uprightness*, which they were trained up in and had set out in, shake off the influences of their education, and break off the thread of their hopeful beginnings, *to walk in the ways of darkness*, in those wicked ways which hate the light, in which men are led blindfold by ignorance and error, and which lead men into utter darkness. The ways of sin are ways of darkness, uncomfortable and unsafe; what fools are those that leave the plain, pleasant, lightsome paths of uprightness, to walk in those ways! Ps. lxxii. 5; 1 John ii. 11. [3.] They take a pleasure in sin, both in committing it themselves and in seeing others commit it (v. 14): They *rejoice* in an opportunity *to do evil*, and in the accomplishment and success of any wicked project. It is sport to fools to do mischief; nor is any sight more grateful to them than to see the *frowardness of the wicked*, to see those that are hopeful drawn into the ways of sin, and then to see them hardened and confirmed in those ways. They are pleased if they can discern that the devil's kingdom gets ground (see Rom. i. 32), such a height of impiety have they arrived at. [4.] They are resolute in sin (v. 15): Their *ways are crooked*, a great many windings and turnings to escape the pursuit of their convictions and break the force of them; some sly excuse, some subtle evasion or other, their deceitful hearts furnish them with, for the strengthening of their hands in their wickedness; and in the crooked mazes of that labyrinth they secure themselves from the arrests of God's word and their own consciences; for they are *froward in their paths*, that is, they are resolved to go

on in them, whatever is said against it. Every wise man will shun the company of such as these.

(2.) From women of corrupt practices. The former lead to spiritual wickednesses the lusts of the unsanctified mind; these lead to *fleshly lusts*, which defile the body, that living temple, but withal *war against the soul*. The adulteress is here called *the strange woman*, because no man that has any wisdom or goodness in him will have any acquaintance with her; she is to be shunned by every Israelite as if she were a heathen, and a stranger to that sacred commonwealth. A strange woman indeed! utterly estranged from all principles of reason, virtue, and honour. It is a great mercy to be delivered from the allurements of the adulteress, considering, [1.] How false she is. Who will have any dealings with those that are made up of treachery? She is a strange woman for, *First*, She is false to him whom she entices. She speaks fair, tells him how much she admires him above any man, and what kindness she has for him; but she *flatters with her words*; she has no true affection for him, nor any desire of his welfare, any more than Delilah had of Samson's. All she designs is to pick his pocket and gratify a base lust of her own. *Secondly*, She is false to her husband, and violates the sacred obligation she lies under to him. He was the *guide of her youth*; by marrying him she chose him to be so, and submitted herself to his guidance, with a promise to attend him only and forsake all others. But she has *forsaken* him, and therefore it cannot be thought that she should be faithful to any one else; and whoever entertains her is partaker with her in her falsehood. *Thirdly*, She is false to God himself: She *forgets the covenant of her God*, the marriage-covenant (v. 17), to which God is not only a witness, but a party, for he having instituted the ordinance, both sides vow to him to be true to each other. It is not her husband only that she sins against but her God, who *will judge whoremongers and adulterers* because they despise the oath and break the covenant, Ezek. xvii. 18; Mal. ii. 14. [2.] How fatal it will prove to those that fall in league with her, v. 18, 19. Let the sufferings of others be our warnings. Take heed of the sin of whoredom; for, *First*, The ruin of those who are guilty of it is certain and unavoidable, if they do not repent. It is a sin that has a direct tendency to the killing of the soul, the extinguishing of all good affections and dispositions in it, and the exposing of it to the wrath and curse of God and the sword of his justice. Those that live in forbidden pleasures are dead while they live. Let discretion preserve every man, not only from the evil woman, but from the evil house, for the *house inclines to death*; it is in the road that leads directly to eternal death; and *her paths unto Rephaim*, to the giants (so some read it), the sinners of the

id world, who, living in luxury and excess of riot, were cut down out of time, and their foundation was overthrown with a flood. Our Lord Jesus deters us from sinful pleasures with the consideration of everlasting torments which follow them. *Where the worm dies not, nor is the fire quenched.* See Matt. v. 28, 29. *Secondly,* Their repentance and recovery are extremely hazardous: *None, or next to none, that go unto her, return again.* It is very rare that any who are caught in this snare of the devil recover themselves, so much is the heart hardened, and the mind blinded, by the deceitfulness of this sin. Having once lost their hold of the paths of life, they know not how to take hold of them again, but are perfectly besotted and bewitched with those base lusts. Many learned interpreters think that this caution against the *strange woman*, besides the literal sense, is to be understood figuratively, as a caution, 1. Against idolatry, which is spiritual whoredom. Wisdom will keep thee from all familiarity with the worshippers of images, and all inclination to join with them, which had for many ages been such pernicious consequence to Israel and loved so to Solomon himself. 2. Against the debauching of the intellectual powers and faculties of the soul by the lusts and appetites of the body. Wisdom will keep thee from being captivated by the carnal mind, and from subjecting the spirit to the dominion of the flesh, that notorious adulteress which forsakes its guide, violates the covenant with our God, which inclines to death, and which, when it has got an undisturbed dominion, makes the case of the soul desperate.

II. This wisdom will be of use to guide and direct us in that which is good (v. 20): *That you mayest walk in the way of good men.* We must avoid the way of the evil man, and the strange woman, in order that we may walk in good ways; we must cease to do evil, in order that we may learn to do well. Note, There is a way which is peculiarly the way of good men, the way in which good men, as such, and as far as they have really been such, have always walked. 2. It will be our wisdom to walk in that way, to ask for the good old way and walk therein, Jer. vi. 16; Heb. vi. 12; xii. 1. And we must not only walk in that way awhile, but we must keep in it, and never turn aside out of it: *The paths of the righteous are the paths of life, which all that are wise, having taken hold of, will keep their hold of.* "That thou mayest imitate those excellent persons, the patriarchs and prophets (so bishop Patrick paraphrases it), and be preserved in the paths of those righteous men who followed after them." We must not only choose our way in general by the good examples of the saints, but must also take directions from them in the choice of our particular paths; observe the track, and go forth by the footsteps of the flock. Two reasons are here given why we should thus choose:—(1.) Be-

cause men's integrity will be their establishment, v. 21. It will be the establishment, [1.] Of their persons: *The upright shall dwell in the land, peaceably and quietly, as long as they live; and their uprightness will contribute to it, as it settles their minds, guides their counsels, gains them the good-will of their neighbours, and entitles them to God's special favour.* [2.] Of their families: *The perfect, in their posterity, shall remain in it.* They shall dwell and remain for ever in the heavenly Canaan, of which the earthly one was but a type. (2.) Because men's iniquity will be their destruction, v. 22. See what becomes of the wicked, who choose the way of the evil man: *they shall be cut off, not only from heaven hereafter and all hopes of that, but from the earth now, on which they set their affections, and in which they lay up their treasure.* They think to take root in it, but they and their families shall be rooted out of it, in judgment to them, but in mercy to the earth. There is a day coming which shall leave them neither root nor branch, Mal. iv. 1. Let that wisdom then enter into our hearts, and be pleasant to our souls, which will keep us out of a way that will end thus.

CHAP. III.

This chapter is one of the most excellent in all this book, both for argument to persuade us to be religious and for directions therein. I. We must be constant to our duty because that is the way to be happy, ver. 1—4. II. We must live a life of dependence upon God because that is the way to be safe, ver. 5. III. We must keep up the fear of God because that is the way to be healthful, ver. 7, 8. IV. We must serve God with our estates because that is the way to be rich, ver. 9, 10. V. We must bear afflictions well because that is the way to get good by them, ver. 11, 12. VI. We must take pains to obtain wisdom because that is the way to gain her, and to gain by her, ver. 13—20. VII. We must always govern ourselves by the rules of wisdom, of right reason and religion, because that is the way to be always easy, ver. 21—26. VIII. We must do all the good we can, and no hurt, to our neighbours, because according as men are just or unjust, charitable or uncharitable, humble or haughty accordingly they shall receive of God, ver. 27—35. From all this it appears what a tendency religion has to make men both blessed and blessings.

MY son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: 2 For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee. 3 Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: 4 So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man. 5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

We are here taught to live a life of communion with God; and without controversy great is this mystery of godliness, and of great consequence to us, and, as is here shown, will be of unspeakable advantage.

I. We must have a continual regard to God's precepts, v. 1, 2.

1. We must, (1.) Fix God's law, and his commandments, as our rule, by which we will in every thing be ruled and to which we

will yield obedience. (2.) We must acquaint ourselves with them; for we cannot be said to forget that which we never knew. (3.) We must remember them so that they may be ready to us whenever we have occasion to use them. (4.) Our wills and affections must be subject to them and must in every thing conform to them. Not only our heads, but our hearts, must *keep God's commandments*; in them, as in the ark of the testimony, both the tables of the law must be deposited.

2. To encourage us to submit ourselves to all the restraints and injunctions of the divine law, we are assured (v. 2) that it is the certain way to long life and prosperity. (1.) It is the way to be long-lived. God's commandments *shall add to us length of days*; to a good useful life on earth, they shall add an eternal life in heaven, *length of days for ever and ever*, Ps. xxi. 4. God shall be our life and the length of our days, and that will be indeed long life, with an addition. But, because length of days may possibly become a burden and a trouble, it is promised, (2.) That it shall prove the way to be easy too, so that even the days of old age shall not be evil days, but days in which thou shalt have pleasure: *Peace shall they* be continually *adding to thee*. As grace increases, peace shall increase; and *of the increase of Christ's government and peace*, in the heart as well as in the world, *there shall be no end*. Great and growing *peace have those that love the law*.

II. We must have a continual regard to God's promises, which go along with his precepts, and are to be received, and retained, with them (v. 3): "*Let not mercy and truth forsake thee*, God's mercy in promising, and his truth in performing. Do not forfeit these, but live up to them, and preserve thy interest in them; do not forget these, but live upon them, and take the comfort of them. *Bind them about thy neck*, as the most graceful ornament." It is the greatest honour we are capable of in this world to have an interest in the mercy and truth of God. "*Write them upon the table of thy heart*, as dear to thee, thy portion, and most delightful entertainment; take a pleasure in applying them and thinking them over." Or it may be meant of the mercy and truth which are our duty, piety and sincerity, charity towards men, fidelity towards God. Let these be fixed and commanding principles in thee. To encourage us to do this we are assured (v. 4) that this is the way to recommend ourselves both to our Creator and fellow-creatures: *So shalt thou find favour and good understanding*. 1. A good man seeks the favour of God in the first place, is ambitious of the honour of being accepted of the Lord, and he shall find that favour, and with it a good understanding; God will make the best of him, and put a favourable construction upon what he says and does. He shall be owned as one of Wisdom's children, and shall have praise with God, as one having that *good understand-*

ing which is ascribed to all those that do his commandments. 2. He wishes to have favour with men also (as Christ had, Luke ii. 5) to be *accepted of the multitude of his brethren* (Esth. x. 3), and that he shall have; they shall understand him aright, and in his dealings with them he shall appear to be prudent, shall act intelligently and with discretion. *He shall have good success* (so some translate it), the common effect of good understanding.

III. We must have a continual regard to God's providence, must own and depend upon it in all our affairs, both by faith and prayer. 1. By faith. We must repose an entire confidence in the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, assuring ourselves of the extent of his providence to all the creature and all their actions. We must therefore *trust in the Lord with all our hearts* (v. 5) we must believe that he is able to do what he will, wise to do what is best, and good, according to his promise, and to do what is best for us, if we love him, and serve him. We must with an entire submission and satisfaction depend upon him to perform all things for us, and *not lean to our own understanding*, if we could, by any forecast of our own, without God, help ourselves, and bring our affairs to a good issue. Those who know themselves cannot but find their own understanding to be a broken reed, which, if they lean to, will certainly fail them. In all our conduct we must be diffident of our own judgment, and confident of God's wisdom, power, and goodness, and therefore must follow Providence and not force it. That often proves best which was least our own doing. 2. By prayer (v. 6): *In all thy ways acknowledge God*. We must not only in our judgment believe that there is an over-ruling hand of God ordering and disposing of all our affairs, but we must solemnly own it, and address ourselves to him accordingly. We must ask his leave, and not design any thing but what we are sure is lawful. We must ask his advice and beg direction from him, not only when the case is difficult (when we know not what to do, or thanks to us that we have our eyes up to him), but in every case, be it ever so plain. We must ask success of him, as those who know *the race is not to the swift*. We must refer ourselves to him as one from whom our judgment proceeds, and patiently, and with a holy indifference, wait his award. *In all our ways* that prove direct, and fair, and pleasant, in which we gain our point to our satisfaction, we must acknowledge God with thankfulness. *In all our ways* that prove cross and uncomfortable, and that are hedged up with thorns, we must acknowledge God with submission. Our eye must be ever towards God; to him we must, in every thing, make our requests known, as Jephthah uttered *all his words before the Lord in Mizpe* Judg. xi. 11. For our encouragement to do this, it is promised, "*He shall direct*

...ths, so that thy way shall be safe and good and the issue happy at last." Note, Those that put themselves under a divine guidance shall always have the benefit of it. God will give them that wisdom which is profitable to direct, so that they shall not turn aside into any by-paths of sin, and then will himself so wisely order the event that it shall be to their hind, or (which is equivalent) for their good. Those that faithfully follow the pillar of cloud and fire shall find that though it may lead them about it leads them the right way and will bring them to Canaan at last.

7 Be not wise in thine own eyes: Fear the LORD, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones. 9 Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: 10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine. 11 My son, devise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: 12 For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son whom he delighteth.

We have here before us three exhortations, each of them enforced with a good reason:—1. We must live in a humble and dutiful subjection to God and his government (v. 7): *Fear the Lord*, as your sovereign Lord and master; be ruled in every thing by your religion and subject to the divine will." This must be, 1. A humble subjection: *Be not wise in thy own eyes*. Note, There is not a greater enemy to the power of religion, and the fear of God in the heart, than conceitedness of our own wisdom. Those that have an opinion of their own sufficiency think it below them, and a disparagement to them, to take their measures from, much more to temper themselves with, religion's rules. 2. Dutiful subjection: *Fear the Lord, and depart from evil*: take heed of doing any thing to offend him and to forfeit his care. To *fear the Lord*, so as to *depart from evil*, is the wisdom and understanding (Job xxviii. 28); those that have it are truly wise, but not arrogantly so, and not wise in their own eyes. For our encouragement thus to live in the fear of God it is here promised (v. 8) that it shall be as serviceable even to the outward man as our necessary food. It will be nourishing: *It shall be health to thy navel*. It will be strengthening: *It shall be marrow to thy bones*. The prudence, temperance, and sobriety, the calmness and composure of mind, and the good government of the appetites and passions, which religion teaches, are very much not only to the health of the soul, but to a good habit of body, which is very desirable, and without which our other

enjoyments in this world are insipid. Envy is *the rottenness of the bones*; the sorrow of the world dries them; but hope and joy in God are marrow to them.

II. We must make a good use of our estates, and that is the way to increase them, v. 9, 10. Here is,

1. A precept which makes it our duty to serve God with our estates: *Honour the Lord with thy substance*. It is the end of our creation and redemption to honour God, to be to him for a name and a praise; we are no other way capable of serving him than in his honour. His honour we must show forth and the honour we have for him. We must honour him, not only *with our bodies and spirits which are his*, but with our estates too, for they also are his: we and all our appurtenances must be devoted to his glory. Worldly wealth is but poor substance, yet, such as it is, we must honour God with it, and then, if ever, it becomes substantial. We must honour God, (1.) *With our increase*. Where riches increase we are tempted to honour ourselves (Deut. viii. 17) and to set our hearts upon the world (Ps. lxxii. 10); but the more God gives us the more we should study to honour him. It is meant of the increase of the earth, for we live upon annual products, to keep us in constant dependence on God. (2.) *With all our increase*. As God has prospered us in every thing, we must honour him. Our law will allow a prescription for a *modus decimandi*—a mode of tithing, but none *de non decimando*—for exemption from paying tithes. (3.) *With the first-fruits of all*, as Abel, Gen. iv. 4. This was the law (Exod. xxiii. 19), and the prophets, Mal. iii. 10. God, who is the first and best, must have the first and best of every thing; his right is prior to all other, and therefore he must be served first. Note, It is our duty to make our worldly estates serviceable to our religion, to use them and the interest we have by them for the promoting of religion, to do good to the poor with what we have and abound in all works of piety and charity, *devising liberal things*.

2. A promise, which makes it our interest to serve God with our estates. It is the way to make a little much, and much more; it is the surest and safest method of thriving: *So shall thy barns be filled with plenty*. He does not say thy bags, but thy barns, not thy wardrobe replenished, but thy presses: "God shall bless thee with an increase of that which is for use, not for show or ornament—for spending and laying out, not for hoarding and laying up." Those that do good with what they have shall have more to do more good with. Note, If we make our worldly estates serviceable to our religion we shall find our religion very serviceable to the prosperity of our worldly affairs. *Godliness has the promise of the life that now is* and most of the comfort of it. We mistake if we think that giving will undo us and make us poor. No, giving for

God's honour will make us rich, Hag. ii. 19. What we gave we have.

III. We must conduct ourselves aright under our afflictions, v. 11, 12. This the apostle quotes (Heb. xii. 5), and calls it *an exhortation which speaks unto us as unto children*, with the authority and affection of a father. We are here in a world of troubles. Now observe,

1. What must be our care when we are in affliction. We must neither despise it nor be weary of it. His exhortation, before, was to those that are rich and in prosperity, here to those that are poor and in adversity. (1.) We must not despise an affliction, be it ever so light and short, as if it were not worth taking notice of, or as if it were not sent on an errand and therefore required no answer. We must not be stocks, and stones, and stoics, under our afflictions, insensible of them, hardening ourselves under them, and concluding we can easily get through them without God. (2.) We must not be weary of an affliction, be it ever so heavy and long, not *faint* under it, so the apostle renders it, not be dispirited, dispossessed of our own souls, or driven to despair, or to use any indirect means for our relief and the redress of our grievances. We must not think that the affliction either presses harder or continues longer than is meet, nor conclude that deliverance will never come because it does not come so soon as we expect it.

2. What will be our comfort when we are in affliction. (1.) That it is a divine correction; it is *the chastening of the Lord*, which, as it is a reason why we should submit to it (for it is folly to contend with a God of incontestable sovereignty and irresistible power), so it is a reason why we should be satisfied in it; for we may be sure that a God of unspotted purity does us no wrong and that a God of infinite goodness means us no hurt. It is from God, and therefore must not be despised; for a slight put upon the messenger is an affront to him that sends him. It is from God, and therefore we must not be weary of it, for he knows our frame, both what we need and what we can bear. (2.) That it is a fatherly correction; it comes not from his vindictive justice as a Judge, but his wise affection as a Father. The father corrects *the son whom he loves*, nay, and because he loves him and desires he may be wise and good. He delights in that in his son which is amiable and agreeable, and therefore corrects him for the prevention and cure of that which would be a deformity to him, and an alloy to his delight in him. Thus God hath said, *As many as I love I rebuke and chasten*, Rev. iii. 19. This is a great comfort to God's children, under their afflictions, [1.] That they not only consist with, but flow from, covenant-love. [2.] That they are so far from doing them any real hurt that, by the grace of God working with them, they do a great deal of good, and are happy means of their sanctification.

13 *Happy is the man that findeth wisdom*, and the man *that* getteth understanding. 14 For the merchandise of it *is* better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. 15 *She is* more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. 16 Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. 17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. 18 *She is* a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and *happy is every one* that retaineth her. 19 The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens. 20 By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew.

Solomon had pressed us earnestly to see diligently for wisdom (*ch. ii. 1, &c.*), and had assured us that we should succeed in our sincere and constant pursuits. But the question is, What shall we get by it when we have found it? Prospect of advantage is the spring and spur of industry; he therefore shows us how much it will be to our profit, laying it down for an unquestionable truth, *Happy is the man that findeth wisdom*, that true wisdom which consists in the knowledge and love of God, and an entire conformity to all the intentions of his truths, providences, and laws. Now observe,

I. What it is to find wisdom so as to be made happy by it.

1. We must get it. He is the happy man who, having found it, makes it his own, gets both an interest in it and the possession of it. *Who draws out understanding* (so the word is); that is, (1.) Who derives it from God. Having it not in himself, he draws it with a bucket of prayer from the fountain of all wisdom, *who gives liberally*. (2.) Who takes pains for it, as he does who draws ore out of the mine. If it do not come easily, we must put the more strength to draw it. (3.) Who improves in it, who, having some understanding, draws it out by growing in knowledge and making five talents ten. (4.) Who does good with it, who draws out from the stock he has, as wine from the vessel, and communicates to others, for their instruction, *thing new and old*. That is well got, and to good purpose, that is thus used to good purpose.

2. We must trade for it. We read here of the merchandise of wisdom, which intimates (1.) That we must make it our business, and not a by-business, as the merchant bestows the main of his thoughts and time upon his merchandise. (2.) That we must venture all in it, as a stock in trade, and be willing to

with all for it. This is that pearl of great price which, when we have found it, we must willingly sell all for the purchase of, Matt. 13. 45, 46. *Buy the truth* (Prov. xxiii. 23); does not say at what rate, because we must buy it at any rate rather than miss it.

3. We must lay hold on it as we lay hold on a good bargain when it is offered to us, which we do the more carefully if there be danger of having it taken out of our hands. We must apprehend with all our might, and exert our utmost vigour in the pursuit of it, lay hold on all occasions to improve in it, and catch at the least of its dictates.

We must retain it. It is not enough to hold on wisdom, but we must keep our mind, hold it fast, with a resolution never to let it go, but to persevere in the ways of wisdom to the end. We must *sustain it* (so we read it), must embrace it with all our might, as we do that which we would sustain. We must do all we can to support the dearest interests of religion in the places where we live.

I. What the happiness of those is who do lay hold on it.

It is a transcendent happiness, more than can be found in the wealth of this world, we had ever so much of it, v. 14, 15. It is not only a surer, but a more gainful merchandise to trade for wisdom, for Christ, and grace, and spiritual blessings, than for silver, gold, and rubies. Suppose a man to have got these in abundance, nay, to have all things he can desire of this world (and so is it that ever had?), yet, (1.) All this would not purchase heavenly wisdom; no, it would utterly be *condemned*; it cannot be *got for gold*, Job xxviii. 15, &c. (2.) All this would not countervail the want of heavenly wisdom nor be the ransom of a soul lost by unbelief. (3.) All this would not make a man half so happy, no, not in this world, those are who have true wisdom, though they have none of all these things. (4.) Heavenly wisdom will procure that for us, and more than that to us, which silver, and gold, and rubies, will not be the purchase of.

It is a true happiness; for it is inclusive and equivalent to, all those things which are supposed to make men happy, v. 16, 17. Wisdom is here represented as a bright and beautiful queen, reaching forth gifts to her faithful and loving subjects, and offering them all that will submit to her government. Is length of days a blessing? Yes, the most valuable; life includes all good, and therefore she offers that in *her right hand*. Religion puts us into the best methods of prolonging life, entitles us to the promises of heaven, and, though our days on earth should be more than our neighbour's, yet it will secure to us everlasting life in a better world.

Are riches and honour accounted blessings? They are so, and them she reaches out in *her left hand*. For, as she is ready to reward those that submit to her with both

arms, so she is ready to give out to them with both hands. They shall have the wealth of this world as far as Infinite Wisdom sees good for them; while the true riches, by which men are rich towards God, are secured to them. Nor is there any honour, by birth or preference, comparable to that which attends religion; it makes the *righteous more excellent than his neighbour*, recommends men to God, commands respect and veneration with all the sober part of mankind, and will in the other world make those that are now buried in obscurity to *shine forth as the sun*. (3.) Is pleasure courted as much as any thing? It is so, and it is certain that true piety has in it the greatest true pleasure. *Her ways are ways of pleasantness*; the ways in which she has directed us to walk are such as we shall find abundance of delight and satisfaction in. All the enjoyments and entertainments of sense are not comparable to the pleasure which gracious souls have in communion with God and doing good. That which is the only right way to bring us to our journey's end we must walk in, fair or foul, pleasant or unpleasant; but the way of religion, as it is the right way, so it is a pleasant way; it is smooth and clean, and strewn with roses: *All her paths are peace*. There is not only peace in the end, but peace in the way; not only in the way of religion in general, but in the particular paths of that way, in all her paths, all the several acts, instances, and duties of it. One does not embitter what the other sweetens, as it is with the allays of this world; but they are all peace, not only sweet, but safe. The saints enter into peace on this side heaven, and enjoy a present sabbatism.

3. It is the happiness of paradise (v. 18): *She is a tree of life*. True grace is that to the soul which the tree of life would have been, from which our first parents were shut out for eating of the forbidden tree. It is a seed of immortality, a *well of living waters, springing up to life eternal*. It is an earnest of the New Jerusalem, in the midst of which is the *tree of life*, Rev. xxii. 2; ii. 7. Those that feed and feast on this heavenly wisdom shall not only be cured by it of every fatal malady, but shall find an antidote against age and death; they shall *eat and live for ever*.

4. It is a participation of the happiness of God himself, for wisdom is his everlasting glory and blessedness, v. 19, 20. This should make us in love with the wisdom and understanding which God gives, that *the Lord by wisdom founded the earth*, so that it cannot be removed, nor can ever fail of answering all the ends of its creation, to which it is admirably and unexceptionably fitted. *By understanding he has likewise established the heavens* and directed all the motions of them in the best manner. The heavenly bodies are vast, yet there is no flaw in them—numerous, yet no disorder in them—the motion rapid, yet no wear or tear; the depths of the sea are broken up, and thence come the waters be-

neath the firmament, and the clouds drop down the dews, the waters from above the firmament, and all this by the divine wisdom and knowledge; therefore happy is the man that finds wisdom, for he will thereby be thoroughly furnished for every good word and work. Christ is that Wisdom, by whom the worlds were made and still consist; happy therefore are those to whom he is made of God wisdom, for he has wherewithal to make good all the foregoing promises of long life, riches, and honour; for all the wealth of heaven, earth, and seas, is his.

21 My son, let not them depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion: 22 So shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck. 23 Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble. 24 When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet. 25 Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh. 26 For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken.

Solomon, having pronounced those happy who not only lay hold on wisdom, but retain her, here exhorts us therefore to retain her, assuring us that we ourselves shall have the comfort of doing so.

I. The exhortation is, to have religion's rules always in view and always at heart, v. 21. 1. To have them always in view: "*My son, let them not depart from thy eyes*"; let not thy eyes ever depart from them to wander after vanity. Have them always in mind, and do not forget them; be ever and anon thinking of them, and conversing with them, and never imagine that thou hast looked upon them long enough and that it is time now to lay them by; but, as long as thou livest, keep up and cultivate thy acquaintance with them." He who learns to write must always have his eye upon his copy, and not let that be out of his sight; and to the words of wisdom must those, in like manner, have a constant respect, who will walk circumspectly. 2. To have them always at heart; for it is in that treasury, the hidden man of the heart, that we must keep sound wisdom and discretion, keep to the principles of it and keep in the ways of it. It is wealth that is worth keeping.

II. The argument to enforce this exhortation is taken from the unspeakable advantage which wisdom, thus kept, will be of to us. 1. In respect of strength and satisfaction: "It will be life to thy soul (v. 22); it will quicken thee to thy duty when thou beginnest to be slothful and remiss; it will revive thee under thy troubles when thou beginnest to droop and despond. It will be thy spiritual life, an earnest of life eternal." Life

to the soul is life indeed. 2. In respect of honour and reputation: It shall be grace to thy neck, as a chain of gold, or a jewel. Grace to thy jaws (so the word is), grateful to taste and relish (so some); it shall increase grace into all thou sayest (so others), so furnish thee with acceptable words, which shall gain thee credit. 3. In respect of safety and security. This he insists upon in reverses, the scope of which is to show the effect of righteousness (which is the same wisdom here) is quietness and assurance ever, Isa. xxxii. 17. Good people are taken under God's special protection, and then they may have an entire satisfaction. They are safe and may be easy, (1.) In their actions by day, v. 23. If our religion be our companion, it will be our convoy: "Thou shalt thou walk in thy way safely." The natural life, and all that belongs to it, shall be under the protection of God's providence, the spiritual life, and all its interests, are under the protection of his grace; so that thou shalt be kept from falling into sin or trouble. Wisdom will direct us into, and keep us in the safe way, as far as may be, from temptation, and will enable us to walk in it with holy security. The way of duty is the way of safety. "We are in danger of falling, but wisdom will keep thee, that thou shalt not stumble at those things which are an offence and overthrow to many, but which thou shalt know how to get over." (2.) In their rest by night, v. 24. In our retirements we lie exposed and are most subject to frights. "But keep up communion with God, and keep a good conscience, and then when thou liest down thou shalt not be afraid of fire, or thieves, or spectres, or any of the terrors of darkness, knowing that while we, and all our friends, are asleep, yet he keeps Israel and every true-born Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps, and to him thou hast committed thyself and taken shelter under the shadow of his wings. Thou shalt lie down, and not need to sit up to keep guard, having lain down, thou shalt sleep, and have thy eyes held waking by care and fear, and thy sleep shall be sweet and refreshing to thee, being not disturbed by any alarms from without or from within," Ps. iv. 8; cxvi. The way to have a good night is to keep a good conscience; and the sleep, as of the labouring man, so of the wise and godly man is sweet. (3.) In their greatest straits and dangers. Integrity and uprightness will preserve us, so that we need not be afraid sudden fear, v. 25. The harms that surprise us, unthought of, giving us no time to arm ourselves by consideration, are most likely to put us into confusion. But let not the wise and good man forget himself, and then he will not give way to any fear that has formerly been the alarm ever so sudden. Let him not fear the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh, that is, [1.] The desolation which the wicked ones make of religion and the religious

ough it comes, and seems to be just at the
or, yet be not afraid of it; for, though God
y make use of the wicked as instruments
his people's correction, yet he will never
fer them to be the authors of their desola-
n. Or rather, [2.] The desolation which
cked men will be brought into in a moment.
will come, and timorous saints may be ap-
prehensive that they shall be involved in it;
let this be their comfort, that though
gments lay waste generally, at least pro-
ciously, yet God knows who are his and
v to separate between the precious and the
e. Therefore be not afraid of that which
ears most formidable, for (v. 26) "*the*
rd shall be not only thy protector to keep
e safe, but *thy confidence* to keep thee se-
e, so that thy foot *shall not be taken* by
enemies nor ensnared by thy own fears."
d has engaged to keep the feet of his saints.

27 Withhold not good from them
whom it is due, when it is in the
wer of thine hand to do it. 28 Say
t unto thy neighbour, Go, and
ne again, and to-morrow I will
re; when thou hast it by thee. 29
vise not evil against thy neighbour,
ing he dwelleth securely by thee.

Strive not with a man without
use, if he have done thee no harm.

Envy thou not the oppressor, and
ose none of his ways. 32 For the
ward is abomination to the LORD:
t his secret *is* with the righteous.

The curse of the LORD *is* in the
use of the wicked: but he blesseth
e habitation of the just. 34 Surely
scorneth the scorers: but he
eth grace unto the lowly. 35 The
se shall inherit glory: but shame
all be the promotion of fools.

True wisdom consists in the due discharge
our duty towards man, as well as towards
d, in honesty as well as piety, and there-
e we have here divers excellent precepts
wisdom which relate to our neighbour.

. We must render to all their due, both
justice and charity, and not delay to do it
27, 28): "*Withhold not good from those*
whom it is due (either for want of love to
m or through too much love to thy money)
n it is in the power of thy hand to do it,
if it be not, it cannot be expected; but
as thy great fault if thou didst, by thy
ravagances, disable thyself to do justly and
w mercy, and it ought to be the greatest
thy griefs if God had disabled thee, not
much that thou art straitened in thy own
sforts and conveniences as that thou hast
wherewithal to give to those to whom it
ue." *Withhold* it not; this implies that
s called for and expected, but that the

hand is drawn in and the bowels of compassion
are shut up. We must not hinder other
from doing it, nor be ourselves backward to
it. "If thou hast it by thee to-day, hast it
in the power of thy hand, say not to thy
neighbour, *Go thy way for this time*, and
come at a more convenient season, and I will
then see what will be done; *to-morrow I will*
give; whereas thou art not sure that thou
shalt live till to-morrow, or that to-morrow
thou shalt *have it by thee*. Be not thus loth
to part with thy money upon a good account.
Make not excuses to shift off a duty that must
be done, nor delight to keep thy neighbour
in pain and in suspense, nor to show the
authority which the giver has over the beg-
gar; but readily and cheerfully, and from a
principle of conscience towards God, give
good to *those to whom it is due*," to the *lords*
and owners of it (so the word is), to those
who upon any account are entitled to it.
This requires us, 1. To pay our just debts
without fraud, covin, or delay. 2. To give
wages to those who have earned them. 3.
To provide for our relations, and those that
have dependence on us, for to them it is due.
4. To render dues both to church and state,
magistrates and ministers. 5. To be ready
to all acts of friendship and humanity, and in
every thing to be neighbourly; for these are
things that are due by the law of doing as
we would be done by. 6. To be charitable
to the poor and necessitous. If others want
the necessary supports of life, and we have
wherewithal to supply them, we must look
upon it as due to them and not withhold it.
Alms are called *righteousness* because they
are a debt to the poor, and a debt which
we must not defer to pay, *Bis dat, qui cito*
dat—*He gives twice who gives speedily*.

II. We must never design any hurt or
harm to any body (v. 29): "*Devise not evil*
against thy neighbour; do not contrive how
to do him an ill-turn undiscovered, to pre-
judice him in his body, goods, or good name,
and the rather because *he dwells securely by*
thee, and, having given thee no provocation,
entertains no jealousy or suspicion of thee,
and therefore is off his guard." It is against
the laws both of honour and friendship to do
a man an ill-turn and give him no warning.
Cursed be he that smites his neighbour secretly.
It is a most base ungrateful thing, if our
neighbours have a good opinion of us, that
we will do them no harm, and we thence take
advantage to cheat and injure them.

III. We must not be quarrelsome and liti-
gious (v. 30): "*Do not strive with a man*
without cause; contend not for that which
thou hast no title to; resent not that as a
provocation which peradventure was but an
oversight. Never trouble thy neighbour with
frivolous complaints and accusations, or vex-
atious law-suits, when either there is no harm
done thee or none worth speaking of, or thou
mightest right thyself in a friendly way."
Law must be the last refuge; for it is not

only our duty, but our interest, *as much as in us lies, to live peaceably with all men.* When accounts are balanced, it will be found there is little got by striving.

IV. We must not envy the prosperity of evil-doers, v. 31. This caution is the same with that which is so much insisted on, Ps. xxxvii. "*Envy not the oppressor*; though he be rich and great, though he live in ease and pleasure, and make all about him to stand in awe of him, yet do not think him a happy man, nor wish thyself in his condition. *Choose none of his ways*; do not imitate him, nor take the courses he takes to enrich himself. Never think of doing as he does, though thou wert sure to get by it all that he has, for it would be dearly bought." Now, to show what little reason saints have to envy sinners, Solomon here, in the last four verses of the chapter, compares the condition of sinners and saints together (as his father David had done, Ps. xxxvii.), sets the one over against the other, that we may see how happy the saints are, though they be oppressed, and how miserable the wicked are, though they be oppressors. Men are to be judged of as they stand with God, and as he judges of them, not as they stand in the world's books. Those are in the right who are of God's mind; and, if we be of his mind, we shall see, whatever pretence one sinner may have to envy another, that saints are so happy themselves that they have no reason at all to envy any sinner, though his condition be ever so prosperous. For, 1. Sinners are hated of God, but saints are beloved, v. 32. The froward sinners, who are continually going from-ward him, whose lives are a perverse contradiction to his will, are *abomination to the Lord*. He that hates nothing that he has made yet abhors those who have thus marred themselves; they are not only abominable in his sight, but an abomination. The righteous therefore have no reason to envy them, for they have his secret with them; they are his favourites; he has that communion with them which is a secret to the world and in which they have a joy that a stranger does not intermeddle with; he communicates to them the secret tokens of his love; his covenant is with them; they know his mind, and the meanings and intentions of his providence, better than others can. *Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do?* 2. Sinners are under the curse of God, they and their houses; saints are under his blessing, they and their habitation, v. 33. The wicked has a house, a strong and stately dwelling perhaps, but *the curse of the Lord is upon it, it is in it*, and, though the affairs of the family may prosper, yet the very blessings are cursed, Mal. ii. 2. There is *leanness in the soul*, when the body is fed to the full, Ps. cvi. 15. The curse may work silently and slowly; but it is as a fretting leprosy; it will consume the *timber thereof and the stones thereof*, Zech. v. 4: Hab. ii. 11. The just have a habitation a poor cottage (the word

is used for sheep-cotes), a very mean dwelling; but God blesses it; he is continually blessing it, from the beginning of the year to the end of it. The curse or blessing God is upon the house according as the habitants are wicked or godly; and it is certain that a blessed family, though poor, no reason to envy a cursed family, though rich. 3. God puts contempt upon sinners, but shows respect to saints, v. 34. (1.) Those who exalt themselves shall certainly be abased: *Surely he scorns the scorners*. Those who scorn to submit to the discipline of religion, scorn to take God's yoke upon them, to be beholden to his grace, who scorn at godliness and godly people, and take pleasure in bantering and exposing them, God will scorn them, and lay them open to scorn before all the world. He despises their impotent malice, *sits in heaven and laughs at them*, Ps. ii. 4. He retaliates upon them (viii. 26); *he resists the proud*. (2.) Those who humble themselves shall be exalted, *he gives grace to the lowly*; he works that in them which puts honour upon them and which they are *accepted of God and approved of men*. Those who patiently bear contempt from scornful men shall have respect from God and all good men, and then they have no reason to envy the scorners or to choose their ways. 4. The end of sinners will be everlasting shame, the end of saints endless honour, v. 35. (1.) Saints are wise men and act wisely for themselves; for though their religion now wraps them up in obscurity and lays them open to reproach, yet they are sure to inherit glory at last, the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. They shall have it, and have it by inheritance, the sweetest and surest tenure. God gives the grace (v. 34), and therefore they shall inherit glory, for grace is glory, 2 Cor. iii. 18. Glory is glory begun, the earnest of it, Ps. lxxxix. 11. (2.) Sinners are fools, for they are not only preparing disgrace for themselves, but at the same time flattering themselves with a prospect of honour, as if they only took way to be great. Their end will manifest their folly: *Shame shall be their promotion*. And it will be so much the more their punishment as it will come instead of their promotion; it will be all the promotion they may ever expect, that God will be glorified by their everlasting confusion.

CHAP. IV.

When the things of God are to be taught precept must be upon precept, and line upon line, not only because the things themselves are of great worth and weight, but because men's minds at the best, are unwary to admit them and commonly prejudiced against them; and therefore Solomon, in this chapter, with great variety of expression and a pleasant powerful flood of wise eloquence, inculcates the same things that he had pressed upon us in the foregoing chapters. Here is, I. An earnest exhortation to the study of wisdom, that is, of true religion and godliness, borrowed from the good instructions which his father gave him, and enforced with many considerable arguments, v. 1—13. II. A necessary caution against bad company and fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, v. 14. III. Particular directions for the attaining and preserving wisdom, and bringing forth the fruits of it, v. 20—27. IV. A plain, so pressingly, is the case laid before us, that we must be for ever inexcusable if we perish in our folly.

HEAR, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to now understanding. 2 For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law. For I was my father's son, tender and only *beloved* in the sight of my mother. 4 He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live. 5 Get wisdom, get understanding: forget *it* not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. 6 Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. 7 Wisdom *is* the principal thing; *therefore* get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. 8 Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee. 10 Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and thy years of thy life shall be many. 11 I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths. 12 When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble. 13 Take fast hold of instruction; let *her* not go: keep her; for she *is* thy life. Here we have,

I. The invitation which Solomon gives his children to come and receive instruction from him (v. 1, 2): *Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father.* That is, 1. "Let your children, in the first place, receive and give good heed to those instructions which I set down for the use of others also." 2. Magistrates and ministers, who are entrusted with the direction of larger societies, are concerned to take a more than ordinary care for the good instruction of their own families; from this duty their public work will by no means excuse them. This duty must begin at home, though it must end there; for he that has not his children in subjection with all gravity, and does not take pains in their good education, how can he do his duty as he ought to the church of God? 1 Tim. iii. 4, 5. The children of those that are eminent for wisdom and public usefulness ought to improve in knowledge and grace in proportion to the advantages they derive from their relation to such parents. It may be observed, to save both the credit and the comfort of those parents whose children do not answer the hopes that arose from their education, that Rehoboam, the

son of Solomon, was far from being either one of the wisest or one of the best. We have reason to think that thousands have got more good by Solomon's proverbs than his own son did, to whom they seem to have been dedicated. 2. Let all young people, in the days of their childhood and youth, take pains to get knowledge and grace, for that is their learning age, and then their minds are formed and seasoned. He does not say, *My* children, but *You* children. We read but of one son that Solomon had of his own; but (would you think it?) he is willing to set up for a schoolmaster, and to teach other people's children! for at that age there is most hope of success; the branch is easily bent when it is young and tender. 3. Let all that would receive instruction come with the disposition of children, though they be grown persons. Let all prejudices be laid aside, and the mind be as white paper. Let them be dutiful, tractable, and self-diffident, and take the word as the word of a father, which comes both with authority and with affection. We must see it coming from God as *our Father in heaven*, to whom we pray, from whom we expect blessings, the Father of our spirits, to whom we ought to be in subjection, that we may live. We must look upon our teachers as our fathers, who love us and seek our welfare; and therefore though the instruction carry in it reproof and correction, for so the word signifies, yet we must bid it welcome. Now, (1.) To recommend it to us, we are told, not only that it is the *instruction of a father*, but that it is *understanding*, and therefore should be welcome to intelligent creatures. Religion has reason on its side, and we are taught it by fair reasoning. It is a law indeed (v. 2), but that law is founded upon doctrine, upon unquestionable principles of truth, upon *good doctrine*, which is not only faithful, but worthy of all acceptance. If we admit the doctrine, we cannot but submit to the law. (2.) To rivet it in us, we are directed to receive it as a gift, to attend to it with all diligence, to attend so as to know it, for otherwise we cannot do it, and not to forsake it by disowning the doctrine or disobeying the law.

II. The instructions he gives them. Observe,

1. How he came by these instructions; he had them from his parents, and teaches his children the same that they taught him, v. 3, 4. Observe, (1.) His parents loved him, and therefore taught him: *I was my father's son.* David had many sons, but Solomon was his son *indeed*, as Isaac is called (Gen. xvii. 19) and for the same reason, because on him the covenant was entailed. He was his father's darling, above any of his children. God had a special kindness for Solomon (the prophet called him *Jedidiah*, because the Lord loved him, 2 Sam. xii. 25), and for that reason David had a special kindness for him, for he was a man after God's own heart. If

parents may ever love one child better than another, it must not be till it plainly appears that God does so. He was *tender, and only beloved, in the sight of his mother*. Surely there was a manifest reason for making such a distinction when both the parents made it. Now we see how they showed their love; they catechised him, kept him to his book, and held him to a strict discipline. Though he was a prince, and heir-apparent to the crown, yet they did not let him live at large; nay, therefore they tutored him thus. And perhaps David was the more strict with Solomon in his education because he had seen the ill effects of an undue indulgence in Adonijah, whom he had not *crossed in any thing* (1 Kings i. 6), as also in Absalom. (2.) What his parents taught him he teaches others. Observe, [1.] When Solomon was grown up he not only remembered, but took a pleasure in repeating, the good lessons his parents taught him when he was a child. He did not forget them, so deep were the impressions they made upon him. He was not ashamed of them, such a high value had he for them, nor did he look upon them as the childish things, the mean things, which, when he became a man, a king, he should put away, as a disparagement to him; much less did he repeat them: as some wicked children have done, to ridicule them, and make his companions merry with them, priding himself that he had got clear from grave lessons and restraints. [2.] Though Solomon was a wise man himself, and divinely inspired, yet, when he was to teach wisdom, he did not think it below him to quote his father and to make use of his words. Those that would learn well, and teach well, in religion, must not affect new-found notions and new-coined phrases, so as to look with contempt upon the knowledge and language of their predecessors; if we must keep to the good old way, why should we scorn the good old words? Jer. vi. 16. [3.] Solomon, having been well educated by his parents, thought himself thereby obliged to give his children a good education, the same that his parents had given him; and this is one way in which we must requite our parents for the pains they took with us, even by showing piety at home, 1 Tim. v. 4. They taught us, not only that we might learn ourselves, but that we might teach our children, the good knowledge of God, Ps. lxxviii. 6. And we are false to a trust if we do not; for the sacred deposit of religious doctrine and law was lodged in our hands with a charge to transmit it pure and entire to those that shall come after us, 2 Tim. ii. 2. [4.] Solomon enforces his exhortations with the authority of his father David, a man famous in his generation upon all accounts. Be it taken notice of, to the honour of religion, that the wisest and best men in every age have been most zealous, not only for the practice of it themselves, but for the propagating of it to others; and we should therefore *continue in*

the things which we have learned, knowing whom we have learned them, 2 Tim. iii. 14.

2. What these instructions were, v. 4—13.

(1.) By way of precept and exhortation David, in teaching his son, though he was child of great capacity and quick apprehension, yet to show that he was in good earnest and to affect his child the more with what he said, expressed himself with great warmth and importunity, and inculcated the same thing again and again. So children must be taught. Deut. vi. 7, *Thou shalt whet them diligently upon thy children*. David, though he was a man of public business, and had tutors for his son, took all this pains with him himself.

[1.] He recommends to him his Bible as his catechism, as the means, his father's words (v. 4), the words of his mouth (v. 5), his saying (v. 10), all the good lessons he had taught him; and perhaps he means particularly that book of Psalms, many of which were *Maschichs*—*psalms of instruction*, and two of them are expressly said to be *for Solomon*. These, and all his other words, Solomon must have an eye to. *First*, He must *hear and receive them* (v. 10), diligently attend to them, and imbibethem, *as the earth drinks in the rain that cometh often upon it*, Heb. vi. 7. God thus bespeak our attention to his word: *Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings*. *Secondly*, He must *hold fast the form of sound words* which his father gave him (v. 4): *Let thy heart retain my words*; and except the word be hid in the heart, lodged in the will and affections, it will not be retained. *Thirdly*, He must govern himself by them: *Keep my commandments*, obey them, and that is the way to increase in the knowledge of them, John vii. 17. *Fourthly*, He must stick to them and abide by them: *Decline not from the words of my mouth* (v. 5), as fearing they will be too great a charge upon thee, but *take fast hold of instruction* (v. 13), as being resolved to keep thy hold and never let it go. Those that have a good education, though they strive to shake it off, will find it hang about them a great while, and, if it do not, their case is very sad.

[2.] He recommends to him wisdom as an understanding as the end to be aimed at in the use of these means; that *wisdom* which is the *principal wisdom*, get that. *Quod caput est sapientie eam acquire sapientiam*—*Be sure to mind that branch of wisdom which is the to branch of it, and that is the fear of God*, ch. i. 7. Junius and Tremellius. A principle of religion in the heart is the one thing needful; therefore, *First*, Get this *wisdom*, get this *understanding*, v. 5. And again, *Get wisdom, and, with all thy getting, get understanding*, v. 7. Pray for it, take pains for it, give diligence in the use of all appointed means to attain it. *Wait at wisdom's gate*, Prov. viii. 34. Get dominion over thy corruptions, which are the follies: get possession of wise principles and the habits of wisdom. Get wisdom by experience, get it *above all thy getting*; be more in

and take more pains to get this than to get the wealth of this world; whatever thou gettest, get this; reckon it a great achievement, and pursue it accordingly." True wisdom is God's gift, and yet we are here commanded to get it, because God gives it to those that labour for it; yet, after all, we must not *forget*, *Our might and the power of our hand have gotten us this wealth. Secondly, Forget not (v. 5), forsake her not (v. 6), let her go (v. 13), but keep her.* Those that have this wisdom must take heed of losing it again by returning to folly: it is indeed a good part, that shall not be taken from us; then we must take heed lest we throw it from us, as those do that forget it first, and let it slip out of their minds, and then forsake it and turn out of its good ways. That good thing which is committed to us we must keep, and not let it drop, through carelessness, nor suffer it to be forced from us, nor suffer ourselves to be wheedled out of it; never let go such a jewel. *Thirdly, Love her (v. 6), and embrace her (v. 8),* as worldly men love their health and set their hearts upon it. Religion should be very dear to us, dearer than anything in this world; and, if we cannot reach the great masters of wisdom, yet let us be the lovers of it; and what grace we have let us embrace it with a sincere affection, as those that admire its beauty. *Fourthly, "Exalt her, v. 8.* Always keep up high thoughts of religion; speak of it with value and veneration, and do all thou canst to bring it into estimation, and maintain the credit of it among men. Concur with God in his purpose, which is to magnify the law and make it honourable, and do what thou canst to serve that purpose." Let *Wisdom's* children not only justify her, but magnify her, and prefer her before that which is dearest to them in this world. In honouring those that fear the Lord, though they are low in the world, and regarding a *poor wise man*, we exalt wisdom.

(2.) By way of motive and inducement us to labour for wisdom, and submit to the advance of it, consider, [1.] It is the main matter, and that which ought to be the chief continual care of every man in this life (7): *Wisdom is the principal thing*; other things which we are solicitous to get and keep are nothing to it. It is the *whole of us*, Eccl. xii. 13. It is that which recommends us to God, which beautifies the soul, which enables us to answer the end of our creation, to live to some good purpose in the world, and to get to heaven at last; and therefore it is the principal thing. [2.] It is reason and equity on its side (v. 11): "*I have taught thee in the way of wisdom*, and so will be found to be at last. *I have led thee, not in the crooked ways of carnal policy, which does wrong under colour of wisdom, but in right paths*, agreeable to the eternal laws and reasons of good and evil." The rectitude of the divine nature appears in the

rectitude of all the divine laws. Observe, David not only taught his son by good instructions, but led him both by a good example and by applying general instructions to particular cases; so that nothing was wanting on his part to make him wise. [3.] It would be much for his own advantage: "*If thou be wise and good, thou shalt be so for thyself.*" *First*, "*It will be thy life, thy comfort, thy happiness; it is what thou canst not live without.*" *Keep my commandments and live, v. 4.* That of our Saviour agrees with this, *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments*, Matt. xix. 17. It is upon pain of death, eternal death, and in prospect of life, eternal life, that we are required to be religious. "*Receive wisdom's sayings, and the years of thy life shall be many (v. 10),* as many in this world as Infinite Wisdom sees fit, and in the other world thou shalt live that life the years of which shall never be numbered. *Keep her* therefore, whatever it cost thee, *for she is thy life, v. 13.* All thy satisfaction will be found in this;" and a soul without true wisdom and grace is really a dead soul. *Secondly*, "*It will be thy guard and guide, thy convoy and conductor, through all the dangers and difficulties of thy journey through this wilderness. Love wisdom, and cleave to her, and she shall preserve thee, she shall keep thee (v. 6)* from sin, the worst of evils, the worst of enemies; she shall keep thee from hurting thyself, and then none else can hurt thee." As we say, "*Keep thy shop, and thy shop will keep thee;*" so, "*Keep thy wisdom, and thy wisdom will keep thee.*" It will keep us from straits and stumbling-blocks in the management of ourselves and our affairs, v. 12. 1. That our steps be not straitened when we go, that we bring not ourselves into such straits as David was in, 2 Sam. xxiv. 14. Those that make God's word their rule shall walk at liberty, and be at ease in themselves. 2. That our feet do not stumble when we run. If wise and good men be put upon sudden resolves, the certain rule of God's word which they go by will keep them even then from stumbling upon any thing that may be pernicious. Integrity and uprightness will preserve us. *Thirdly*, "*It will be thy honour and reputation (v. 8): Exalt wisdom (do thou but show thy good-will to her advancement)* and though she needs not thy service she will abundantly recompense it, *she shall promote thee, she shall bring thee to honour.*" Solomon was to be a king, but his wisdom and virtue would be more his honour than his crown or purple; it was that for which all his neighbours had him so much in veneration; and no doubt, in his reign and David's, wise and good men stood fairest for preferment. However, religion will, first or last, bring all those to honour that cordially embrace her; they shall be accepted of God, respected by all wise men, owned in the great day, and shall inherit everlasting glory. This he insists on (v. 9): "*She shall give to thy head an orna-*

ment of grace in this world, shall recommend thee both to God and man, and in the other world a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee, a crown that shall never totter, a crown of glory that shall never wither." That is the true honour which attends religion. *Nobilitas sola est atque unica virtus—Virtue is the only nobility!* David having thus recommended wisdom to his son, no marvel that when God bade him ask what he would he prayed, Lord, *give me a wise and an understanding heart.* We should make it appear by our prayers how well we are taught.

14 Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. 15 Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away. 16 For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall. 17 For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence. 18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. 19 The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble.

Some make David's instructions to Solomon, which began *v. 4*, to continue to the end of the chapter; nay, some continue them to the end of the ninth chapter; but it is more probable that Solomon begins here again, if not sooner. In these verses, having exhorted us to walk in the paths of wisdom, he cautions us against the path of the wicked. 1. We must take heed of the ways of sin and avoid them, every thing that looks like sin and leads to it. 2. In order to this we must keep out of the ways of sinners, and have no fellowship with them. For fear of falling into wicked courses, we must shun wicked company. Here is,

I. The caution itself, *v. 14, 15*. 1. We must take heed of falling in with sin and sinners: *Enter not into the paths of the wicked.* Our teacher, having like a faithful guide shown us the *right paths* (*v. 11*), here warns us of the by-paths into which we are in danger of being drawn aside. Those that have been well educated, and trained up in the way they should go, let them never turn aside into the way they should not go; let them not so much as enter into it, no, not to make trial of it, lest it prove a dangerous experiment and difficult to retreat with safety. "Venture not into the company of those that are infected with the plague, no, not though thou think thyself guarded with an antidote." 2. If at any time we are inveigled into an evil way, we must hasten out of it. "If, ere thou wast aware, thou didst enter in at the gate, because it was wide, go not on in the way of evil men. As soon as thou art made sensible of thy mis-

take, retire immediately, take not a step more stay not a minute longer, in the way that certainly leads to destruction." 3. We must dread and detest the ways of sin and sinners and decline them with the utmost care imaginable. "*The way of evil men may seem pleasant way and sociable, and the nearer way to the compassing of some secular end we may have in view; but it is an evil way and will end ill, and therefore if thou lovest thy God and thy soul avoid it, pass not by it, that thou mayest not be tempted to enter into it; and, if thou find thyself near it, turn from it and pass away, and get as far off it as thou canst.*" The manner of expression intimates the imminent danger we are in, the need we have of this caution, and the great importance of it, and that our watchmen are, or should be, in good earnest, in giving us warning. It intimates likewise at what a distance we should keep from sin and sinners; he does not say, Keep at a due distance, but at a great distance, the further the better; never think you can get far enough from it. *Escape for thy life: look not behind thee.*

II. The reasons to enforce this caution.

1. "Consider the character of the men whose way thou art warned to shun." They are mischievous men (*v. 16, 17*); they not only care not what hurt they do to those that stand in their way, but it is their business to do mischief, and their delight, purely for mischief-sake. They are continually signing and endeavouring to cause some to fall, to ruin them body and soul. Wickedness and malice are in their nature, and violence is in all their actions. They are spiteful in the highest degree; for, (1.) Mischief is their rest and sleep to them. As much satisfaction as a covetous man has when he has got money, an ambitious man when he has got preferment, and a good man when he has done good, so much have they when they have said or done that which is injurious and ill-natured; and they are extremely uneasy if they cannot get their envy and revenge gratified, as Haman, to whom every thing was unpleasant as long as Mordecai was unchanged. It intimates likewise how restless and unwearied they are in their mischievous pursuits; they will rather be deprived of sleep than of the pleasure of being vexatious. (2.) Mischief is meat and drink to them; they feed and feast upon it. *They eat the bread of the wickedness (they eat up my people as they eat bread, Ps. xiv. 4) and drink the wine of violence (v. 17), drink iniquity like water.* Job. xv. 16. All they eat and drink is gotten by rapine and oppression. Do wicked men think the time lost in which they are not doing hurt? Let good men make it as much their business and delight to do good. *Amici diem perdidit—Friends, I have lost a day.* And let all that are wise, and wish well to themselves, avoid the society of the wicked; for, [1.] It is very scandalous; for there is no disposition of mind that is a greater re-

to human nature, a greater enemy to human society, a bolder defiance to God and conscience, that has more of the devil's image in it, or is more serviceable to his interests, than a delight to do mischief and to vex, and hurt, and ruin every body. [2.] It is very dangerous. "Shun those that delight to do mischief as thou tenderest thy own safety; whatever friendship they may pretend, the time or other they will do thee mischief; thou wilt ruin thyself if thou dost concur with them (*ch. i. 18*) and they will ruin thee if thou dost not."

2. "Consider the character of the way in which which thou art warned to shun, compared with the right way which thou art inclined to walk in."

(1.) The way of righteousness is light (*v. 1*): *The path of the just, which they have chosen, and in which they walk, is as light; the light shines on their ways* (*Job xxii. 28*) and makes them both safe and pleasant. Christ is *their way* and he is *the light*. They are guided by the word of God and that is a *light to their feet*; they themselves are *light to the Lord* and they *walk in the light as he is the light*. [1.] It is a *shining light*. Their way shines to themselves in the joy and comfort of it; it shines before others in the lustre and honour of it; *it shines before men, who see their good works*, *Matt. v. 16*. They go on in their way with a holy security and serenity of mind, as those that *walk in the light*. It is as the morning-light, which *shines out of obscurity* (*Isa. lviii. 8, 10*) and puts an end to the *works of darkness*. [2.] It is a growing light; it *shines more and more*, not like the light of a meteor, which soon disappears, but like that of a candle, which burns dim and grows down, but like that of the rising sun, which goes forward shining, mounts upward shining. Grace, the guide of this way, is growing; *he that has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger*. That joy which is the measure of this way, that honour which is the brightness of it, and all that happiness which is indeed its light, shall be still increasing. [3.] It will arrive, in the end, at the perfect day. The light of the dayspring will at length be noon-day light, and it is this that the enlightened soul is pressing towards. The saints will not be perfect till they come to heaven, but there they shall themselves *shine as the sun when he goes forth in his strength*, *Matt. xiii. 43*. Their graces and joys shall be all consummate. Therefore is our wisdom to keep close to the path of the just.

(2.) The way of sin is as darkness, *v. 19*. The works he had cautioned us not to have fellowship with are *works of darkness*. What pleasure and satisfaction can those have who know no pleasure and satisfaction but that they have in doing mischief? What guide have those that cast God's word behind them? *The way of the wicked is dark, and therefore dangerous; for they stumble,*

and yet know not at what they stumble. They fall into sin, but are not aware which way the temptation came by which they were overthrown, and therefore know not how to avoid it the next time. They fall into trouble, but never enquire wherefore God contends with them; they *consider not that they do evil*, nor what will be in the end of it, *Ps. lxxxii. 5; Job xviii. 5, 6*. This is the way we are directed to shun.

20 My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. 21 Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. 22 For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh. 23 Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. 24 Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. 25 Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. 26 Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. 27 Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.

Solomon, having warned us not to do evil, here teaches us how to do well. It is not enough for us to shun the occasions of sin, but we must study the methods of duty.

I. We must have a continual regard to the word of God and endeavour that it may be always ready to us.

1. The sayings of wisdom must be our principles by which we must govern ourselves, our monitors to warn us of duty and danger; and therefore, (1.) We must receive them readily: "*Incline thy ear to them* (*v. 20*); humbly bow to them; diligently listen to them." The attentive hearing of the word of God is a good sign of a work of grace begun in the heart and a good means of carrying it on. It is to be hoped that those are resolved to do their duty who are inclined to know it. (2.) We must retain them carefully (*v. 21*); we must lay them before us as our rule: "*Let them not depart from thy eyes*; view them, review them, and in every thing aim to conform to them." We must lodge them within us, as a commanding principle, the influences of which are diffused throughout the whole man: "*Keep them in the midst of thy heart*, as things dear to thee, and which thou art afraid of losing." Let the word of God be written in the heart, and that which is written there will remain.

2. The reason why we must thus make much of the words of wisdom is because they will be both food and physic to us, like the *tree of life*, *Rev. xxii. 2; Ezek. xlvii. 12*. Those that seek and find them, find and keep them, shall find in them, (1.) Food: *For they*

are life unto those that find them, v. 22. As the spiritual life was begun by the word as the instrument of it, so by the same word it is still nourished and maintained. We could not live without it; we may by faith live upon it. (2.) *Physic*. They are *health to all their flesh*, to the whole man, both body and soul; they help to keep both in good plight. They are *health to all flesh*, so the LXX. There is enough to cure all the diseases of this distempered world. They are *a medicine to all their flesh* (so the word is), to all their corruptions, for they are called flesh, to all their grievances, which are as thorns in the flesh. There is in the word of God a proper remedy for all our spiritual maladies.

II. We must keep a watchful eye and a strict hand upon all the motions of our inward man, v. 23. Here is, 1. A great duty required by the laws of wisdom, and in order to our getting and preserving wisdom: *Keep thy heart with all diligence*. God, who gave us these souls, gave us a strict charge with them: Man, woman, *keep thy heart; take heed to thy spirit*, Deut. iv. 9. We must maintain a holy jealousy of ourselves, and set a strict guard, accordingly, upon all the avenues of the soul; keep our hearts from doing hurt and getting hurt, from being defiled by sin and disturbed by trouble; keep them as our jewel, as our vineyard; keep a conscience void of offence; keep out bad thoughts; keep up good thoughts; keep the affections upon right objects and in due bounds. *Keep them with all keepings* (so the word is); there are many ways of keeping things—by care, by strength, by calling in help, and we must use them all in keeping our hearts; and all little enough, so deceitful are they, Jer. xvii. 9. *Or above all keepings*; we must keep our hearts with more care and diligence than we keep any thing else. We must keep our eyes (Job xxxi. 1), keep our tongues (Ps. xxiv. 13), keep our feet (Eccl. v. 1), but, above all, keep our hearts. 2. A good reason given for this care, because *out of it are the issues of life*. Out of a heart well kept will flow living issues, good products, to the glory of God and the edification of others. Or, in general, all the actions of the life flow from the heart, and therefore keeping that is making the tree good and healing the springs. Our lives will be regular or irregular, comfortable or uncomfortable, according as our hearts are kept or neglected.

III. We must set a *watch before the door of our lips*, that we offend not with our tongue (v. 24): *Put away from thee a froward mouth and perverse lips*. Our hearts being naturally corrupt, out of them a great deal of corrupt communication is apt to come, and therefore we must conceive a great dread and detestation of all manner of evil words, cursing, swearing, lying, slandering, brawling, filthiness, and foolish talking, all which come

from a froward mouth and perverse lips, that will not be governed either by reason or religion, but contradict both, and which are unsightly and ill-favoured before God as crooked distorted mouth drawn awry is before men. All manner of tongue sins, we must by constant watchfulness and stedfast resolution, *put from us*, put far from us, abstaining from all words that have an appearance of evil and fearing to learn any such words.

IV. We must make a covenant with our eyes: *Let them look right on and straight before thee*, v. 25. Let the eye be fixed and not wandering; let it not rove after every thing that presents itself, for then it will be diverted from good and ensnared in evil. Turn it from beholding vanity; let thy eye be single and not divided; let thy intention be sincere and uniform, and look not aspiring at any by-end." We must keep our eye upon our Master, and be careful to approve ourselves to him; keep our eye upon our rule and conform to that; keep our eye upon our mark, the *prize of the high calling*, and direct all towards that. *Oculum in metam*—The eye upon the goal.

V. We must act considerably in all we do (v. 26): *Ponder the path of thy feet*, weigh it (so the word is); "put the word of God in one scale, and what thou hast done, or art about to do, in the other, and see how they agree; be nice and critical in examining whether thy way be good before the Lord and whether it will end well." We must consider our past ways and examine what we have done, and our present ways, what we are doing, whither we are going, and *see that we walk circumspectly*. It concerns us to consider what are the duties and what the difficulties, what are the advantages and what the dangers, of our way, that we may act accordingly. "Do nothing rashly."

VI. We must act with steadiness, caution and consistency: "*Let all thy ways be established* (v. 26) and be not unstable in them as the double-minded man is; halt not between two, but go on in an even uniform course of obedience; *turn not to the right hand nor to the left*, for there are errors on both hands, and Satan gains his point if he prevails to draw us aside either way. Be very careful to *remove thy foot from evil*; take heed of extremes, for in them there is evil and *let thy eyes look right on*, that thou mayest keep the golden mean." Those that would approve themselves wise must always be watchful.

CHAP. V.

The scope of this chapter is much the same with that of chap. IV. To write the same things, in other words, ought not to be grievous, for it is safe, Phil. iii. 1. Here is, 1. An exhortation to get acquaintance with and submit to the laws of wisdom in general, ver. 2. II. A particular caution against the sin of whoredom, ver. 3–14. III. Remedies prescribed against this sin. 1. Conjugal love, ver. 15–20. 2. A regard to God's omniscience, ver. 21. 3. A dread of the miserable end of wicked people, ver. 22, 23. And all little enough to arm young people against those fleshly lusts which war against the soul.

MY son, attend unto my wisdom and bow thine ear to my un-

standing: 2 That thou mayest re-
d discretion, and *that thy lips may*
p knowledge. 3 For the lips of a
ange woman drop as a honey-
nb, and her mouth is smother
n oil: 4 But her end is bitter as
rmwood, sharp as a two-edged sword.
er feet go down to death; her
ps take hold on hell. 6 Lest thou
uldest ponder the path of life, her
s are moveable, *that thou canst*
know *them*. 7 Hear me now there-
e, O ye children, and depart not
m the words of my mouth. 8 Re-
ve thy way far from her, and come
tigh the door of her house: 9
st thou give thine honour unto
ers, and thy years unto the cruel:
Lest strangers be filled with thy
alth; and thy labours *be* in the
se of a stranger; 11 And thou
urn at the last, when thy flesh and
body are consumed, 12 And say,
w have I hated instruction, and my
art despised reproof; 13 And have
obeyed the voice of my teachers,
inclined mine ear to them that
ructed me! 14 I was almost in all
d in the midst of the congregation
d assembly.

Here we have,

A solemn preface, to introduce the cau-
which follows, v. 1, 2. Solomon here
resses himself to his son, that is, to all
ng men, as unto his children, whom he
an affection for and some influence upon.
God's name, he demands attention; for
writes by divine inspiration, and is a pro-
t, though he begins not with, *Thus saith*
Lord. "Attend, and bow thy ear; not
y hear what is said, and read what is
ten, but apply thy mind to it and con-
er it diligently." To gain attention he
es, 1. The excellency of his discourse:
is *my wisdom, my understanding*; if I un-
take to teach thee wisdom I cannot pre-
be any thing to be more properly called
moral philosophy is my philosophy, and
t which is to be learned in my school." The
usefulness of it: "Attend to what I
," (1.) "That thou mayest act wisely—
t thou mayest regard discretion." Solo-
n's lectures are not designed to fill our
nds with notions, with matters of nice
culation, or doubtful disputation, but to
de us in the government of ourselves, that
may act prudently, so as becomes us and
is will be for our true interest. (2.) "That
u mayest speak wisely—*that thy lips may*
p knowledge, and thou mayest have it ready

at thy tongue's end" (as we say), "for the
benefit of those with whom thou dost con-
verse." The priest's lips are said to *keep*
knowledge (Mal. ii. 7); but those that are
ready and mighty in the scriptures may not
only in their devotions, but in their dis-
courses, be spiritual priests.

II. The caution itself, and that is to abstain
from fleshly lusts, from adultery, fornication,
and all uncleanness. Some apply this figu-
ratively, and by the adulterous woman here
understand idolatry, or false doctrine, which
tends to debauch men's minds and manners,
or the sensual appetite, to which it may as
fitly as any thing be applied; but the primary
scope of it is plainly to warn us against se-
venth-commandment sins, which youth is so
prone to, the temptations to which are so
violent, the examples of which are so many,
and which, where admitted, are so destruc-
tive to all the seeds of virtue in the soul that
it is not strange that Solomon's cautions
against it are so very pressing and so often
repeated. Solomon here, as a faithful watch-
man, gives fair warning to all, as they regard
their lives and comforts, to dread this sin, for
it will certainly be their ruin. Two things
we are here warned to take heed of:—

1. That we do not listen to the charms of
this sin. It is true *the lips of a strange wo-*
man drop as a honey-comb (v. 3); the plea-
sures of fleshly lust are very tempting (like
the wine that *gives its colour in the cup and*
moves itself aright); its mouth, the kisses of
its mouth, the words of its mouth, are *smoother*
than oil, that the poisonous pill may go down
glibly and there may be no suspicion of harm
in it. But consider, (1.) How fatal the con-
sequences will be. What fruit will the sin-
ner have of his honey and oil when the end
will be, [1.] The terrors of conscience: It is
bitter as wormwood, v. 4. What was luscious
in the mouth rises in the stomach and turns
sour there; it cuts, in the reflection, like a
two-edged sword; take it which way you will,
it wounds. Solomon could speak by experi-
ence, Eccl. vii. 26. [2.] The torments of
hell. If some that have been guilty of this
sin have repented and been saved, yet the di-
rect tendency of the sin is to destruction of
body and soul; *the feet of it go down to death*,
nay, *they take hold on hell*, to pull it to the
sinner, as if the damnation slumbered too long,
v. 5. Those that are entangled in this sin
should be reminded that there is but a step
between them and hell, and that they are
ready to drop into it. (2.) Consider how
false the charms are. The adulteress flatters
and speaks fair, her words are honey and oil,
but she will deceive those that hearken to
her: *Her ways are moveable, that thou canst*
not know them; she often changes her dis-
guise, and puts on a great variety of false co-
lours, because, if she be rightly known, she
is certainly hated. Proteus-like, she puts
on many shapes, that she may keep in with
those whom she has a design upon. And

what does she aim at with all this art and management? Nothing but to keep them from *pondering the path of life*, for she knows that, if they once come to do that, she shall certainly lose them. Those are *ignorant of Satan's devices* who do not understand that the great thing he drives at in all his temptations is, [1.] To keep them from choosing the path of life, to prevent them from being religious and from going to heaven, that, being himself shut out from happiness, he may keep them out from it. [2.] In order hereunto, to keep them from pondering the path of life, from considering how reasonable it is that they should walk in that path, and how much it will be for their advantage. Be it observed, to the honour of religion, that it certainly gains its point with all those that will but allow themselves the liberty of a serious thought and will, weigh things impartially in an even balance, and that the devil has no way of securing men in his interests but by diverting them with continual amusements of one kind or other from the calm and sober consideration of the *things that belong to their peace*. And uncleanness is a sin that does as much as any thing blind the understanding, sear the conscience, and keep people from pondering the path of life. Whoredom *takes away the heart*, Hos. iv. 11.

2. That we do not approach the borders of this sin, v. 7, 8.

(1.) This caution is introduced with a solemn preface: "*Hear me now therefore, O you children!* whoever you are that read or hear these lines, take notice of what I say, and mix faith with it, treasure it up, and *depart not from the words of my mouth*, as those will do that hearken to the words of the strange woman. Do not only receive what I say, for the present merely, but cleave to it, and let it be ready to thee, and of force with thee, when thou art most violently assaulted by the temptation."

(2.) The caution itself is very pressing: "*Remove thy way far from her*; if thy way should happen to lie near her, and thou shouldst have a fair pretence of being led by business within the reach of her charms, yet change thy way, and alter the course of it, rather than expose thyself to danger; *come not nigh the door of her house*; go on the other side of the street, nay, go through some other street, though it be about." This intimates, [1.] That we ought to have a very great dread and detestation of the sin. We must fear it as we would a place infected with the plague; we must loathe it as the odour of carrion, that we will not come near. *Then* we are likely to preserve our purity when we conceive a rooted antipathy to all fleshly lusts. [2.] That we ought industriously to avoid every thing that may be an occasion of this sin or a step towards it. Those that would be kept from harm must keep out of harm's way. Such tinder there is in the corrupt nature, that it is madness, upon any pre-

tence whatsoever, to come near the spark. If we thrust ourselves into temptation, mocked God when we prayed, *Lead us into temptation*. [3.] That we ought to be jealous over ourselves with a godly jealousy and not to be so confident of the strength of our own resolutions as to venture upon the brink of sin, with a promise to ourselves *hitherto we will come and no further*. [4.] That whatever has become a snare to us and an occasion of sin, though it be as a *right eye* or a *right hand*, we must *pluck it out, cut it off, and cast it from us*, must part with that which is dearest to us rather than hazard our souls; this is our Saviour's command, Mat. v. 28—30.

(3.) The arguments which Solomon uses to enforce this caution are taken from the same topic with those before, the many mischiefs which attend this sin. [1.] It blasts the reputation. "*Thou wilt give thy honour unto others* (v. 9); thou wilt lose it thyself; thou wilt put into the hand of each of thy neighbours a stone to throw at thee, for they will all, with good reason, shame on thee, will despise thee, and treat thee on thee, as a foolish man." Whoredom is a sin that makes men contemptible and base, and no man of sense or virtue will care to keep company with one that keeps company with harlots. [2.] It wastes the time, *gives away the years*, the years of youth, the flower of men's time, *unto the cruel*, "that base lustful woman, which with the utmost cruelty wars against the soul, that base harlot which pretends an affection for thee, but really hunts for the precious life." Those years that should be given to the honour of a gracious God are spent in the service of a cruel sin. [3.] It ruins the estate (v. 10). "*Strangeness will be filled with thy wealth*, which thou hast but entrusted with as a steward for thy family; and the fruit of thy labours, which should be provision for thy own house, will be in the house of a stranger, that neither is bound to it nor will ever thank thee for it." It is destructive to the health, and shortens men's days: *Thy flesh and thy body will be consumed by it*, v. 11. The lusts of uncleanness not only war against the soul, which the sinner neglects and is in no care about, but they war against the body too, which he is indulgent of and is in such care to please a pamper, such deceitful, such foolish, such hurtful lusts are they. Those that give themselves to work uncleanness with greediness waste their strength, throw themselves into weakness, and often have their bodies filled with loathsome distempers, by which the number of their months is cut off in the middest, and they fall unpitied sacrifices to a cruel lust. [5.] It will fill the mind with horror if ever conscience be awakened. "Thou shalt art merry now, *sporting thyself in thy own deceivings*, yet thou wilt certainly mourn at the last, v. 11. Thou art all this while making work for repentance, and laying

ter for vexation and torment in the re-
 tion, when the sin is set before thee in its
 colours." Sooner or later it will bring
 row, either when the soul is humbled and
 ight to repentance or when the *flesh and*
are consumed, either by sickness, when
 science flies in the sinner's face, or by the
 ve; when the body is rotting there, the
 is racking in the torments of hell, where
 worm dies not, and "Son, remember," is
 constant peal. Solomon here brings in
 convinced sinner reproaching himself,
 aggravating his own folly. He will then
 st bitterly lament it. *First*, That because
 ated to be reformed he therefore hated
 be informed, and could not endure either
 be taught his duty (*How have I hated not*
the discipline of being instructed, but
instruction itself, though all true and
ed!) or to be told of his faults—*My heart*
vised reproof, v. 12. He cannot but own
 those who had the charge of him, pa-
 ts, ministers, had done their part; they
 been his teachers; they had instructed
 , had given him good counsel and fair
 ning (v. 13); but to his own shame and
 fusion does he speak it, and therein justi-
 God in all the miseries that were brought
 on him, he had not taken their counsel,
 not obeyed their voice, for indeed he *never*
ined his ear to those that instructed him,
 er minded what they said nor admitted
 impressions of it. Note, Those who have
 a good education and do not live up to
 it will have a great deal to answer for another
 ; and those who will not now remember
 at they were taught, to conform themselves
 t, will be made to remember it as an ag-
 gravation of their sin, and consequently of
 ir ruin. *Secondly*, That by the frequent
 s of sin the habits of it were so rooted and
 rmed that his heart was fully set in him
 commit it (v. 14): *I was almost in all evil*
the midst of the congregation and assembly.
 hen he came into the synagogue, or into
 courts of the temple, to worship God
 h other Israelites, his unclean heart was
 of wanton thoughts and desires and his
 s of adultery. Reverence of the place and
 mpany, and of the work that was doing,
 ld not restrain him, but he was almost as
 ked and vile there as any where. No sin
 l appear more frightful to an awakened
 onscience than the profanation of holy things;
 y will any aggravation of sin render it more
 eedingly sinful than the place we are ho-
 ured with in the congregation and assem-
 y, and the advantages we enjoy thereby.
 ori and Cozbi avowed their villany in the
 ht of Moses and all the congregation (Num.
 v. 6), and heart-adultery is as open to God,
 d must needs be most offensive to him, when
 draw nigh to him in religious exercises.
 as in all evil in defiance of the magistrates
 d judges, and their assemblies; so some
 d understand it. Others refer it to the evil of
 nishment, not to the evil of sin. "I was

made an example, a spectacle to the world.
 I was under almost all God's sore judgments
in the midst of the congregation of Israel,
 set up for a mark. *I stood up and cried in*
the congregation," Job xxx. 28. Let that be
 avoided which will be thus rued at last.

15 Drink waters out of thine own
 cistern, and running waters out of
 thine own well. 16 Let thy fountains
 be dispersed abroad, and rivers of
 waters in the streets. 17 Let them be
 only thine own, and not strangers'
 with thee. 18 Let thy fountain be
 blessed: and rejoice with the wife of
 thy youth. 19 *Let her be as* the lov-
 ing hind and pleasant roe; let her
 breasts satisfy thee at all times; and
 be thou ravished always with her love.
 20 And why wilt thou, my son, be
 ravished with a strange woman, and
 embrace the bosom of a stranger?
 21 For the ways of man *are* before
 the eyes of the LORD, and he ponder-
 eth all his goings. 22 His own iniqui-
 ties shall take the wicked himself, and
 he shall be holden with the cords of
 his sins. 23 He shall die without in-
 struction; and in the greatness of his
 folly he shall go astray.

Solomon, having shown the great evil that
 there is in adultery and fornication, and all
 such lewd and filthy courses, here prescribes
 remedies against them.

I. Enjoy with satisfaction the comforts
 of lawful marriage, which was ordained for
 the prevention of uncleanness, and therefore
 ought to be made use of in time, lest it should
 not prove effectual for the cure of that which
 it might have prevented. Let none complain
 that God has dealt unkindly with them in
 forbidding them those pleasures which they
 have a natural desire of, for he has graciously
 provided for the regular gratification of them.
 "Thou mayest not indeed eat of every tree
 of the garden, but choose thee out one, which
 thou pleasest, and of that thou mayest freely
 eat; nature will be content with that, but
 lust with nothing." God, in thus confining
 men to one, has been so far from putting any
 hardship upon them that he has really con-
 sulted their true interest; for, as Mr. Her-
 bert observes, "*If God had laid all common,*
certainly man would have been the encloser."
 —Church-porch. Solomon here enlarges
 much upon this, not only prescribing it as
 an antidote, but urging it as an argument
 against fornication, that the allowed pleasures
 of marriage (however wicked wits may ridi-
 cule them, who are factors for the unclean
 spirit) far transcend all the false forbidden
 pleasures of whoredom.

1. Let young men marry, marry and not

burn. Have a cistern, a well of thy own (v. 15), even the wife of thy youth, v. 18. *Wholly abstain, or wed.*—Herbert. “The world is wide, and there are varieties of accomplishments, among which thou mayest please thyself.”

2. Let him that is married take delight in his wife, and let him be very fond of her, not only because she is the wife that he himself has chosen and he ought to be pleased with his own choice, but because she is the wife that God in his providence appointed for him and he ought much more to be pleased with the divine appointment, pleased with her because she is his own. *Let thy fountain be blessed* (v. 18); think thyself very happy in her, look upon her as a blessed wife, let her have thy blessing, pray daily for her, and then rejoice with her. Those comforts we are likely to have joy of that are sanctified to us by prayer and the blessing of God. It is not only allowed us, but commanded us, to be pleasant with our relations; and it particularly becomes yoke-fellows to rejoice together and in each other. Mutual delight is the bond of mutual fidelity. It is not only taken for granted that the bridegroom rejoices over his bride (Isa. lxii. 5), but given for law. Eccl. ix. 9, *Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of thy life.* Those take not their comforts where God has appointed who are jovial and merry with their companions abroad, but sour and morose with their families at home.

3. Let him be fond of his wife and love her dearly (v. 19): *Let her be as the loving hind and the pleasant roe*, such as great men sometimes kept tame in their houses and played with. Desire no better diversion from severe study and business than the innocent and pleasant conversation of thy own wife; let her lie in thy bosom, as the poor man's ewe-lamb did in his (2 Sam. xii. 3), and do thou repose thy head in hers, and let that satisfy thee at all times; and seek not for pleasure in any other. “*Err thou always in her love.*” If thou wilt suffer thy love to run into an excess, and wilt be dotingly fond of any body, let it be only of thy own wife, where there is least danger of exceeding. This is *drinking waters*, to quench the thirst of thy appetite, *out of thy own cistern*, and *running waters*, which are clear, and sweet, and wholesome, *out of thy own well*, v. 15. 1 Cor. vii. 2, 3.

4. Let him take delight in his children and look upon them with pleasure (v. 16, 17): “Look upon them as streams from thy own pure fountains” (the Jews are said to come forth out of the waters of Judah, Isa. xlviii 1), “so that they are parts of thyself, as the streams are of the fountain. Keep to thy own wife, and thou shalt have.” (1.) “A numerous offspring, like rivers of water, which run in abundance, and they shall be dispersed abroad, matched into other families, whereas those that commit whoredom shall not increase,”

Hos. iv. 10. (2.) “A peculiar offspring, which shall be only thy own, whereas the children of whoredom, that are fathered upon thee, are probably, not so, but, for aught thou knowest, are the offspring of strangers, and thou must keep them.” (3.) “A creditable offspring, which are an honour to thee, which thou mayest send abroad, and appear with, in the streets, whereas a spurious brood is thy disgrace, and that which thou art ashamed to own.” In this matter, virtue has all the pleasure and honour in it; justly therefore it is called wisdom.

5. Let him then scorn the offer of forbidden pleasures when he is always ravished with the love of a faithful virtuous wife; him consider what an absurdity it will be for him to be ravished with a strange woman (v. 20), to be in love with a filthy harlot, and embrace the bosom of a stranger, which, if he had any sense of honour or virtue, he would loathe the thoughts of. “Why wilt thou be so sottish, such an enemy to thyself, as prefer puddle-water, and that poisoned and stolen, before pure living waters out of thy own well?” Note, If the dictates of reason may be heard, the laws of virtue will be obeyed.

II. “See the eye of God always upon thee, and let his fear rule in thy heart,” v. 21. Those that live in this sin promise themselves secrecy (*the eye of the adulterer waits for twilight*, Job xxiv. 15); but to what purpose when it cannot be hidden from God? For God sees it. *The ways of man*, all his motions, all his actions, are before the eyes of the Lord; all the workings of the heart and all the goings of the life, that which is done ever secretly and disguised ever so artfully. God sees it in a true light, and knows it with all its causes, circumstances, and consequences. He does not cast an eye upon men's ways now and then, but they are always actual in his view and under his inspection; and he dares not sin against God in his sight, nor do that wickedness under his eye which he durst not do in the presence of a man or himself? 2. He will call the sinner to an account for it; for he not only sees, but ponder all his goings, judges concerning them, as one that will shortly judge the sinner for them. Every action is weighed, and shall be brought into judgment (Eccl. xii. 14), which is a good reason why we should ponder the path of our feet (ch. iv. 26), and so judge ourselves that we may not be judged.

III. “Foresee the certain ruin of those that go on still in their trespasses.” Those that live in this sin promise themselves impunity, but they deceive themselves; their sin will find them out, v. 22, 23. The apostle gives the sense of these verses in a few words. He xiii. 4, *Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.* 1. It is a sin which men with great difficulty shake off the power of. When a sinner is old and weak his lusts are strong and active, in calling to remembrance the do-

his youth, Ezek. xxiii. 19. Thus his own iniquities having seized the wicked himself by his own consent, and he having voluntarily rendered himself a captive to them, he is *laid in the cords of his own sins*, and such full possession they have gained of him that he cannot extricate himself, but in the *greatness of his folly* (and what greater folly could there be than to yield himself a servant to such cruel task-masters?) he shall *go astray*, and wander endlessly. Uncleanness is a sin from which, when once men have plunged themselves into it, they very hardly and very slowly recover themselves. 2. It is a sin which, if it be not forsaken, men cannot possibly escape the punishment of; it will unavoidably bring about their ruin. As their own iniquities do arrest them in the reproaches of conscience and present rebukes (Jer. vii. 19), so their own iniquities shall arrest them and bind them over to the judgments of God. There needs no prison, no chains; they shall be *holden in the cords of their own sins*, as the fallen angels, being incurably wicked, are thereby reserved in *chains of darkness*. The sinner, who, having been often reproved, *hardens his neck*, shall *die at length without instruction*. Having had general warnings sufficient given him already, he shall have no particular warnings, but he shall die without seeing his danger beforehand, shall die because he would not receive instruction, but *in the greatness of his folly would go astray*; and so shall his doom be, he shall never find the way home again. Those that are so foolish as to choose the way of sin are justly left of God to themselves to go in till they come to that destruction which it leads to, which is a good reason why we should guard with watchfulness and resolution against the allurements of the sensual appetite.

CHAP. VI.

This chapter we have, I. A caution against rash suretiship, ver. 1-3. II. A rebuke to slothfulness, ver. 6-11. III. The character and fate of a malicious mischievous man, ver. 12-15. IV. An account of seven things which God hates, ver. 16-19. V. An exhortation to make the word of God familiar to us, ver. 20-23. VI. A repeated warning of the pernicious consequences of the sin of whoredom, ver. 24-35. We are here discussed man sin very much by arguments borrowed from our secular interests, for it is not only represented as damning in the other world, but as impoverishing in this.

MY son, if thou be surety for thy friend, if thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger, 2 Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth. 3 Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself, when thou art come to the hand of thy friend; go, humble thyself, and make sure thy friend. Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor number to thine eyelids. 5 Deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the hunter, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler.

It is the excellency of the word of God that it

teaches us not only divine wisdom for another world, but human prudence for this world, that we may order our affairs with discretion; and this is one good rule, To avoid suretiship, because by it poverty and ruin are often brought into families, which take away that comfort in relations which he had recommended in the foregoing chapter. 1. We must look upon suretiship as a snare and decline it accordingly, v. 1, 2. "It is dangerous enough for a man to be bound for his friend, though it be one whose circumstances he is well acquainted with, and well assured of his sufficiency, but much more to *strike the hands with a stranger*, to become surety for one whom thou dost not know to be either able or honest." Or the stranger here with whom the hand is stricken is the creditor, "the usurer to whom thou art become bound, and yet as to thee he is a stranger, that is, thou owest him nothing, nor hast had any dealings with him. If thou hast rashly entered into such engagements, either wheedled into them or in hopes to have the same kindness done for thee another time, know that *thou art snared with the words of thy mouth*; it was easily done, with a word's speaking; it was but setting thy hand to a paper, a bond is soon sealed and delivered, and a recognition entered into. But it will not be so easily got clear of; thou art *in a snare* more than thou art aware of." See how little reason we have to make light of tongue-sins; if by a word of our mouth we may become indebted to men, and lie open to their actions, by the words of our mouth we may become obnoxious to God's justice, and even so may be snared. It is false that words are but wind: they are often snares. 2. If we have been drawn into this snare, it will be our wisdom by all means, with all speed, to get out of it, v. 3-5. It sleeps for the present; we hear nothing of it. The debt is not demanded; the principal says, "Never fear, we will take care of it." But still the bond is in force, interest is running on, the creditor may come upon thee when he will and perhaps may be hasty and severe, the principal may prove either knavish or insolvent, and then thou must rob thy wife and children, and ruin thy family, to pay that which thou didst neither eat nor drink for. And therefore *deliver thyself*; rest not till either the creditor give up the bond or the principal give thee counter-security; when *thou art come into the hand of thy friend*, and he has advantage against thee, it is no time to threaten or give ill language (that will provoke and make ill worse), but *humble thyself*, beg and pray to be discharged, go down on thy knees to him, and give him all the fair words thou canst; engage thy friends to speak for thee; leave no stone unturned till thou hast agreed with thy adversary and compromised the matter, so that thy bond may not come against thee or thine. This is a care which may well break thy sleep, and let it do so till thou hast

got through it. *Give not sleep to thy eyes till thou hast delivered thyself.* Strive and struggle to the utmost, and hasten with all speed, as a roe or a bird delivers herself out of the snare of the fowler or hunter. Delays are dangerous, and feeble efforts will not serve." See what care God, in his word, has taken to make men good husbands of their estates, and to teach them prudence in the management of them. *Godliness* has precepts, as well as promises, relating to the life that now is.

But how are we to understand this? We are not to think it is unlawful in any case to become surety, or bail, for another; it may be a piece of justice or charity; he that has friends may see cause in this instance to show himself friendly, and it may be no piece of imprudence. Paul became bound for Onesimus, Philem. 19. We may help a young man into business that we know to be honest and diligent, and gain him credit by passing our word for him, and so do him a great kindness without any detriment to ourselves. But, 1. It is every man's wisdom to keep out of debt as much as may be, for it is an incumbrance upon him, entangles him in the world, puts him in danger of doing wrong or suffering wrong. *The borrower is servant to the lender,* and makes himself very much a slave to the world. Christians therefore, who are *bought with a price*, should not thus, without need, make themselves *the servants of men*, 1 Cor. vii. 23. 2. It is great folly to entangle ourselves with necessitous people, and to become bound for their debts, that are ever and anon taking up money, and lading, as we say, out of one hole into another, for it is ten to one but, some time or other, it will come upon us. A man ought never to be bound as surety for more than he is both able and willing to pay, and can afford to pay without wronging his family, in case the principal fail, for he ought to look upon it as his own debt. Ecclesiasticus viii. 13, *Be not surety above thy power, for, if thou be surety, thou must take care to pay it.* 3. It is a necessary piece of after-wit, if we have foolishly entangled ourselves, to get out of the snare as fast as we can, to lose no time, spare no pains, and stick at no submission to make ourselves safe and easy, and get our affairs into a good posture. It is better to humble ourselves for an accommodation than to ruin ourselves by our stiffness and haughtiness. *Make sure thy friend* by getting clear from thy engagements from him; for rash suretiship is as much the bane of friendship as that which is prudent is sometimes the bond of it. Let us take heed lest we any way make ourselves guilty of other men's sins against God (1 Tim. v. 22), for that is worse, and much more dangerous, than being bound for other men's debts; and, if we must be in all this care to get our debts to men forgiven, much more to get our peace made with God. *"Humble thyself to him; make sure of Christ thy friend,* to intercede for thee; pray earnestly

that thy sins may be pardoned, and thou mayest be delivered from going down to the pit, and it shall not be in vain. *Give not sleep to thy eyes nor slumber to thy eyelids till this be done."*

6 Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, 8 Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. 9 How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? 10 Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: 11 So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.

Solomon, in these verses, addresses himself to the sluggard who loves his ease, lives in idleness, minds no business, sticks to nothing, brings nothing to pass, and in a particular manner is careless in the business of religion. Slothfulness is as sure a way to poverty, though not so short a way, as rash suretiship. He speaks here to the sluggard.

1. By way of instruction, v. 6—8. 1. He sends him to school, for sluggards must be schooled. He is to take him to school himself, for, if the scholar will take no pains, the master must take the more; the sluggard is not willing to come to school to him (drawing scholars will never love wakeful teachers) and therefore he has found him out another school, as low as he can desire. Observe,

1. The master he is sent to school to: *Go to the ant, to the bee,* so the LXX. Man taught more than the beasts of the earth, and made wiser than the fowls of heaven; and yet is so degenerated that he may learn wisdom from the meanest insects and be ashamed by them. When we observe the wonderful sagacities of the inferior creatures we must not only give glory to the God of nature, who has made them thus strangely, but receive instruction to ourselves; by spiritualizing common things, we may make the things of God both easy and ready to us, and converse with them daily.

2. The application of mind that is required in order to learn of this master: *Consider her ways.* The sluggard is so because he does not consider; nor shall we ever learn to any purpose, either by the word or the works of God, unless we set ourselves to consider. Particularly, if we would imitate others in that which is good, we must consider their ways, diligently observe what they do, that we may do likewise, Phil. iii. 17.

3. The lesson that is to be learned. In general, learn wisdom, *consider, and be wise* that is the thing we are to aim at in our learning, not only to be knowing, but to be wise. In particular, learn to *provide meat in summer*; that is, (1.) We must prepare

neither, and not mind the present time only, but eat up all, and lay up nothing, but in the short time treasure up for a spending time. Thus provident we must be in our worldly affairs, not with an anxious care, but with a prudent foresight; lay in for winter, for straits and wants that may happen, and for old age; much more in the affairs of our souls. We must provide meat and food, that which is substantial and will stand us in stead, and which we shall most need. In the enjoyment of the means of grace provide for the want of them, in life for death, in time for eternity; in the state of probation and preparation must provide for the state of retribution. (2.) We must take pains, and labour in our business, yea, though we labour under inconveniences. Even in summer, when the weather is hot, the ant is busy in gathering food and saving it up, and does not indulge her ease, nor take her pleasure, as the grasshopper, that sings and sports in the summer and then perishes in the winter. The ants help one another; if one have a grain of corn too big for her to carry home, her neighbours will come to her assistance. (3.) We must improve opportunities, we must gather when it is to be had, as the ant does in summer and harvest, in the proper time. It is our wisdom to improve the season while that favours us, cause that may be done then which cannot be done at all, or not so well done, at another time. *Walk while you have the light.*

4. The advantages which we have of learning this lesson above what the ant has, which will aggravate our slothfulness and neglect, will waste away our time. She has no guides, no advisers, and rulers, but does it of herself, following the instinct of nature; the more we may be for us who do not in like manner follow the dictates of our own reason and conscience, though besides them we have parents, masters, ministers, magistrates, to put us in mind of our duty, to check us for the neglect of it, to quicken us to it, to direct us to it, and to call us to an account about it. The greater helps we have for working out our salvation the more inexcusable shall we be if we neglect it.

II. By way of reproof, v. 9—11. In these verses,

1. He expostulates with the sluggard, reprimanding him and reasoning with him, calling him to his work, as a master does his servant that has over-slept himself: "*How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? How long wilt thou sleep if one would let thee arise? When wilt thou think it time to arise?*" The sluggards should be roused with a *How long?* which is applicable, (1.) To those that are slothful in the way of work and duty, in the duties of their particular calling as men or their general calling as Christians. "*How long wilt thou waste thy time, and when wilt thou be a better husband of it? How long wilt thou love thy ease, and when wilt thou learn to deny thyself, and to take pains? How*

long wilt thou bury thy talents, and when wilt thou begin to trade with them? How long wilt thou delay, and put off, and trifle away thy opportunities, as one regardless of hereafter; and when wilt thou stir up thyself to do what thou hast to do, which, if it be not done, will leave thee for ever undone?" (2.) To those that are secure in the way of sin and danger: "*Hast thou not slept enough? - Is it not far in the day? Does not thy Master call? Are not the Philistines upon thee? When then wilt thou arise?*"

2. He exposes the frivolous excuses he makes for himself, and shows how ridiculous he makes himself. When he is roused he stretches himself, and begs, as for alms, for more sleep, more slumber; he is well in his warm bed, and cannot endure to think of rising, especially of rising to work. But, observe, he promises himself and his master that he will desire but a little more sleep, a little more slumber, and then he will get up and go to his business. But herein he deceives himself; the more a slothful temper is indulged the more it prevails; let him sleep awhile, and slumber awhile, and still he is in the same tune; still he asks for a little more sleep, yet a little more; he never thinks he has enough, and yet, when he is called, pretends he will come presently. Thus men's great work is left undone by being put off yet a little longer, *de die in diem—from day to day*; and they are cheated of all their time by being cheated of the present moments. A little more sleep proves an everlasting sleep. *Sleep on now, and take your rest.*

3. He gives him fair warning of the fatal consequences of his slothfulness, v. 11. (1.) *Poverty and want* will certainly come upon those that are slothful in their business. If men neglect their affairs, they not only will not go forward, but they will go backward. He that leaves his concerns at sixes and sevens will soon see them go to wreck and ruin, and bring his noble to nine-pence. Spiritual poverty comes upon those that are slothful in the service of God; those will want oil, when they should use it, that provide it not in their vessels. (2.) "*It will come silently and insensibly, will grow upon thee, and come step by step, as one that travels, but will without fail come at last.*" *It will leave thee as naked as if thou wert stripped by a highwayman*; so bishop Patrick. (3.) "*It will come irresistibly, like an armed man, whom thou canst not oppose nor make thy part good against.*"

12 A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a froward mouth. 13 He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers; 14 Frowardness is in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually: he soweth discord. 15 Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly;

suddenly shall he be broken without remedy. 16 These six *things* doth the LORD hate: yea, seven *are* an abomination unto him: 17 A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, 18 A heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, 19 A false witness *that* speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

Solomon here gives us,

I. The characters of one that is mischievous to man and dangerous to be dealt with. If the slothful are to be condemned, that do nothing, much more those that do ill, and contrive to do all the ill they can. It is a *naughty person* that is here spoken of, Heb. *A man of Belial*; I think it should have been so translated, because it is a term often used in scripture, and this is the explication of it. Observe,

1. How a man of Belial is here described. He is *a wicked man*, that makes a trade of doing evil, especially with his tongue, for he walks and works his designs with a *froward mouth* (v. 12), by lying and perverseness, and a direct opposition to God and man. He says and does every thing, (1.) Very artfully and with design. He has the subtlety of the serpent, and carries on his projects with a great deal of craft and management (v. 13), *with his eyes, with his feet, with his fingers*. He expresses his malice *when he dares not speak out* (so some), or, rather, thus he carries on his plot; those about him, whom he makes use of as the tools of his wickedness, understand the ill meaning of a wink of his eye, a stamp of his feet, the least motion of his fingers. He gives orders for evil-doing, and yet would not be thought to do so, but has ways of concealing what he does, so that he may not be suspected. He is a close man, and upon the reserve; those only shall be let into the secret that would do any thing he would have them to do. He is a cunning man, and upon the trick; he has a language by himself, which an honest man is not acquainted with, nor desires to be. (2.) Very spitefully and with ill design. It is not so much ambition or covetousness that is in his heart, as downright *frowardness*, malice, and ill nature. He aims not so much to enrich and advance himself as to do an ill turn to those about him. He is *continually devising one mischief* or other, purely for mischief-sake—a man of Belial indeed, of the devil, resembling him not only in subtlety, but in malice.

2. What his doom is (v. 15): *His calamity shall come and he shall be broken*; he that devised mischief shall fall into mischief. His ruin shall come, (1.) Without warning. It shall come suddenly: *Suddenly shall he be broken*, to punish him for all the wicked arts

he had to surprise people into his snare (2.) Without relief. He shall be irreparably broken, and never able to piece again: *He shall be broken without remedy*. What relief can he expect that has disobliged all mankind? *He shall come to his end and none shall help him*, Dan. xi. 45.

II. A catalogue of those things which in a special manner odious to God, all who are generally to be found in those men of Belial whom he had described in the foregoing verses; and the last of them (which being the seventh, seems especially to be intended, because he says they are six, yea, seven is part of his character, that *he sows discord*) God hates sin; he hates every sin; he can never be reconciled to it; he hates nothing but sin. But there are some sins which God in a special manner hate; and all those here mentioned are such as are injurious to our neighbour. It is an evidence of a good-will God bears to mankind that those sins are in a special manner provoking to him, which are prejudicial to the comfort of human life and society. *Therefore* the men of Belial must expect their ruin to come suddenly, and without remedy, because their practices are such as the Lord hates and are an *abomination to him*, v. 16. Those things which God hates it is no thanks to us to hate in other but we must hate them in ourselves. Haughtiness, conceitedness of ourselves, a contempt of others—a *proud look*. There are seven things that God hates, and pride is the first, because it is at the bottom of much sin and gives rise to it. God sees the pride in the heart and hates it there; but, when it prevails to that degree that the show of mercy countenance witnesses against them that they overvalue themselves and undervalue others about them, this is in a special manner hateful to him, for then pride is proud of its own and sets shame at defiance. 2. Falsehood and fraud, and dissimulation. Next to a *proud look*, nothing is more an abomination to God than a *lying tongue*; nothing more sacred than truth, nor more necessary to conversation than speaking truth. God and good men hate and abhor lying. 3. Cruelty and blood-thirstiness. The devil was, from the beginning, a liar and a murderer (John viii. 44), and therefore, as a *lying tongue*, hands that shed innocent blood are hateful to God, because they have in them the devil's image and do him service. 4. Subtlety, the contrivance of sin, wisdom to do evil, *heart that designs and a head that devises wicked imaginations*, that is acquainted with the depths of Satan and knows how to carry on a covetous, envious, revengeful plot, more effectually. The more there is of craft and management in sin the more it is an abomination to God. 5. Vigour and diligence in the prosecution of sin—*feet that are swift running to mischief*, as if they were afraid of losing time or were impatient of delay in doing thing they are so greedy of. The policy a

ilance, the eagerness and industry, of sinners, in their sinful pursuits, may shame us to go about that which is good so awkwardly and so coldly. 6. False-witness bearing, which is one of the greatest mischiefs that the wicked imagination can devise, and against which there is least fence. There must not be a greater affront to God (to whom an oath appeal is made) nor a greater injury to our neighbour (all whose interests in this world, even the dearest, lie open to an attack of this kind) than knowingly to give a false testimony. There are seven things which God hates, and lying involves two of them; he hates it, and doubly hates it. 7. Making mischief between relations and neighbours, and using all wicked means possible, not only to alienate their affections one from another, but to irritate their passions one against another. The God of love and peace hates him that sows discord among brethren, he delights in concord. Those that by bearing and slandering, by carrying ill-true stories, aggravating every thing that is said and done, and suggesting jealousies and evil surmises, blow the coals of contention, are but preparing for themselves a fire of the same nature.

20 My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: 21 Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. 22 When thou sleepest, it shall lead thee; when thou wakest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life: 24 To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman. 25 Lust not after her beauty with thine heart; neither let her take away with her eyelids. 26 For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought a piece of bread: and the adulterers will hunt for the precious life. 27 When a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? 28 Can he go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned? 29 So he that goeth to his neighbour's wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent. Men do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry; 31 But if he be found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give the substance of his house. 32 But whoso committeth adultery with a

woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul. 33 A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away. 34 For jealousy is the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance. 35 He will not regard any ransom; neither will he rest content, though thou givest many gifts.

Here is, I. A general exhortation faithfully to adhere to the word of God and to take it for our guide in all our actions.

1. We must look upon the word of God both as a light (v. 23) and as a law, v. 20, 23. (1.) By its arguments it is a light, which our understandings must subscribe to; it is a lamp to our eyes for discovery, and so to our feet for direction. The word of God reveals to us truths of eternal certainty, and is built upon the highest reason. Scripture-light is the sure light. (2.) By its authority it is a law, which our wills must submit to. As never such a light shone out of the schools of the philosophers, so never such a law issued from the throne of any prince, so well framed, and so binding. It is such a law as is a lamp and a light, for it carries with it the evidence of its own goodness.

2. We must receive it as our father's commandment and the law of our mother, v. 20. It is God's commandment and his law. But, (1.) Our parents directed us to it, put it into our hands, trained us up in the knowledge and observance of it, its original and obligation being most sacred. We believe indeed, not for their saying, for we have tried it ourselves and find it to be of God; but we were beholden to them for recommending it to us, and see all the reason in the world to continue in the things we have learned, knowing of whom we have learned them. (2.) The cautions, counsels, and commands which our parents gave us agree with the word of God, and therefore we must hold them fast. Children, when they are grown up, must remember the law of a good mother, as well as the commandment of a good father, Ecclesiasticus iii. 2. The Lord has given the father honour over the children and has confirmed the authority of the mother over the sons.

3. We must retain the word of God and the good instructions which our parents gave us out of it. (1.) We must never cast them off, never think it a mighty achievement (as some do) to get clear of the restraints of a good education: "Keep thy father's commandment, keep it still, and never forsake it." (2.) We must never lay them by, no, not for a time (v. 21): Bind them continually, not only upon thy hand (as Moses had directed, Deut. vi. 8) but upon thy heart. Phylacteries upon the hand were of no value at all, any further than they occasioned pious thoughts and affections

in the heart. There the word must be written, there it must be hid, and laid close to the conscience. Tie them about thy neck, as an ornament, a bracelet, or gold chain,—*about thy throat* (so the word is); let them be a guard upon that pass; tie them about thy throat, that no forbidden fruit may be suffered to go in nor any evil word suffered to go out through the throat; and thus a great deal of sin would be prevented. Let the word of God be always ready to us, and let us feel the impressions of it, as of that which is bound upon our hearts and about our necks.

4. We must make use of the word of God and of the benefit that is designed us by it. If we bind it continually upon our hearts, (1.) It will be our guide, and we must follow its direction. "*When thou goest, it shall lead thee* (v. 22); it shall lead thee into, and lead thee in, the good and right way, shall lead thee from, and lead thee out of, every sinful dangerous path. It will say unto thee, when thou art ready to turn aside, *This is the way; walk in it*. It will be that to thee that the pillar of cloud and fire was to Israel in the wilderness. Be led by that, let it be thy rule, and then thou shalt be led by the Spirit; he will be thy monitor and support." (2.) It will be our guard, and we must put ourselves under the protection of it: "*When thou sleepest, and liest exposed to the malignant powers of darkness, it shall keep thee; thou shalt be safe, and shalt think thyself so*." If we govern ourselves by the precepts of the word all day, and make conscience of the duty God has commanded to us, we may shelter ourselves under the promises of the word at night, and take the comfort of the deliverances God does and will command for us. (3.) It will be our companion, and we must converse with it: "*When thou awakest in the night, and knowest not how to pass away thy waking minutes, if thou pleasest, it shall talk with thee, and entertain thee with pleasant meditations in the night-watches; when thou awakest in the morning, and art contriving the work of the day, it shall talk with thee about it, and help thee to contrive for the best*," Ps. i. 2. The word of God has something to say to us upon all occasions, if we would but enter into discourse with it, would ask it what it has to say, and give it the hearing. And it would contribute to our close and comfortable walking with God all day if we would begin with him in the morning and let his word be the subject of our first thoughts. *When I awake I am still with thee*; we are so if the word be still with us. (4.) It will be our life; for, as the law is a lamp and a light for the present, so the reproofs of instruction are the way of life. Those reproofs of the word which not only show us our faults, but instruct us how to do better, are the way that leads to life, eternal life. Let not faithful reproofs therefore, which have such a direct tendency to make us happy, ever make us uneasy.

II. Here is a particular caution against the sin of uncleanness.

1. When we consider how much this iniquity abounds, how heinous it is in its own nature, of what pernicious consequence it is, and how certainly destructive to all the see of the spiritual life in the soul, we shall wonder that the cautions against it are often repeated and so largely inculcated. One great kindness God designed men giving them his law, was to preserve them from this sin, v. 24. "*The reproofs of instruction are therefore the way of life to thee, because they are designed to keep thee from the evil woman, who will be certain death to thee, from being enticed by the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman, who pretends to love thee, but intends to ruin thee*." Those that will be wrought upon by flattery make themselves a very easy prey to the tempter; and those who would avoid that snare must take well-instructed reproofs as great kindness and be thankful to those that will deal faithfully with them, Prov. xxvii. 5, 6. (2.) The greatest kindness we can do ourselves is to keep at a distance from this sin, and to look upon it with the utmost dread and detestation (v. 25): "*Last not after her beauty, nor let it be in thy heart, for, if thou dost, thou hast already committed adultery with her*. Talk not of the charms in her face, neither be thou smitten with her amorous glances; they are all snares and nets; let her not come near thee with her eye-lids. Her looks are arrows and fiery darts; they wound, they kill, in another sense than what lovers mean; they call it a pleasing captivity, but it is a destroying one, it is worse than Egyptian slavery."

2. Divers arguments Solomon here urges to enforce this caution against the sin of whoredom.

(1.) It is a sin that impoverishes men, wastes their estates, and reduces them to beggary (v. 26): "*By means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread*." Many a man has been so, who has purchased the ruin of his body and soul at the expense of his wealth. The prodigal son spent his living on harlots, so that he brought himself to be fellow-commoner with the swine. And that poverty must needs lie heavily upon men bring themselves into by their own folly Job xxxi. 12.

(2.) It threatens death; it kills men: "*The adulteress will hunt for the precious life, perhaps designedly, as Delilah for Samson's*." At least, eventually, the sin strikes at the life. Adultery was punished by the law of Moses as a capital crime. *The adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death*. Every one knew this. Those therefore who, for the gratifying of a base lust, would lay themselves open to the law, could be reckoned no better than self-murderers.

(3.) It brings guilt upon the conscience and debauches that. He that touches his neighbour's wife, with an immodest touch

cannot be innocent, v. 29. [1.] He is in imminent danger of adultery, as he that *takes fire in his bosom, or goes upon hot coals*, is in danger of being burnt. The way of this sin is down-hill, and those that venture upon the temptations to it hardly escape the sin itself. The fly fools away her life by playing the wanton with the flames. It is a deep pit, which it is madness to venture upon the brink of. He that keeps company with those of ill fame, that goes in with them, and touches them, cannot long preserve his innocency; he thrusts himself into temptation and so throws himself out of God's protection. [2.] He that commits adultery is in the high road to destruction. The bold presumptuous sinner says, "I may venture upon the sin and yet escape the punishment; I shall have peace though I go on." He might as well say, *I will take fire into my bosom and not burn my clothes, or I will go upon hot coals and not burn my feet. He that goes in to his neighbour's wife*, however he holds himself, God will not hold him guiltless. The fire of lust kindles the fire of hell.

(4.) It ruins the reputation and entails perpetual infamy upon that. It is a much more scandalous sin than stealing is, v. 30—33. Perhaps it is not so in the account of men, at least not in our day. A thief is sent to the stocks, to the gaol, to Bridewell, to the galows, while the vile adulterer goes unpunished, nay, with many, unblemished; he dares boast of his villanies, and they are made but jest of. But, in the account of God and his angels, adultery was much the more enormous crime; and, if God is the fountain of honour, his word must be the standard of it. [1.] As for the sin of stealing, if a man were brought to it by extreme necessity, if he stole meat for the *satisfying of his soul when he was hungry*, though that will not excuse him from guilt, yet it is such an extenuation of his crime that men do not despise him, do not expose him to ignominy, but pity him. Hunger will break through stone-walls, and blame will be laid upon those that brought him to poverty, or that did not relieve him. Nay, though he have not that to say in his excuse, *if he be found stealing*, and the evidence be ever so plain upon him, yet he shall only make restitution seven-fold. The law of Moses appointed that he who stole a sheep should restore four-fold, and an ox five-fold (Exod. xxii. 1); accordingly David adjudged, 1 Sam. xii. 6. But we may suppose in those cases concerning which the law had not made provision the judges afterwards settled the penalties in proportion to the crimes, according to the equity of the law. Now, if he that stole an ox out of a man's field must restore five-fold, it was reasonable that he that stole a man's goods out of his house should restore even-fold; for there was no law to put him to death, as with us, for burglary and robbery on the highway, and of this worst kind of theft Solomon here speaks; the greatest

punishment was that a man might be forced to give all the substance of his house to satisfy the law and his blood was not attained. But, [2.] Committing adultery is a more heinous crime; Job calls it so, and an *iniquity to be punished by the judge*, Job xxxi. 11. When Nathan would convict David of the evil of his adultery he did it by a parable concerning the most aggravated theft, which, in David's judgment, deserved to be punished with death (2 Sam. xii. 5), and then showed him that his sin was *more exceedingly sinful* than that. *First*, It is a greater reproach to a man's reason, for he cannot excuse it, as a thief may, by saying that it was to satisfy his hunger, but must own that it was to gratify a brutish lust which would break the hedge of God's law, not for want, but for wantonness. Therefore *whoso commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding*, and deserves to be stigmatized as an arrant fool. *Secondly*, It is more severely punished by the law of God. A thief suffered only a pecuniary mulct, but the adulterer suffered death. The thief *steals to satisfy his soul*, but the adulterer *destroys his own soul*, and falls an unpitied sacrifice to the justice both of God and man. "Sinner, thou hast destroyed thyself." This may be applied to the spiritual and eternal death which is the consequence of sin; *he that does it wounds his conscience*, corrupts his rational power, extinguishes all the sparks of the spiritual life, and exposes himself to the wrath of God for ever, and thus *destroys his own soul*. *Thirdly*, The infamy of it is indelible, v. 33. It will be a wound to his good name, a dishonour to his family, and, though the guilt of it may be done away by repentance, the reproach of it never will, but will stick to his memory when he is gone. David's sin in the matter of Uriah was not only a perpetual blemish upon his own character, but gave occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme his name too.

(5.) It exposes the adulterer to the rage of the jealous husband, whose honour he puts such an affront upon, v. 34, 35. He that touches his neighbour's wife, and is familiar with her, gives him occasion for jealousy, much more he that debauches her, which, if kept ever so secret, might then be *discovered by the waters of jealousy*, Num. v. 12. "When discovered, thou hadst better meet a bear robbed of her whelps than the injured husband, who, in the case of adultery, will be as severe an avenger of his own honour as, in the case of manslaughter, of his brother's blood. If thou art not afraid of the wrath of God, yet be afraid of the *rage of a man*. Such jealousy is; it is *strong as death and cruel as the grave*. In the day of vengeance, when the adulterer comes to be tried for his life, the prosecutor will not spare any pains or cost in the prosecution, will not relent towards thee, as he would perhaps towards one that had robbed him. He will not accept of any commutation, any composition;

he will not regard any ransom. Though thou offer to bribe him, and give him many gifts to pacify him, he will not rest content with any thing less than the execution of the law. Thou must be stoned to death. If a man would give all the substance of his house, it would atone for a theft (v. 31), but not for adultery; in that case it would utterly be contemned. Stand in awe therefore, and sin not; expose not thyself to all this misery for a moment's sordid pleasure, which will be bitterness in the end."

CHAP. VII.

The scope of this chapter is, as of several before, to warn young men against the lusts of the flesh. Solomon remembered of what ill consequence it was to his father, perhaps found himself, and perceived his son, addicted to it, or at least had observed how many hopeful young men among his subjects had been ruined by those lusts; and therefore he thought he could never say enough to dissuade men from them, that "every one may possess his vessel in sanctification and honour, and not in the lusts of uncleanness." In this chapter we have, I. A general exhortation to get our minds principled and governed by the word of God, as a sovereign antidote against this sin, ver. 1-6. II. A particular representation of the great danger which unwary young men are in of being inveigled into this snare, ver. 6-23. III. A serious caution inferred thence, in the close, to take heed of all approaches towards this sin, ver. 24-27. We should all pray, "Lord, lead us not into this temptation."

MY son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee. 2 Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye. 3 Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart. 4 Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister; and call understanding thy kinswoman: 5 That they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger which flattereth with her words.

These verses are an introduction to his warning against fleshly lusts, much the same with that, ch. vi. 20, &c., and ending (v. 5) as that did (v. 24), *To keep thee from the strange woman*; that is it he aims at; only there he had said, *Keep thy father's commandment*, here (which comes all to one), *Keep my commandments*, for he speaks to us as unto sons. He speaks in God's name; for it is God's commandments that we are to keep, his words, his law. The word of God must be to us, 1. As that which we are most careful of. We must keep it as our treasure; we must lay up God's commandments with us, lay them up safely, that we may not be robbed of them by the wicked one, v. 1. We must keep it as our life: *Keep my commandments and live* (v. 2), not only, "Keep them, and you shall live;" but, "Keep them as you would your life, as those that cannot live without them." It would be death to a good man to be deprived of the word of God, for by it he lives, and not by bread alone. 2. As that which we are most tender of: *Keep my law as the apple of thy eye*. A little thing offends the eye, and therefore nature has so well guarded it. We pray, with David, that God would keep us as the apple of his eye (Ps. xvii. 8),

that our lives and comforts may be precious in his sight; and they shall be so (Zech. ii. 8) if we be in like manner tender of his law and afraid of the least violation of it. Those who reproach strict and circumspect walking, a needless preciseness, consider not that the law is to be kept as the apple of the eye, for indeed it is the apple of our eye; the law is light; the law in the heart is the eye of the soul. 3. As that which we are proud of and would be ever mindful of (v. 3): "*Bind them upon thy fingers*"; let them be precious to thee; look upon them as an ornament, as a diamond-ring, as the signet on thy right hand wear them continually as thy wedding-ring the badge of thy espousals to God. Look upon the word of God as putting an honour upon thee, as an ensign of thy dignity. Bind them on thy fingers, that they may be constant memorandums to thee of thy duty, that thou mayest have them always in view, and that which is graven upon the palms of thy hands." 4. As that which we are fond of and are ever thinking of. Write them upon the table of thy heart, as the names of thy friends we dearly love, we say, are written in our hearts. Let the word of God dwell richly in us, and be written there where it will be always at hand to be read. Where sin was written (Jer. xvii. 1) let the word of God be written. It is the matter of a promise (Heb. viii. 10), *I will write my law in their hearts*, which makes the precept practicable and easy. 5. As that which we are intimately acquainted and conversant with (v. 4): "*Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister*, whom I dearly love and take delight in; and call understanding thy kinswoman, to whom thou art nearly allied, and for whom thou hast a pure affection; call her thy friend, whom thou courtest. We must make the word of God familiar to us, consult it, and consult its honour, and take a pleasure in conversing with it. 6. As that which we make use of for our defence and armour, to keep us from the strange woman, from sin, that flattering but destroying thing, that adulteress; particularly from the sin of uncleanness, v. 5. Let the word of God confirm our dread of that sin and our resolutions against it; let it discover to us its fallacies and suggest to us answers to all its flatteries.

6 For at the window of my house I beheld through my casement, 7 And discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding, 8 Passing through the street near her corner; and he went the way to her house, 9 In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night: 10 And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of a harlot, and subtil of heart. 11 (She is loud and stubborn

her feet abide not in her house: 12 Now is *she* without, now in the streets, and lieth in wait at every corner.) 13 So she caught him, and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him, 14 *I have* peace offerings with me; this day have I paid my vows. 15 Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee. 16 I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved *works*, with fine linen of Egypt. 17 I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. 18 Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning: let us solace ourselves with loves. 19 For the good man is not at home, he is gone a long journey: 20 He hath taken a bag of money with him, and will come home at the day appointed. 21 With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him. 22 He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; 23 Till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life.

Solomon here, to enforce the caution he had given against the sin of whoredom, tells the story of a young man that was ruined to all intents and purposes by the enticements of an adulterous woman. Such a story as this would serve the lewd profane poets of our age to make a play of, and the harlot with them would be a heroine; nothing could be so entertaining to the audience, or give them so much diversion, as her arts of beguiling the young gentleman and drawing in the country squire; her conquests would be celebrated as the triumphs of wit and love, and the comedy would conclude very pleasantly; and every young man that saw it acted would covet to be so picked up. Thus *fools make a mock at sin*. But Solomon here relates it, and all wise and good men read it, as a very melancholy story. The impudence of the adulterous woman is very justly looked upon, by all that have any sparks of virtue in them, with the highest indignation, and the easiness of the young man with the tenderest compassion; and the story concludes with sad reflections, enough to make all that read and hear it afraid of the snares of fleshly lusts and careful to keep at the utmost distance from them. It is supposed to be a parable, or imagined case, but I doubt it was too true, and, which is

worse, that notwithstanding the warning it gives of the fatal consequences of such wicked courses it is still too often true, and the agents for hell are still playing the same game and with similar success.

Solomon was a magistrate, and, as such, inspected the manners of his subjects, looked often through his casement, that he might see with his own eyes, and made remarks upon those who little thought his eye was upon them, that he might know the better how to make the sword he bore a terror to evil-doers. But here he writes as a minister, a prophet, who is by office a watchman, to give warning of the approach of the enemies, and especially where they lie in ambush, that we may not be ignorant of Satan's devices, but may know where to double our guard. This Solomon does here, where we may observe the account he gives,

I. Of the person tempted, and how he laid himself open to the temptation, and therefore must thank himself if it end in his destruction. 1. He was a *young man*, v. 7. Fleshly lusts are called *youthful lusts* (2 Tim. ii. 22), not to extenuate them as tricks of youth, and therefore excusable, but rather to aggravate them, as robbing God of the first and best of our time, and, by debauching the mind when it is tender, laying a foundation for a bad life ever after, and to intimate that young people ought in a special manner to fortify their resolutions against this sin. 2. He was a young man *void of understanding*, that went abroad into the world, not principled as he ought to have been with wisdom and the fear of God, and so ventured to sea without ballast, without pilot, cord, or compass; he knew not how to depart from evil, which is the best understanding, Job xxviii. 28. Those become an easy prey to Satan who, when they have arrived to the stature of men, have scarcely the understanding of children. 3. He kept bad company. He was a *young man among the youths*, a silly young man *among the simple ones*. If, being conscious of his own weakness, he had associated with those that were older and wiser than himself, there would have been hopes of him. Christ, at twelve years old, conversed with the doctors, to set young people an example of this. But, if those that are simple choose such for their companions as are like themselves, simple they will still be, and hardened in their simplicity. 4. He was sauntering, and had nothing to do, but *passed through the street* as one that knew not how to dispose of himself. One of the sins of filthy Sodom was *abundance of idleness*, Ezek. xvi. 49. He went in a starched stately manner, so (it is said) the word signifies. He appeared to be a nice formal fop, the top of whose accomplishments was to dress well and walk with a good air; fit game for that bird of prey to fly at. 5. He was a night-walker, that hated and scorned the business that is to be done

by day-light, from which the evening calls men in to their repose; and, having fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, he begins to move in the twilight in the evening, v. 9. And he chooses the black and dark night as fittest for his purpose, not the moonlight nights, when he might be discovered. 6. He steered his course towards the house of one that he thought would entertain him, and that he might be merry with; he went near her corner, the way to her house (v. 8), contrary to Solomon's advice (ch. v. 8), *Come not nigh the door of her house*. Perhaps he did not know it was the way to an infamous house, but, however, it was a way that he had no business in; and when we have nothing to do the devil will quickly find us something to do. We must take heed, not only of idle days, but of idle evenings, lest they prove inlets to temptation.

II. Of the person tempting, not a common prostitute, for she was a married wife (v. 19), and, for aught that appears, lived in reputation among her neighbours, not suspected of any such wickedness, and yet, in the twilight of the evening, when her husband was abroad, abominably impudent. She is here described, 1. By her dress. She had the attire of a harlot (v. 10), gaudy and flaunting, to set her off as a beauty; perhaps she was painted as Jezebel, and went with her neck and breasts bare, loose, and *en deshabile*. The purity of the heart will show itself in the modesty of the dress, which becomes women professing godliness. 2. By her craft and management. She is subtle of heart, mistress of all the arts of wheedling, and knowing how by all her caresses to serve her own base purposes. 3. By her temper and carriage. She is loud and stubborn, talkative and self-willed, noisy and troublesome, wilful and headstrong, all tongue, and will have her saying, right or wrong, impatient of check and control, and cannot bear to be counselled, much less reprov'd, by husband or parents, ministers or friends. She is a daughter of Belial, that will endure no yoke. 4. By her place, not her own house; she hates the confinement and employment of that; her feet abide not there any longer than needs must. She is all for gadding abroad, changing place and company. Now is she without in the country, under pretence of taking the air, now in the streets of the city, under pretence of seeing how the market goes. She is here, and there, and every where but where she should be. She lies in wait at every corner, to pick up such as she can make a prey of. Virtue is a penance to those to whom home is a prison.

III. Of the temptation itself and the management of it. She met the young spark. Perhaps she knew him; however she knew by his fashions that he was such a one as she wished for; so she caught him about the neck and kissed him, contrary to all the rules of modesty (v. 13), and waited not for his com-

pliments or courtship, but with an impudent face invited him not only to her house, but to her bed.

1. She courted him to sup with her (v. 14): *I have peace-offerings with me*. Hereb she gives him to understand, (1.) Her prosperity, that she was compassed about with many blessings that she had occasion to offer peace-offerings, in token of joy and thankfulness; she was before-hand in the world, so that he needed not fear having his pocket picked. (2.) Her profession of piety. She had been to-day at the temple, and was as well respected there as any that worshipped in the courts of the Lord. She had paid her vows, and, as she thought, made all even with God Almighty, and therefore might venture upon a new score of sins. Note, The external performances of religion, if they do not harden men against sin, harden them in it, and embolden carnal hearts to venture upon it, in hopes that when they come to count and discount with God he will be found as much in debt to them for their peace-offerings and their vows as they to him for their sins. But it is sad that a show of piety should become the shelter of iniquity (which really doubles the shame of it, and makes it more exceedingly sinful) and that men should baffle their consciences with those very things that should startle them. The Pharisee made long prayers, that they might the more plausibly carry on their covetous and malicious designs. (3.) Her present plenty of good provisions. The greatest part of the flesh of the peace-offerings was by the law returned back to the offerers, to feast upon with their friends, which (if they were peace-offerings of thanksgiving) was to be all eaten the same day and none of it left until the morning, Lev. vii. 15. This law of charity and generosity is abused to be a colour for gluttony and excess: "Come," says she, "come home with me, for I have good cheer enough, and only want good company to help me off with it." It was a pity that the peace-offerings should thus become, in a base sense, sin-offerings, and that what was designed for the honour of God should become the food and fuel of a base lust. But this is not all. (4.) To strengthen the temptation [1.] She pretends to have a very great affection for him above any man: "Therefore because I have a good supper upon the table, I came forth to meet thee, for no friend in the world shall be so welcome to it as thou shalt." v. 15. Thou art he whom I came on purpose to seek, to seek diligently, came myself, and would not send a servant." Surely he cannot deny her his company when she put such a value upon it, and would take all this pains to obtain the favour of it. Sinners take pains to do mischief, and are as the roaring lion himself; they go about seeking to devour, and yet pretend they are seeking to oblige. [2.] She would have it thought that Providence itself countenanced her choice of him for be-

companion; for how quickly had she found him whom she sought!

2. She courted him to lie with her. They will sit down to eat and drink, and then rise up to play, to play the wanton, and there is bed ready for them, where he shall find that which will be in all respects agreeable to him. To please his eye, it is *decked with coverings of tapestry and carved works*, exquisitely fine; he never saw the like. To please his touch, the sheets are not of home-spun cloth; they are far-fetched and dear bought; they are of *fine linen of Egypt*, v. 16. To gratify his smell, it is *perfumed with the sweetest scents*, v. 17. Come, therefore, and *let us take our fill of love*, v. 18. Of love, does she say? Of *lust* she means, brutish lust; but it is a pity that the name of love should be thus abused. True love is from heaven; this is from hell. How can those pretend to solace themselves and love one another who are really ruining themselves and one another?

3. She anticipated the objection which he might make of the danger of it. Is she not another man's wife, and what if her husband should catch them in adultery, in the very act? he will make them pay dearly for their sport, and where will the solace of their love be then? "Never fear," says she, "*the good man is not at home*" (v. 19); she does not call him her husband, for she *forakes the guide of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God*; but "*the good man of the house, whom I am weary off*." Thus Potiphar's wife, when she spoke of her husband, would not call him so, but *he*, Gen. xxxix. 14. It is therefore with good reason taken notice of, to Sarah's praise, that she spoke respectfully of her husband, calling him *lord*. She pleases herself with this that he is not at home, and therefore she is melancholy if she have not some company, and therefore whatever company she has she may be free with them, for she is from under his eye, and he shall never know. But will he not return quickly? No: "*he has gone a long journey, and cannot return on a sudden; he appointed the day of his return, and he never comes home sooner than he says he will. He has taken a bag of money with him, either,*" (1.) "To trade with, to buy goods with, and he will not return till he has laid it all out. It is a pity that an honest industrious man should be thus abused, and advantage taken of his absence, when it is upon business, for the good of his family. Or, (2.) "To spend and revel with." Whether justly or not, she insinuates that he was a bad husband; so she would represent him, because she was resolved to be a bad wife, and must have that for an excuse; it is often groundlessly suggested, but is never a sufficient excuse. "He follows his pleasures, and wastes his estate abroad" (says she), "and why should not I do the same at home?"

IV. Of the success of the temptation. Promising the young man every thing that was pleasant, and impunity in the enjoyment, she gained her point, v. 21. It should seem, the youth, though very simple, had no ill design, else a word, a beck, a wink, would have served, and there would have been no need of all this harangue; but though he did not intend any such thing, nay, had something in his conscience that opposed it, yet *with her much fair speech she caused him to yield*. His corruptions at length triumphed over his convictions, and his resolutions were not strong enough to hold out against such artful attacks as these, but *with the flattery of her lips she forced him*; he could not stop his ear against such a charmer, but surrendered himself her captive. Wisdom's maidens, who plead her cause, and have reason on their side, and true and divine pleasures to invite men to, have a deaf ear turned to them, and with all their rhetoric cannot compel men to come in, but such is the dominion of sin in the hearts of men that its allurements soon prevail by falsehood and flattery. With what pity does Solomon here look upon this foolish young man, when he sees him follow the adulterous woman! (1.) He gives him up for gone; alas! he is undone. He goes to the slaughter (for houses of uncleanness are slaughter-houses to precious souls); a dart will presently *strike through his liver*; going without his breast-plate, he will receive his death's wound, v. 23. It is his life, his precious life, that is thus irrecoverably thrown away, he is perfectly lost to all good; his conscience is debauched; a door is opened to all other vices, and this will certainly end in his endless damnation. (2.) That which makes his case the more piteous is that he is not himself aware of his misery and danger; he goes blindfold, nay, he goes laughing to his ruin. The ox thinks he is led to the pasture when he is led to the slaughter; *the fool* (that is, the drunkard, for, of all sinners, drunkards are the greatest fools, they wilfully turn themselves into fools) is led to *the correction of the stocks*, and is not sensible of the shame of it, but goes to it as if he were going to a play. The *bird* that *hastes to the snare* looks only at the bait, and promises herself a good bit from that, and considers not that *it is for her life*. Thus this unthinking unwary young man dreams of nothing but the pleasures he shall have in the embraces of the harlot, while really he is running headlong upon his ruin. Though Solomon does not here tell us that he put the law in execution against this base harlot, yet we have no reason to think but that he did, he was himself so affected with the mischief she did and had such an indignation at it.

24 Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth. 25 Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray

in her paths. 26 For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her. 27 Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.

We have here the application of the foregoing story: "*Hearken to me therefore, and not to such seducers (v. 24); give ear to a father, and not to an enemy.*" 1. "Take good counsel when it is given you. *Let not thy heart decline to her ways (v. 25); never leave the paths of virtue, though strait and narrow, solitary and up-hill, for the way of the adulteress, though green, and broad, and crowded with company. Do not only keep thy feet from those ways, but let not so much as thy heart incline to them; never harbour a disposition this way, nor think otherwise than with abhorrence of such wicked practices as these. Let reason, and conscience, and the fear of God ruling in the heart, check the inclinations of the sensual appetite. If thou goest in her paths, in any of the paths that lead to this sin, thou goest astray, thou art out of the right way, the safe way; therefore take heed, go not astray, lest thou wander endlessly.*" 2. "Take fair warning when it is given you." (1.) "Look back, and see what mischief this sin has done. The adulteress has been the ruin not of here and there one, but she has *cast down many wounded.*" Thousands have been undone, now and for ever, by this sin; and those not only the weak and simple youths, such as he was of whom he had now spoken, but *many strong men have been slain by her, v. 26.* Herein, perhaps, he has an eye especially to Samson, who was slain by this sin, and perhaps to David too, who by this sin entailed a sword upon his house, though so far the Lord took it away that he himself should not die. These were men not only of great bodily strength, but of eminent wisdom and courage, and yet their fleshly lusts prevailed over them. *Howl, fir-trees, if the cedars be shaken. Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.* (2.) "Look forward with an eye of faith, and see what will be in the end of it," v. 27. Her house, though richly decked and furnished, and called a *house of pleasure*, is the *way to hell*; and her chambers are the stair-case that goes down to the *chambers of death* and everlasting darkness. The cup of fornication must shortly be exchanged for the cup of trembling; and the flames of lust, if not quenched by repentance and mortification, will burn to the lowest hell. Therefore *stand in awe and sin not.*

CHAP. VIII.

The word of God is two-fold, and, in both senses, is wisdom; for a word without wisdom is of little value, and wisdom without a word is of little use. Now, I. Divine revelation is the word and wisdom of God, and that pure religion and undefiled which is built upon it; and of that Solomon here speaks, recommending it to us as faithful, and well worthy of all acceptance, ver. 1.—21. God, by it, instructs, and governs, and blesses, the children of men. II. The Redeemer is the eternal Word and wisdom, the Logos. He is the Wisdom that speaks to the children of men in the former part of the chapter. All divine revelation

passes through his hand, and centres in him; but of him as the personal Wisdom, the second person in the Godhead, in the judgment of many of the ancients, Solomon here speaks, ver. 22—31. He concludes with a repeated charge to the children of men diligently to attend to the voice of God in his word, 32—36.

DOETH not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice? 2 She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths. 3 She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming at the doors. 4 Unto you, O men, call; and my voice is to the sons of man. 5 O ye simple, understand wisdom: and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart. 6 Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things. 7 For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips. 8 All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them. 9 They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge. 10 Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold. 11 For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it.

The will of God revealed to us for our salvation is here largely represented to us as easy to be known and understood, that none may have an excuse for their ignorance or error, and as worthy to be embraced, that none may have an excuse for their carelessness and unbelief.

I. The things revealed are easy to be known, for they *belong to us and to our children* (Deut. xxix. 29), and we need not soar up to heaven, or dive into the depths, to get the knowledge of them (Deut. xxx. 11), for they are published and proclaimed in some measure the works of the creation (Ps. xix. 1), more fully by the consciences of men and the eternal reasons and rules of good and evil, but most clearly by Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. The precepts of wisdom may easily be known; for, 1. They are proclaimed aloud (v. 1): *Does not Wisdom cry? Yes, she cries aloud, and does not spare* (Isa. lviii. 1); she *puts forth her voice*, as one in earnest and desirous to be heard. *Jesus stood and cried*, John vii. 37. The curses and blessings were read with a loud voice by the Levites, Deut. xxvii. 14. And men's own hearts sometimes speak aloud to them; there are clamours of conscience, as well as whispers. 2. They are proclaimed from on high (v. 2): *She stands in the top of high places*; it was from the top of Mount Sinai that the law was given, and Christ expounded it in a

sermon upon the mount. Nay, if we slight divine revelation, we *turn away from him that speaks from heaven*, a high place indeed, Heb. xii. 25. The adulterous woman spoke in secret, the oracles of the heathen muttered, but Wisdom speaks openly; truth seeks no corners, but gladly appeals to the light. 3. They are proclaimed in the *places of concourse*, where multitudes are gathered together, the more the better. Jesus spoke in the *synagogues and in the temple, whither the Jews always resorted*, John xviii. 20. Every man that passes by on the road, of what rank or condition soever, may know what is good, and what the Lord requires of him, if it be not his own fault. There is no speech nor language where Wisdom's voice is not heard; her discoveries and directions are given to all promiscuously. *He that has ears to hear, let him hear.* 4. They are proclaimed where they are most needed. They are intended for the guide of our way, and therefore are published in the *places of the paths*, where many ways meet, that travellers may be shown, if they will but ask, which is the right way, just then when they are at a loss; thou shalt then *hear the word behind thee, saying, This is the way*, Isa. xxx. 21. The foolish man *knows not how to go to the city* Eccl. x. 15, and therefore Wisdom stands ready to direct him, stands *at the gates, at the entry of the city*, ready to tell him where the seer's house is, 1 Sam. ix. 18. Nay, she follows men to their own houses, and cries to them *at the coming in at the doors*, saying, *Peace be to this house; and, if the son of peace be here, it shall certainly abide upon it.* God's ministers are appointed to testify to people both publicly and from house to house. Their own consciences follow them with admonitions wherever they go, which they cannot be out of the hearing of while they carry their own heads and hearts about with them, which are a law unto themselves. 5. They are directed to the children of men. We attend to that discourse in which we hear ourselves named, though otherwise we should have neglected it; therefore Wisdom speaks to us: "*Unto you, O men! I call* (v. 4), not to angels (they need not these instructions), not to devils (they are past them), not to the brute-creatures (they are not capable of them), but *to you, O men!* who are taught more than the beasts of the earth and made wiser than the fowls of heaven. To you is this law given, to you is the word of this invitation, this exhortation sent. *My voice is to the sons of men*, who are concerned to receive instruction, and to whom, one would think, it should be very welcome. It is not, to you, O Jews! only, but to you, O scholars! but to you, O men! *O sons of men!* even the meanest." 6. They are designed to make them wise (v. 5); they are calculated not only for men that are capable of wisdom, but for sinful men, fallen men, foolish men, that need it, and are undone without it: "*O you simple ones! understand wisdom.*

Though you are ever so simple, Wisdom will take you for her scholars, and not only so, but, if you will be ruled by her, will undertake to give you *an understanding heart.*" When sinners leave their sins, and become truly religious, then the *simple understand wisdom.*

II. The things revealed are worthy to be known, well worthy of all acceptance. We are concerned to hear; for, 1. They are of inestimable value. They are *excellent things* (v. 6), *princely things*, so the word is. Though they are level to the capacity of the meanest, yet there is that in them which will be entertainment for the greatest. They are divine and heavenly things, so excellent that, in comparison with them, all other learning is but children's play. Things which relate to an eternal God, an immortal soul, and an everlasting state, must needs be *excellent things.* 2. They are of incontestable equity, and carry along with them the evidence of their own goodness. They are *right things* (v. 6), *all in righteousness* (v. 8), and *nothing froward or perverse in them.* All the dictates and directions of revealed religion are consonant to, and perfective of, the light and law of nature, and there is nothing in them that puts any hardship upon us, that lays us under any undue restraints, unbecoming the dignity and liberty of the human nature, nothing that we have reason to complain of. *All God's precepts concerning all things are right.* 3. They are of unquestionable truth. Wisdom's doctrines, upon which her laws are founded, are such as we may venture our immortal souls upon: *My mouth shall speak truth* (v. 7), the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, for it is a testimony to the world. Every word of God is true; there are not so much as pious frauds in it, nor are we imposed upon in that which is told us for our good. Christ is a faithful witness, is the truth itself; *wickedness* (that is, lying) *is an abomination to his lips.* Note, Lying is wickedness, and we should not only refrain from it, but it should be an abomination to us, and as far from what we say as from what God says to us. His word to us is *yea, and amen*; never then let ours be *yea and nay.* 4. They are wonderfully acceptable and agreeable to those who take them aright, who understand themselves aright, who have not their judgments blinded and biassed by the world and the flesh, are not under the power of prejudice, are taught of God, and whose understanding he has opened, who impartially *seek knowledge*, take pains for it, and have found it in the enquiries they have hitherto made. To them, (1.) They are all *plain*, and not hard to be understood. If the book is sealed, it is to those who are willingly ignorant. *If our gospel is hidden, it is hidden to those who are lost*; but to those who *depart from evil, which is understanding*, who have that *good understanding* which those have who *do the commandments*, to them *they are all plain* and there is nothing difficult in them. The way of reli-

gion is a highway, and *the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein*, Isa. xxxv.

8. Those therefore do a great wrong to the common people who deny them the use of the scripture under pretence that they cannot understand it, whereas it is plain for plain people. (2.) They are all *right*, and not hard to be submitted to. Those who discern things that differ, who know good and evil, readily subscribe to the rectitude of all Wisdom's dictates, and therefore, without murmuring or disputing, govern themselves by them.

III. From all this he infers that the right knowledge of those things, such as transforms us into the image of them, is to be preferred before all the wealth of this world (v. 10, 11): *Receive my instruction, and not silver*. Instruction must not only be heard, but received. We must bid it welcome, receive the impressions of it, and submit to the command of it; and this *rather than choice gold*, that is, 1. We must prefer religion before riches, and look upon it that, if we have the knowledge and fear of God in our hearts, we are really more happy and better provided for every condition of life than if we had ever so much silver and gold. *Wisdom is in itself, and therefore must be in our account, better than rubies*. It will bring us in a better price, be to us a better portion; show it forth, and it will be a better ornament than jewels and precious stones of the greatest value. Whatever we can sit down and wish for of the wealth of this world would, if we had it, be unworthy to be compared with the advantages that attend serious godliness. 2. We must be dead to the wealth of this world, that we may the more closely and earnestly apply ourselves to the business of religion. We must receive instruction as the main matter, and then be indifferent whether we receive silver or no; nay, we must not receive it as our portion and reward, as the rich man in his life-time *received his good things*.

12 I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions. 13 The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate. 14 Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength. 15 By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. 16 By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth. 17 I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me. 18 Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness. 19 My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver. 20 I lead

in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment: 21 That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures.

Wisdom here is Christ, *in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*; it is Christ in the word and Christ in the heart, not only Christ revealed to us, but Christ revealed in us. It is the word of God, the whole compass of divine revelation; it is God the Word, in whom all divine revelation centres; it is the soul formed by the word; it is Christ formed in the soul; it is religion in the purity and power of it. Glorious things are here spoken of this excellent person, this excellent thing.

I. Divine wisdom gives men good heads (v. 12): *I Wisdom dwell with prudence*, not with carnal policy (the wisdom that is from above is contrary to that, 2 Cor. i. 12), but with true discretion, which serves for the right ordering of the conversation, that wisdom of the prudent which is to *understand his way* and is in all cases *profitable to direct*, the wisdom of the serpent, not only to guard from harm, but to guide in doing good. *Wisdom dwells with prudence*; for prudence is the product of religion and an ornament to religion; and there are more *witty inventions* found out with the help of the scripture, both for the right understanding of God's providences and for the effectual countermining of Satan's devices and the doing of good in our generation, than were ever discovered by the learning of the philosophers or the politics of statesmen. We may apply it to Christ himself; he *dwells with prudence*, for his whole undertaking is the *wisdom of God in a mystery*, and in it God *abounds towards us in all wisdom and prudence*. Christ *found out the knowledge of that great invention*, and a costly one it was to him, man's salvation, by his satisfaction, an admirable expedient. We had found out many inventions for our ruin; he found out one for our recovery. The covenant of grace is so well ordered in all things that we must conclude that he who ordered it *dwelt with prudence*.

II. It gives men good hearts, v. 13. True religion, consisting in the *fear of the Lord*, which is the wisdom before recommended, teaches men, 1. To hate all sin, as displeasing to God and destructive to the soul: *The fear of the Lord is to hate evil, the evil way, to hate sin as sin*, and therefore *to hate every false way*. Wherever there is an awe of God there is a dread of sin, as an evil, as only evil. 2. Particularly to hate pride and passion, those two common and dangerous sins. Conceit- edness of ourselves, *pride and arrogancy*, are sins which Christ hates, and so do all those who have the Spirit of Christ; every one hates them in others, but we must hate them in ourselves. *The froward mouth*, peevish-

ness towards others, God hates, because it is such an enemy to the peace of mankind, and therefore we should hate it. Be it spoken to the honour of religion that, however it is unjustly accused, it is so far from making men conceited and sour that there is nothing more directly contrary to it than pride and passion, nor which it teaches us more to detest.

III. It has a great influence upon public affairs and the well-governing of all societies. r. 14. Christ, as God, has strength and wisdom; wisdom and might are his; as Redeemer, he is the *wisdom of God and the power of God*. To all that are his he is made of God both *strength and wisdom*; in him they are laid up for us, that we may both know and do our duty. He is the wonderful counsellor and gives that grace which alone is *sound wisdom*. He is *understanding* itself, and has *strength* for all those that strengthen themselves in him. True religion gives men the best counsel in all difficult cases, and helps to make their way plain. Wherever it is, it is *understanding*, it has *strength*; it will be all that to us that we need, both for services and sufferings. Where the word of God dwells richly it makes a man *perfect and furnishes him thoroughly for every good word and work*. Kings, princes, and judges, have of all men most need of wisdom and strength, of counsel and courage, for the faithful discharge of the trusts reposed in them, and that they may be blessings to the people over whom they are set. And therefore Wisdom says, *By me kings reign* (v. 15, 16), that is, 1. Civil government is a divine institution, and those that are entrusted with the administration of it have their commission from Christ: it is a branch of his kingly office that *by him kings reign*; from him to whom all judgment is committed their power is derived. They reign by him, and therefore ought to reign for him. 2. Whatever qualifications for government any kings or princes have they are indebted to the grace of Christ for them; he gives them the spirit of government, and they have nothing, no skill, no principles of justice, but what he endues them with. *A divine sentence is in the lips of the king*; and kings are to their subjects what he makes them. 3. Religion is very much the strength and support of the civil government; it teaches subjects their duty, and so *by it kings reign* over them the more easily; it teaches kings their duty, and so *by it kings reign* as they ought; they *decree justice*, while they *rule in the fear of God*. Those rule well whom religion rules.

IV. It will make all those happy, truly happy, that receive and embrace it.

1. They shall be happy in the love of Christ; for he it is that says, *I love those that love me*, r. 17. Those that *love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity* shall be beloved of him with a peculiar distinguishing love: he will *love them and manifest himself to them*.

2. They shall be happy in the success of their enquiries after him: "*Those that seek*

me early, seek an acquaintance with me and an interest in me, seek me early, that is, seek me earnestly, seek me first before any thing else, that begin betimes in the days of their youth to seek me, they shall find what they seek." Christ shall be theirs, and they shall be his. He never said, *Seek in vain*.

3. They shall be happy in the wealth of the world, or in that which is infinitely better. (1.) They shall have as much riches and honour as Infinite Wisdom sees good for them (v. 18); they are *with Christ*, that is, he has them to give, and whether he will see fit to give them to us must be referred to him. Religion sometimes helps to make people rich and great in this world, gains them a reputation, and so increases their estates; and the riches which Wisdom gives to her favourites have these two advantages:—[1.] That they are *riches and righteousness*, riches honestly got, not by fraud and oppression, but in regular ways, and riches charitably used, for alms are called *righteousness*. Those that have their wealth from God's blessing on their industry, and that have a heart to do good with it, have *riches and righteousness*. [2.] That therefore they are *durable riches*. Wealth gotten by vanity will soon be diminished, but that which is well got will wear well and will be left to the children's children, and that which is well spent in works of piety and charity is put out to the best interest and so will be durable; for the friends made by the *mammon of unrighteousness when we fail will receive us into everlasting habitations*, Luke xvi. 9. It will be found after many days, for the days of eternity. (2.) They shall have that which is infinitely better, if they have not riches and honour in this world (v. 19): "*My fruit is better than gold*, and will turn to a better account, will be of more value in less compass, and *my revenue better than the choicest silver*, will serve a better trade." We may assure ourselves that not only Wisdom's products at last, but her income in the mean time, not only her fruit, but her revenue, is more valuable than the best either of the possessions or of the reversions of this world.

4. They shall be happy in the grace of God now; that shall be their guide in the good way, v. 20. This is that fruit of wisdom which is *better than gold, than fine gold*, it *leads us in the way of righteousness*, shows us that way and goes before us in it, the way that God would have us walk in and which will certainly bring us to our desired end. It *leads in the midst of the paths of judgment*, and saves us from deviating on either hand. *In medio virtutis—Virtue lies in the midst*. Christ by his Spirit guides believers into all truth, and so *leads them in the way of righteousness*, and they *walk after the Spirit*.

5. They shall be happy in the glory of God hereafter, v. 21. Therefore Wisdom *leads in the paths of righteousness*, not only that she may keep her friends in the way of duty and

obedience, but that she may cause them to inherit substance and may fill their treasures, which cannot be done with the things of this world, nor with any thing less than God and heaven. The happiness of those that love God, and devote themselves to his service, is substantial and satisfactory. (1.) It is substantial; it is substance itself. It is a happiness which will subsist of itself, and stand alone, without the accidental supports of outward conveniences. Spiritual and eternal things are the only real and substantial things. Joy in God is substantial joy, solid and well-grounded. The promises are their bonds, Christ is their surety, and both substantial. They *inherit substance*; that is, their inheritance hereafter is substantial; it is a weight of glory; it is substance, Heb. x. 34. All their happiness they have as heirs; it is grounded upon their sonship. (2.) It is satisfying; it will not only fill their hands, but *fill their treasures*, not only maintain them, but make them rich. The things of this world may fill men's bellies (Ps. xvii. 14), but not their treasures, for they cannot in them secure to themselves *goods for many years*; perhaps they may be deprived of them *this night*. But let the treasures of the soul be ever so capacious there is enough in God, and Christ, and heaven, to fill them. In Wisdom's promises believers have goods laid up, not for days and years, but for eternity; her fruit therefore is *better than gold*.

22 The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. 23 I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. 24 When *there were* no depths, I was brought forth; when *there were* no fountains abounding with water. 25 Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: 26 While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. 27 When he prepared the heavens, I *was* there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: 28 When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: 29 When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: 30 Then I was by him, *as one brought up with him*: and I was daily *his* delight, rejoicing always before him; 31 Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights *were* with the sons of men.

That it is an intelligent and divine person that here speaks seems very plain, and that it is not meant of a mere essential property of the divine nature, for Wisdom here has personal properties and actions; and that intelligent divine person can be no other than the Son of God himself, to whom the principal things here spoken of wisdom are attributed in other scriptures, and we must explain scripture by itself. If Solomon himself designed only the praise of wisdom as an attribute of God, by which he made the world and governs it, so to recommend to men the study of that wisdom which belongs to them, yet the Spirit of God, who indited what he wrote, carried him, as David often, to such expressions as could agree to no other than the Son of God, and would lead us into the knowledge of great things concerning him. All divine revelation is the *revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him*, and here we are told who and what he is, as God, designed in the eternal counsels to be the Mediator between God and man. The best exposition of these verses we have in the first four verses of St. John's gospel. *In the beginning was the Word, &c.* Concerning the Son of God observe here

I. His personality and distinct subsistence one with the Father and of the same essence and yet a person of himself, whom *the Lord possessed* (v. 22), *who was set up* (v. 23), *was brought forth* (v. 24, 25), *was by him* (v. 30) for he was *the express image of his person* Heb. i. 3.

II. His eternity; he was begotten of the Father, for *the Lord possessed him*, as his own Son, his beloved Son, laid him in his bosom; he was *brought forth as the only-begotten of the Father*, and this *before all worlds*, which is most largely insisted upon here. The Word was eternal, and had a being before the world, before the beginning of time; and therefore it must follow that it was from eternity. *The Lord possessed him in the beginning of his way*, of his eternal counsels, for those were *before his work*. This way indeed had no beginning, for God's purposes in himself are eternal like himself, but God speaks to us in our own language. Wisdom explains herself (v. 23): *I was set up from everlasting*. The Son of God was, in the eternal counsels of God, designed and advanced to be the wisdom and power of the Father, light and life, and all in all, both in the creation and in the redemption of the world. That he was *brought forth* as to his being, and *set up* as to the divine counsels concerning his office, before the world was made, is here set forth in a great variety of expressions, much the same with those by which the eternity of God himself is expressed Ps. xc. 2, *Before the mountains were brought forth*. 1. *Before the earth was*, and that was made *in the beginning*, before man was made; therefore the second Adam had a being before the first, for the first Adam

was made of the earth, the second had a being before the earth, and therefore is not of the earth, John iii. 31. 2. Before the sea was (v. 24), when there were no depths in which the waters were gathered together, no fountains from which those waters might arise, one of that deep on which the Spirit of God moved for the production of the visible creation, Gen. i. 2. 3. Before the mountains were, the everlasting mountains, v. 25. Eliphaz, to convince Job of his inability to judge of the divine counsels, asks him (Job v. 7), *Wast thou made before the hills?* No, thou wast not. But *before the hills was the eternal Word brought forth.* 4. Before the habitable parts of the world, which men cultivate, and reap the profits of (v. 26), the fields in the valleys and plains, to which the mountains are as a wall, which are the *highest part of the dust of the world; the first part of the dust* (so some), the atoms which compose the several parts of the world; *the chief or principal part of the dust*, so it may be read, and understood of man, who was made of the dust of the ground and is dust, but is the principal part of the dust, dust enlivened, dust redeemed. The eternal Word had a being before man was made; for *in him was the life of men.*

III. His agency in making the world. He not only had a being before the world, but he was present, not as a spectator, but as the architect, when the world was made. God lenced and humbled Job by asking him, *Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Who hath laid the measures thereof? (Job xxxviii. 4, &c.)* Wast thou that eternal Word and wisdom, who was the prime manager of that great affair? No; thou art of yesterday." But here the Son of God, referring, as it should seem, to the discourse God had with Job, declares himself to have been engaged in that which Job could not pretend to be a witness of and a worker in, the creation of the world. *By him God made the worlds*, Eph. iii. 9; Heb. i. 2; Col. i. 16. 1. When, on the first day of the creation, in the very beginning of time, God said, *Let there be light*, and with a word produced it, this eternal Wisdom was that almighty Word: *when I was there, when he prepared the heavens*, the fountain of that light, which, whatever it is here, is there substantial. 2. He was no less active when, on the second day, he stretched out the firmament, the vast expanse, and set that as a compass upon the face of the depth (v. 27), surrounded it on all sides with that canopy, that curtain. Or it may refer to the exact order and method with which God framed all the parts of the universe, as the workman marks out his work with his line and compasses. The work in nothing varied from the plan of it formed in the eternal mind. 3. He was also employed on the third day's work, when the *waters above the heavens* were gathered together by *establishing the clouds above*, and those under the heavens by *strengthening the fountains of*

the deep, which send forth those waters (v. 28), and by preserving the bounds of the sea, which is the receptacle of those waters, v. 29. This speaks much the honour of this eternal Wisdom, for by this instance God proves himself a God greatly to be feared (Jer. v. 22) that *he has placed the sand for the bound of the sea*, that the dry land might continue to appear above water, fit to be a habitation for man; and thus he has *appointed the foundation of the earth*. How able, how fit, is the Son of God to be the Saviour of the world, who was the Creator of it!

IV. The infinite complacency which the Father had in him, and he in the Father (v. 30): *I was by him, as one brought up with him.* As by an eternal generation he was brought forth of the Father, so by an eternal counsel he was brought up with him, which intimates, not only the infinite love of the Father to the Son, who is therefore called *the Son of his love* (Col. i. 13), but the mutual consciousness and good understanding that were between them concerning the work of man's redemption, which the Son was to undertake, and about which the *counsel of peace* was between them both, Zech. vi. 13. He was *alumnus patris—the Father's pupil*, as I may say, trained up from eternity for that service which in time, in the fulness of time, he was to go through with, and is therein taken under the special tuition and protection of the Father; he is *my servant whom I uphold*, Isa. xlii. 1. He did what he saw the Father do (John v. 19), pleased his Father, sought his glory, did according to the commandment he received from his Father, and all this *as one brought up with him.* He was *daily his Father's delight* (*my elect, in whom my soul delighteth*, says God, Isa. xlii. 1), and he also *rejoiced always before him.* This may be understood either, 1. Of the infinite delight which the persons of the blessed Trinity have in each other, wherein consists much of the happiness of the divine nature. Or, 2. Of the pleasure which the Father took in the operations of the Son, when he *made the world*; God saw every thing that the Son made, and, *behold, it was very good*, it pleased him, and therefore his Son was *daily*, day by day, during the six days of the creation, upon that account, *his delight*, Exod. xxxix. 43. And the Son also did himself *rejoice before him* in the beauty and harmony of the whole creation, Ps. civ. 31. Or, 3. Of the satisfaction they had in each other, with reference to the great work of man's redemption. The Father delighted in the Son, as Mediator between him and man, was well-pleased with what he proposed (Matt. iii. 17), and *therefore loved him* because he undertook to *lay down his life for the sheep*; he put a confidence in him that he would go through his work, and not fail nor fly off. The Son also *rejoiced always before him*, delighted to do his will (Ps. xl. 8), adhered closely to his undertaking, as one that was well-satisfied in

it, and, when it came to the setting to, expressed as much satisfaction in it as ever, saying, *Lo, I come, to do as in the volume of the book it is written of me.*

V. The gracious concern he had for mankind, *v. 31.* Wisdom rejoiced, not so much in the rich products of the earth, or the treasures hid in the bowels of it, as in the habitable parts of it, for her delights were with the sons of men; not only in the creation of man is it spoken with a particular air of pleasure (*Gen. i. 26.*) *Let us make man,* but in the redemption and salvation of man. The Son of God was ordained, *before the world,* to that great work, *1 Pet. i. 20.* A remnant of the sons of men were given him to be brought, through his grace, to his glory, and these were those in whom his delights were. His church was the habitable part of his earth, made habitable for him, *that the Lord, God might dwell even among those* that had been rebellious; and this he rejoiced in, in the prospect of seeing his seed. Though he foresaw all the difficulties he was to meet with in his work, the services and sufferings he was to go through, yet, because it would issue in the glory of his Father and the salvation of those sons of men that were given him, he looked forward upon it with the greatest satisfaction imaginable, in which we have all the encouragement we can desire to come to him and rely upon him for all the benefits designed us by his glorious undertaking.

32 Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways. 33 Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. 34 Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. 35 For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD. 36 But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.

We have here the application of Wisdom's discourse; the design and tendency of it is to bring us all into an entire subjection to the laws of religion, to make us wise and good, not to fill our heads with speculations, or our tongues with disputes, but to rectify what is amiss in our hearts and lives. In order to this, here is,

I. An exhortation to hear and obey the voice of Wisdom, to attend and comply with the good instructions that the word of God gives us, and in them to discern the voice of Christ, as the sheep know the shepherd's voice.

1. We must be diligent hearers of the word; for how can we believe in him of whom we have not heard? *"Hearken unto me, O ye children!" v. 32.* "Read the word written, sit under the word preached, bless God for

both, and hear him in both speaking to you." Let children in age hearken, for it is their learning age, and what they hearken to then, it is likely, they will be so seasoned by as to be governed by all their days. Let children in relation hearken to God as their Father, to Wisdom as their mother, to whom they ought to be in subjection and live. Let Wisdom's children justify Wisdom by hearkening to her, and show themselves to be indeed her children. We must hear Wisdom's words, (1.) Submissively, and with a willing heart (*v. 33*): *"Hear instruction, and refuse it not,* either as that which you need not or as that which you like not; it is offered you as a kindness, and it is at your peril if you refuse it." Those that reject the counsel of God reject it against themselves, *Luke vii. 30.* "Refuse it not now, lest you should not have another offer." (2.) Constantly, and with an attentive ear. We must hear Wisdom so as to watch daily at her gates, as beggars to receive an alms, as clients and patients to receive advice, and to wait as servants, with humility, and patience, and ready observance, at the posts of her doors. See here what a good house Wisdom keeps, for every day is dole-day; what a good school, for every day is lecture-day. While we have God's works before our eyes, and his word in our hand, we may be every day hearing Wisdom, and learning instruction from her. See here what dutiful and diligent attendance is required of all Christ's disciples; they must watch at the gates. [1.] We must lay hold on all opportunities of getting knowledge and grace, and must get into, and keep in, a constant settled course of communion with God. [2.] We must be very humble in our attendance on divine instructions, and be glad of any place, even the meanest, so we may but be within hearing of them, as David, who would gladly be a door-keeper in the house of God. [3.] We must raise our expectations of these instructions, and hearken to them with care, and patience, and perseverance, must watch and wait, as Christ's hearers, that hanged on him to hear him, as the word in the original is (*Luke xix. 48*) and (*ch. xxi. 38*) *came early in the morning to hear him.*

2. We must be conscientious doers of the work, for we are blessed only in our deed. It is not enough to hearken unto Wisdom's words, but we must keep her ways (*v. 32*), do every thing that she prescribes, keep within the hedges of her ways, and not transgress them, keep in the tracks of her ways, proceed and persevere in them. *"Hear instruction and be wise;* let it be a means to make you wise in ordering your conversation." What we know is known in vain if it do not make us wise, *v. 33.*

II. An assurance of happiness to all those that do hearken to Wisdom. They are blessed *v. 32* and again *v. 34.* Those are blessed that watch and wait at Wisdom's gates; even their attendance there is their happiness; it is the

est place they can be in. Those are blessed that wait there, for they shall not be put to wait long; let them continue to knock awhile and it shall be opened to them. They are seeking Wisdom, and they shall find what they seek. But will it make them amends if they do find it? Yes (v. 35): *Whoso finds me finds life, that is, all happiness, all that good which he needs or can desire. He finds life in that grace which is the principle of spiritual life and the pledge of eternal life. He finds life, for he shall obtain favour of the Lord, and in his favour is life. If the king's favour is towards a wise son, much more the favour of the King of kings. Christ is Wisdom, and he that finds Christ, that obtains an interest in him, he finds life; for Christ is life to all believers. He that has the Son of God has life, eternal life, and he shall obtain favour of the Lord, who is well-pleased with all those that are in Christ; nor can we obtain God's favour, unless we find Christ and be found in him.*

III. The doom passed upon all those that reject Wisdom and her proposals, v. 36. They are left to ruin themselves, and Wisdom will not hinder them, because they have set at naught all her counsel. 1. Their crime is very great; they *sin against Wisdom*, rebel against its light and laws, thwart its designs, and by their folly offend it. They *sin against Christ*; they act in contempt of his authority, and in contradiction to all the purposes of his life and death. This is construed into hating Wisdom, hating Christ; they are his enemies, who will not have him to reign over them. What can appear worse than hating him who is the centre of all beauty and fountain of all goodness, love itself? 2. Their punishment will be very just, for they wilfully bring it upon themselves. (1.) Those that offend Christ do the greatest wrong to themselves; they *wrong their own souls*; they wound their own consciences, bring a blot and stain upon their souls, which renders them odious in the eyes of God, and unfit for communion with him; they deceive themselves, disturb themselves, destroy themselves. Sin is a wrong to the soul. (2.) Those that are at variance with Christ are in love with their own ruin: *those that hate me love death*; they love that which will be their death, and put that from them which would be their life. Sinners die because they will die, which leaves them inexcusable, makes their condemnation the more tolerable, and will for ever justify God when he judges. *O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself.*

CHAP. IX.

Wisdom and sin are rivals for the soul of man, and here we are told how they both make their court to it, to have the innermost and uppermost place in it. The design of this representation is to set before us life and death, good and evil; and there needs no more than a fair stating of the case to determine us which of these to choose, and surrender our hearts to. They are both sought in making entertainment for the soul, and inviting it to accept of the entertainment; concerning both we are told what the issue will be; and, the matter being thus laid before us, let us consider, take advice, and speak our minds. And we are therefore concerned to put a value upon our own souls, because we see there is such striving for them. I. Christ, under the name of Wisdom, invites us to accept of his entertainment, and

so to enter into acquaintance and communion with him, ver. 1-6. And having foretold the different success of his invitation (ver. 7-9) he shows, in short, what he requires from us (ver. 10); and what he designs for us (ver. 11), and then leaves it to our choice what we will do, ver. 12. II. Sin, under the character of a foolish woman, courts us to accept of her entertainment, and (ver. 13-16) pretends it is very charming, ver. 17. But Solomon tells us what the reckoning will be, ver. 18. And now choose you, this day, whom you will close with.

WISDOM hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars: 2 She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table. 3 She hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth upon the highest places of the city, 4 Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: *as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him,* 5 Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine *which I have mingled.* 6 Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding. 7 He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame: and he that rebuketh a wicked *man getteth* himself a blot. 8 Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee. 9 Give *instruction* to a wise *man*, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just *man*, and he will increase in learning. 10 The fear of the **LORD** is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding. 11 For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased. 12 If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself: but *if* thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.

Wisdom is here introduced as a magnificent and munificent queen, very great and very generous; that Word of God is this Wisdom in which God makes known his goodwill towards men; God the Word is this Wisdom, to whom the Father has committed all judgment. He who, in the chapter before, showed his grandeur and glory as the Creator of the world, here shows his grace and goodness as the Redeemer of it. The word is plural, *Wisdoms*; for in Christ are hid treasures of wisdom, and in his undertaking appears the manifold wisdom of God in a mystery. Now observe here,

I. The rich provision which Wisdom has made for the reception of all those that will be her disciples. This is represented under the similitude of a sumptuous feast, whence, it is probable, our Saviour borrowed those parables in which he compared the *kingdom of heaven* to a great supper, Matt. xxii. 2; Luke xiv. 16. And so it was prophesied of Isa. xxv. 6. It is such a feast as Ahasuerus

made to show the riches of his glorious kingdom. The grace of the gospel is thus set before us in the ordinance of the Lord's supper. To bid her guests welcome, 1. Here is a stately palace provided, *v. 1.* Wisdom, not finding a house capacious enough for all her guests, has built one on purpose, and, both to strengthen it and to beautify it, she has hewn out her seven pillars, which make it to be very firm, and look very great. Heaven is the house which Wisdom has built to entertain all her guests that are called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb; that is her Father's house, where there are many mansions, and whither she has gone to prepare places for us. She has hanged the earth upon nothing, therefore in it we have no continuing city; but heaven is a city that has foundations, has pillars. The church is Wisdom's house, to which she invites her guests, supported by the power and promise of God, as by seven pillars. Probably, Solomon refers to the temple which he himself had lately built for the service of religion, and to which he would persuade people to resort, both to worship God and to receive the instructions of Wisdom. Some reckon the schools of the prophets to be here intended. 2. Here is a splendid feast got ready (*v. 2*): *She has killed her beasts; she has mingled her wine*; plenty of meat and drink are provided, and all of the best. *She has killed her sacrifice* (so the word is); it is a sumptuous, but a sacred feast, a feast upon a sacrifice. Christ has offered up himself a sacrifice for us, and it is *his flesh* that is *meat indeed* and *his blood* that is *drink indeed*. The Lord's supper is a feast of reconciliation and joy upon the sacrifice of atonement. The wine is mingled with something richer than itself, to give it a more than ordinary spirit and flavour. *She has completely furnished her table* with all the satisfactions that a soul can desire—righteousness and grace, peace and joy, the assurances of God's love, the consolations of the Spirit, and all the pledges and earnest of eternal life. Observe, It is all Wisdom's own doing; *she has killed the beasts, she has mingled the wine*, which denotes both the love of Christ, who makes the provision (he does not leave it to others, but takes the doing of it into his own hands), and the excellency of the preparation. That must needs be exactly fitted to answer the end which Wisdom herself has the fitting up of.

II. The gracious invitation she has given, not to some particular friends, but to all in general, to come and take part of these provisions. 1. She employs her servants to carry the invitation round about in the country: *She has sent forth her maidens*, *v. 3.* The ministers of the gospel are commissioned and commanded to give notice of the preparations which God has made, in the everlasting covenant, for all those that are willing to come up to the terms of it; and they, with maiden purity, not corrupting themselves or the word

of God, and with an exact observance of the orders, are to call upon all they meet with even in the highways and hedges, to come a feast with Wisdom, for all things are now ready, Luke xiv. 23. 2. She herself comes upon the highest places of the city, as one earnestly desirous of the welfare of the children of men, and grieved to see them reject their own mercies for lying vanities. Lord Jesus was himself the publisher of his own gospel; when he had sent forth his disciples he followed them to confirm what they said; nay, it began to be spoken by the Lord Heb. ii. 3. He stood, and cried, *Come unto me.* We see who invites; now let us observe.

(1.) To whom the invitation is given: *Who is simple and wants understanding*, *v. 4.* We were to make an entertainment, of all people we should not care for, much less could we the company of such, but rather of philosophers and learned men, that we might hear their wisdom, and whose table-talk would be improving. "Have I need of madmen? But Wisdom invites such, because what she has to give is what they most need, and it is for their welfare that she consults, and aims in the preparation and invitation. He that is simple is invited, that he may be made wise, and he that wants a heart (so the word is) let him come hither, and he shall have one. His preparations are rather physic than food, designed for the most valuable and desirable cure, that of the mind. Whosoever hears the invitation is general, and excludes none that do not exclude themselves; though they be ever so foolish, yet, [1.] They shall be welcome. [2.] They may be helped; they shall neither be despised nor despaired of. Our Saviour came, not to call the righteous, but sinners, not the wise in their own eyes, who say they see (John ix. 41), but the simple, those who are sensible of their simplicity and ashamed of it, and him that is willing to become a fool, that he may be wise, 1 Cor. iii. 18.

(2.) What the invitation is. [1.] We are invited to Wisdom's house: *Turn in hither*. I say we are, for which of us is there that must not own the character of the invitee that are simple and want understanding? Wisdom's doors stand open to such, and she is desirous to have some conversation with them, one word for their good, nor has she any other design upon them. [2.] We are invited to her table (*v. 5*): *Come, eat of my bread*, that is, taste of the true pleasures that are to be found in the knowledge and fear of God. By faith acted on the promises of the gospel, applying them to ourselves and taking the comfort of them, we feed, we feast, upon the provisions Christ has made for poor souls. What we eat and drink we make our own, we are nourished and refreshed by it, and so are our souls by the word of God; it has that in it which is meat and drink to those that have understanding.

(3.) What is required of those that m

have the benefit of this invitation, v. 6. [1.] They must break off from all bad company: *Forsake the foolish, converse not with them, conform not to their ways, have no fellowship with the works of darkness, or with those that deal in such works.*" The first step towards virtue is to shun vice, and therefore to shun the vicious. *Depart from me, ye evil-doers.* [2.] They must awake and arise from the dead; they must live, not in pleasure (for those that do so are dead while they live), but in the service of God; for those only that do so live indeed, live to some purpose. "Live not a mere animal-life, as brutes, but now, at length, live the life of men. *Live and you shall live; live spiritually, and you shall live eternally,*" Eph. v. 14. [3.] They must choose the paths of Wisdom, and keep to them: "*Go in the way of understanding; govern thyself henceforward by the rules of religion and right reason.*" It is not enough to forsake the foolish, but we must join ourselves with those that walk in wisdom, and walk in the same spirit and steps.

III. The instructions which Wisdom gives to the maidens she sends to invite, to the ministers and others, who in their places are endeavouring to serve her interests and designs. He tells them,

1. What their work must be, not only to all in general what preparation is made for souls, and to give a general offer of it, but they must address themselves to particular persons, must tell them of their faults, *reprove, rebuke, v. 7, 8.* They must instruct them to amend—*teach, v. 9.* The word of God is intended, and therefore so is the ministry of that word, *for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.*

2. What different sorts of persons they would meet with, and what course they must take with them, and what success they might expect.

(1.) They would meet with some *scorners* and *wicked men* who would mock the messengers of the Lord, and misuse them, would *urge those to scorn* that invite them to the feast of the Lord, as they did, 2 Chron. xxx. 16, would *treat them spitefully*, Matt. xxii. 6. And, though they are not forbidden to invite these simple ones to Wisdom's house, yet they are advised not to pursue the invitation of reproving and rebuking them. *Reprove not a scorner; cast not these pearls before swine, Matt. vii. 6.* Thus Christ said of the Pharisees, *Let them alone*, Matt. xv. 14. "Do not reprove them." [1.] "In justice to them, for those have forfeited the favour of further means who scorn the means they have had. Those that are thus filthy, let them be filthy still; those that are joined to idols, let them alone; lo, we turn to the Gentiles." [2.] "In prudence to yourselves; because, if you reprove them," First, "You lose your labour, and get to yourselves shame for the disappointment." Secondly, "You exasperate them; so it ever so wisely and tenderly, if you do it with fully, they will hate you, they will load

you with reproaches, and say all the ill they can of you, and so you will get a blot; therefore you had better not meddle with them, for your reproofs will be likely to do more hurt than good."

(2.) They would meet with others, who are wise, and good, and just; thanks be to God, all are not scorners. We meet with some who are so wise for themselves, so just to themselves, as to be willing and glad to be taught; and when we meet with such, [1.] If there be occasion, we must reprove them; for wise men are not so perfectly wise but there is that in them which needs a reproof; and we must not connive at any man's faults because we have a veneration for his wisdom, nor must a *wise man* think that his wisdom exempts him from reproof when he says or does any thing foolishly; but the more wisdom a man has the more desirous he should be to have his weaknesses shown him, because a *little folly* is a great blemish to him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour.

[2.] With our reproofs we must give them instruction, and must teach them, v. 9. [3.] We may expect that our doing so will be taken as a kindness, Ps. cxli. 5. A wise man will reckon those his friends who deal faithfully with him: "*Rebuke such a one, and he will love thee* for thy plain dealing, will thank thee, and desire thee to do him the same good turn another time, if there be occasion." It is as great an instance of wisdom to take a reproof well as to give it well. [4.] Being taken well, it will do good, and answer the intention. A *wise man* will be made wiser by the reproofs and instructions that are given him; he will increase in learning, will grow in knowledge, and so grow in grace. None must think themselves too wise to learn, nor so good that they need not be better and therefore need not be taught. We must still press forward, and follow on to know till we come to the perfect man. Give to a *wise man* (so it is in the original), give him advice, give him reproof, give him comfort, and he will be yet wiser; give him occasion (so the LXX.), occasion to show his wisdom, and he will show it, and the acts of wisdom will strengthen the habits.

IV. The instructions she gives to those that are invited, which her maidens must inculcate upon them.

1. Let them know wherein true wisdom consists, and what will be their entertainment at Wisdom's table, v. 10. (1.) The heart must be principled with the fear of God; that is the beginning of wisdom. A reverence of God's majesty, and a dread of his wrath, are that fear of him which is the beginning, the first step towards true religion, whence all other instances of it take rise. This fear may, at first, have torment, but love will, by degrees, cast out the torment of it. (2.) The head must be filled with the knowledge of the things of God. The knowledge of holy things (the word is plural) is under-

standing, the things pertaining to the service of God (those are called *holy things*), that pertain to our own sanctification; reproof is called that *which is holy*, Matt. vii. 6. Or the knowledge which holy men have, which was taught by the holy prophets, of those things which *holy men spoke as they were moved by the holy Ghost*, this is *understanding*; it is the best and most useful understanding, will stand us in most stead and turn to the best account.

2. Let them know what will be the advantages of this wisdom (v. 11): "*By me thy days shall be multiplied.*" It will contribute to the health of thy body, and so *the years of thy life on earth shall be increased*, while men's folly and intemperance shorten their days. It will bring thee to heaven, and there thy days shall be multiplied *in infinitum—to infinity*, and the *years of thy life shall be increased without end.*" There is no true wisdom but in the way of religion and no true life but in the end of that way.

3. Let them know what will be the consequence of their choosing or refusing this fair offer, v. 12. Here is, (1.) The happiness of those that embrace it: "*If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself*"; thou wilt be the gainer by it, not Wisdom." A man cannot be profitable to God. It is to our own good that we are thus courted. "Thou wilt not leave the gain to others" (as we do our worldly wealth when we die, which is therefore called *another man's*, Luke xvi. 12), "but thou shalt carry it with thee into another world." Those that are wise for their souls are wise for themselves, for the soul is the man; nor do any consult their own true interest but those that are truly religious. This recommends us to God, and recovers us from that which is our folly and degeneracy; it employs us in that which is most beneficial in this world, and entitles us to that which is much more so in the world to come. (2.) The shame and ruin of those that slight it: "*If thou scornest Wisdom's proffer, thou alone shalt bear it.*" [1.] "Thou shalt bear the blame of it." Those that are good must thank God, but those that are wicked may thank themselves; it is not owing to God (he is not the author of sin); Satan can only tempt, he cannot force; and wicked companions are but his instruments; so that all the fault must lie on the sinner himself. [2.] "Thou shalt bear the loss of that which thou scornest; it will be to thy own destruction; thy blood will be upon thy own head, and the consideration of this will aggravate thy condemnation. Son, remember, that thou hadst this fair offer made thee, and thou wouldst not accept of it; thou stoodest fair for life, but didst choose death rather."

13 A foolish woman is clamorous: *she is simple*, and knoweth nothing.

14 For she sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of

the city. 15 To call passengers who go right on their ways: 16 Whosoever is simple, let him turn in hither: and for him that wanteth understanding she saith to him, 17 Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. 18 But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that guests are in the depths of hell.

We have heard what Christ has to say, engage our affections to God and godliness, and one would think the whole world should go after him; but here we are told how industrious the tempter is to seduce unwary souls into the paths of sin, and with the more he gains his point, and Wisdom's courtship is not effectual. Now observe,

I. Who is the tempter—a foolish woman. Folly herself, in opposition to Wisdom. Carnal sensual pleasure I take to be especially meant by this *foolish woman* (v. 13); for this is the great enemy to virtue and inlet to vice that defiles and debauches the mind, stupefies conscience, and puts out the sparks of conviction, more than any thing else. The tempter is here described to be, 1. Very ignorant: *She is simple and knows nothing*, that is, she has no sufficient solid reason to offer where she gets dominion in a soul she works out all the knowledge of holy things; they are lost and forgotten. *Whoredom, and wine, and new wine, take away the heart*; they beset men, and make fools of them. (2.) Very importunate. The less she has to offer that is rational the more violent and pressing she is, and carries the day often by dint of impudence. *She is clamorous and noisy* (v. 13) continually haunting young people with her enticements. *She sits at the door of her house* (v. 14), watching for a prey; not as Abraham at his tent-door, seeking an opportunity to do good. *She sits on a seat* (on a throne, so the word signifies) *in the high places of the city*, as if she had authority to give law, and we were all debtors to the flesh, to *after the flesh*, and as if she had reputation and were in honour, and thought worthy *the high places of the city*; and perhaps she gains upon many more by pretending to be fashionable than by pretending to be agreeable. "Do not all persons of rank and figure in the world" (says she) "give themselves greater liberty than the strict laws of virtue allow; and why shouldst thou humble thyself so far as to be cramped by them?" Thus the tempter affects to seem both kind and great.

II. Who are the tempted—young people who have been well educated; these she will triumph most in being the ruin of. Observe 1. What their real character is; they are *passengers that go right on their ways* (v. 15) that have been trained up in the paths of religion and virtue and set out very hopeful and well, that seemed determined and d

igned for good, and are not (as that young man, ch. vii. 8) *going the way to her house*. Such as these she has a design upon, and sets snares for, and uses all her arts, all her arms, to pervert them; if they go right on, and will not look towards her, she will call after them, so urgent are these temptations.

How she represents them. She calls them *pie and wanting understanding*, and therefore courts them to her school, that they may be cured of the restraints and formalities of their religion. This is the method of the *ge* (which is too close an exposition of this parable), where the sober young man, that has been virtuously educated, is the fool in play, and the plot is to make him *seven years more a child of hell* than his profane companions, under colour of polishing and refining him, and setting him up for a wit and a beau. What is justly charged upon *and impiety* (v. 4), that it is folly, is here unjustly retorted upon the ways of virtue; but the day will declare who are the wise.

III. What the temptation is (v. 17): *Stolen waters are sweet*. It is to water and bread, whereas Wisdom invites to the beasts she has killed and the wine she has mingled; however, bread and water are acceptable enough to those that are hungry and thirsty; and this is pretended to be more *sweet and pleasant* than common, for it is *stolen water and bread eaten in secret*, with a fear of being discovered. The pleasures of prohibited things are boasted of as more relishing than those of prescribed love; and dishonest gain is preferred to that which is justly gotten. Now this argues, not only a bold contempt, or an impudent defiance, 1. Of God's law, that the waters are the sweeter for being stolen and come at by breaking through the edge of the divine command. *Nitimur in vitium*—*We are prone to what is forbidden*. It is spirit of contradiction we have from our parents, who thought the forbidden tree all others a tree to be desired. 2. Of God's curse. The bread is eaten in secret, for fear of discovery and punishment, and the sinner takes a pride in having so far baffled his convictions, and triumphed over them, that, notwithstanding that fear, he dares commit the sin, and can make himself believe that, being eaten in secret, it shall never be discovered or reckoned for. Sweetness and pleasantness constitute the bait; but, by the tempter's art showing, even that is so absurd, and has such allays, that it is a wonder how it can have any influence upon men that pretend to be wise.

IV. An effectual antidote against the temptation, in a few words, v. 18. He that far wants understanding as to be drawn in by these enticements is led on, ignorantly, to his own inevitable ruin: *He knows*. He will not believe, does not consider, the tempter will not let him know, *that the dead* there, that those who live in pleasure are

dead while they live, dead in trespasses and sins. Terrors attend these pleasures like the terrors of death itself. The giants are there—*Rephaim*. It was this that ruined the sinners of the old world, the giants that were in the earth in those days. Her guests, that are treated with these *stolen waters*, are not only in the highway to hell and at the brink of it, but they are already in the depths of hell, under the power of sin, led captive by Satan at his will, and ever and anon lashed by the terrors of their own consciences, which are a hell upon earth. The depths of Satan are the depths of hell. Remorseless sin is remediless ruin; it is the bottomless pit already. Thus does Solomon show the hook; those that believe him will not meddle with the bait.

CHAP. X.

Hitherto we have been in the porch or preface to the proverbs; here they begin. They are short but weighty sentences; most of them are distichs, two sentences in one verse, illustrating each other: but it is seldom that there is any coherence between the verses, much less any thread of discourse, and therefore in these chapters we need not attempt to reduce the contents to their proper heads, the several sentences will appear best in their own places. The scope of them all is to set before us good and evil, the blessing and the curse. Many of the proverbs in this chapter relate to the good government of the tongue, without which men's religion is vain.

THE proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.

Solomon, speaking to us as unto children, observes here how much the comfort of parents, natural, political, and ecclesiastical, depends upon the good behaviour of those under their charge, as a reason, 1. Why parents should be careful to give their children a good education, and to train them up in the ways of religion, which, if it obtain the desired effect, they themselves will have the comfort of it, or, if not, they will have for their support under their heaviness that they have done their duty, have done their endeavour. 2. Why children should conduct themselves wisely and well, and live up to their good education, that they may gladden the hearts of their parents and not sadden them. Observe, (1.) It adds to the comfort of young people that are pious and discreet that thereby they do something towards recompensing their parents for all the care and pains they have taken with them, and occasion pleasure to them in the evil days of old age, when they most need it; and it is the duty of parents to rejoice in their children's wisdom and well-doing, yea, though it arrive at such an eminency as to eclipse them. (2.) It adds to the guilt of those that conduct themselves ill that thereby they grieve those whom they ought to be a joy to, and are a heaviness particularly to their poor mothers who bore them with sorrow, but with greater sorrow see them wicked and vile.

2 Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death. 3 The LORD will not

suffer the soul of the righteous to famish: but he casteth away the substance of the wicked.

These two verses speak to the same purport, and the latter may be the reason of the former. 1. That wealth which men get unjustly will do them no good, because God will blast it: *Treasures of wickedness profit nothing, v. 2.* The treasures of wicked people, much more the treasure which they have made themselves masters of by any wicked arts, by oppression or fraud, though it be ever so much, as a treasure, and laid up ever so safely, though it be hidden treasure, yet it profits nothing: when profit and loss come to be balanced the profit gained by the treasures will by no means countervail the loss sustained by the wickedness, Matt. xvi. 26. They do not profit the soul; they will not purchase any true comfort or happiness. They will stand a man in no stead at death, or in the judgment of the great day; and the reason is because God casts away the substance of the wicked (v. 3); he takes that from them which they have unjustly gotten; he rejects the consideration of it, not regarding the rich more than the poor. We often see that scattered by the justice of God which has been gathered together by the injustice of men. How can the treasures of wickedness profit, when, though it be counted substance, God casts it away and it vanishes as a shadow? 2. That which is honestly got will turn to a good account, for God will bless it. *Righteousness delivers from death*, that is, wealth gained, and kept, and used, in a right manner (righteousness signifies both honesty and charity); it answers the end of wealth, which is to keep us alive and be a defence to us. It will deliver from those judgments which men bring upon themselves by their wickedness. It will profit to such a degree as to deliver, though not from the stroke of death, yet from the sting of it, and consequently from the terror of it. *For the Lord will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish (v. 3)*, and so their righteousness delivers from death, purely by the favour of God to them, which is their life and livelihood, and which will keep them alive in famine. The soul of the righteous shall be kept alive by the word of God, and faith in his promise, when *young lions shall lack and suffer hunger*.

4 He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.

We are here told, 1. Who those are who, though rich, are in a fair way to become poor—those who deal with a slack hand, who are careless and remiss in their business, and never mind which end goes foremost, nor ever set their hands vigorously to their work or stick to it; those who deal with a deceitful hand (so it may be read); those who think

to enrich themselves by fraud and tricking will, in the end, impoverish themselves, not only by bringing the curse of God on what they have, but by forfeiting their reputation with men; none will care to deal with those who deal with sleight of hand and are honest only with good looking to. 2. Who those are who, though poor, are in a fair way to become rich—those who are diligent and honest, who are careful about their affairs, and, what their hands find to do, do it with all their might, in a fair and honourable way; those are likely to increase what they have. *The hand of the acute (so some), of those who are sharp, but not sharpeners; the hand of the active (so others); the stirring hand gets a penny.* This is true in the affairs of our souls as well as in our worldly affairs; slothfulness and hypocrisy lead to spiritual poverty, but those who are fervent in pursuing the Lord, are likely to be rich in faith and rich in good works.

5 He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame

Here is, 1. The just praise of those who improve their opportunities, who take pains to gather and increase what they have, both for soul and body, who provide for hereafter while provision is to be made, who gather in summer, which is gathering time. He who does so is a wise son, and it is his honour; he acts wisely for his parents, whom, if there be occasion, he ought to maintain, and he gives reputation to himself, his family, and his education. 2. The just reproach and blame of those who trifle away these opportunities: *He who sleeps*, loves his ease, idle away his time, and neglects his work, especially *who sleeps in harvest*, when he should be laying in for winter, who lets slip the season of furnishing himself with that which he will have occasion for, *is a son that causeth shame*; for he is a foolish son; he prepares shame for himself when winter comes, and reflects shame upon all his friends. He who gets knowledge and wisdom in the days of his youth gathers in summer, and he will have the comfort and credit of his industry; but he who idles away the days of his youth will bear the shame of his indolence when he is old.

6 Blessings are upon the head of the just: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.

Here is, 1. The head of the just crowned with blessings, with the blessings both of God and man. Variety of blessings, abundance of blessings, shall descend from above and visibly abide on the head of good men: real blessings; they shall not only be spoken well of, but done well to. Blessings shall be put on their head as a coronet to adorn and dignify them and as a helmet to protect and secure them. 2. The mouth of the wicked

ered with violence. Their mouths shall be stopped with shame for the violence which they have done; they shall not have a word to say in excuse for themselves (Job v. 16); their breath shall be stopped with the violence that shall be done to them, when their violent sayings shall return on their heads, shall be returned to their teeth.

7 The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot.

Both the just and the wicked, when their days are fulfilled, must die. Between their bodies in the grave there is no visible difference; between the souls of the one and the other, in the world of spirits, there is a vast difference, and so there is; or ought to be, between their memories, which survive them.

I. Good men are and ought to be well spoken of when they are gone; it is one of the blessings that comes upon the head of the just, even when their head is laid. Blessed men leave behind them blessed memories.

It is part of the dignity of the saints, especially those who excel in virtue and are eminently useful, that they are remembered with respect when they are dead. Their good name, their name with good men, for good things, is then in a special manner as *precious sentiment*, Eccl. vii. 1. Those that honour God he will thus honour, Ps. cxii. 3, 6, 9. The elders by faith obtained a good report (Heb. xi. 2), and, being dead, are yet spoken of. 2. It is part of the duty of the survivors: Let the memory of the just be blessed, so the Jews read it, and observe it as a precept, not naming an eminently just man that is dead without adding, *Let his memory be blessed*. We must delight in making an honourable mention of good men that are gone, bless God for them, and for his gifts and graces that appeared in them, and especially be followers of them in that which is good.

II. Bad men are and shall be forgotten, or spoken of with contempt. When their bodies are putrefying in the grave their names also shall rot. Either they shall not be preserved at all, but buried in oblivion (no good can be said of them, and therefore the greatest kindness that can be done them will be to say nothing of them), or they shall be loathsome, and mentioned with detestation, and that rule of honour, *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*—Say nothing to the disadvantage of the dead, will not protect them. Where the wickedness has been notorious, and cannot but be mentioned, it ought to be mentioned with abhorrence.

8 The wise in heart will receive commandments: but a prating fool shall fall.

Here is, 1. The honour and happiness of the obedient. They will receive commandments; they will take it as a privilege, and really an ease to them, to be under govern-

ment, which saves them the labour of deliberating and choosing for themselves; and they will take it as a favour to be told their duty and admonished concerning it. And this is their wisdom; those are *wise in heart* who are tractable, and those who thus bend, thus stoop, shall stand and be established, shall prosper, being well advised. 2. The shame and ruin of the disobedient, that will not be governed, nor endure any yoke, that will not be taught, nor take any advice. They are fools, for they act against themselves and their own interest; they are commonly *prating fools*, fools of lips, full of talk, but full of nonsense, boasting of themselves, prating spitefully against those that admonish them (3 John 10), and pretending to give counsel and law to others. Of all fools, none more troublesome than the *prating fools*, nor that more expose themselves; but they shall fall into sin, into hell, because they received not commandments. Those that are full of tongue seldom look well to their feet, and therefore stumble and fall.

9 He that walketh uprightly walketh surely: but he that perverteth his ways shall be known.

We are here told, and we may depend upon it, 1. That men's integrity will be their security: *He that walks uprightly* towards God and man, that is faithful to both, that designs as he ought and means as he says, *walks surely*; he is safe under a divine protection and easy in a holy security. He goes on his way with a humble boldness, being well armed against the temptations of Satan, the troubles of the world, and the reproaches of men. He knows what ground he stands on, what guide he follows, what guard he is surrounded with, and what glory he is going to, and therefore proceeds with assurance and *great peace*, Isa. xxxii. 17; xxxiii. 15, 16. Some understand it as part of the character of an upright man, that he *walks surely*, in opposition to walking at all adventures. He will not dare to do that which he is not fully satisfied in his own conscience concerning the lawfulness of, but will see his way clear in every thing. 2. That men's dishonesty will be their shame: *He that perverts his way*, that turns aside into crooked paths, that dissembles with God and man, looks one way and rows another, though he may for a time disguise himself, and pass current, shall be known to be what he is. It is a thousand to one but some time or other he betrays himself; at least, God will discover him in the great day. *He that perverts his ways documento erit*—shall be made an example of, for warning to others; so some.

10 He that winketh with the eye causeth sorrow: but a prating fool shall fall.

Mischief is here said to attend, 1. Pohtic, designing, self-disguising sinners: *He that*

winks with the eye, as if he took no notice of you, when at the same time he is watching an opportunity to do you an ill turn, that makes signs to his accomplices when to come in to assist him in executing his wicked projects, which are all carried on by trick and artifice, *causes sorrow* both to others and to himself. Ingenuity will be no excuse for iniquity, but the sinner must either repent or do worse, either rue it or be ruined by it.

2. Public, silly, self-exposing sinners: A *prating fool*, whose sins go before unto judgment, *shall fall*, as was said before, v. 8. But his case is less dangerous of the two, and, though he destroy himself, he does not create so much sorrow to others as *he that winks with his eyes*. The dog that bites is not always the dog that barks.

11 The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.

See here, 1. How industrious a good man is, by communicating his goodness, to do good with it: *His mouth*, the outlet of his mind, *is a well of life*; it is a constant spring, whence issues good discourse for the edification of others, like streams that water the ground and make it fruitful, and for their consolation, like streams that quench the thirst of the weary traveller. It is like a *well of life*, that is pure and clean, not only not poisoned, but not muddled, with any corrupt communication.

2. How industrious a bad man is, by concealing his badness, to do hurt with it: *The mouth of the wicked covers violence*, disguises the designed mischief with professions of friendship, that it may be carried on the more securely and effectually, as Joab kissed and killed, Judas kissed and betrayed; this is his sin, to which the punishment answers (v. 6): *Violence covers the mouth of the wicked*; what he got by violence shall by violence be taken from him, Job v. 4, 5.

12 Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.

Here is, 1. The great mischief-maker, and that is malice. Even where there is no manifest occasion of strife, yet *hatred* seeks occasion and so *stirs it up* and does the devil's work. Those are the most spiteful ill-natured people that can be who take a pleasure in setting their neighbours together by the ears, by tale-bearing, evil surmises, and misrepresentations, blowing up the sparks of contention, which had lain buried, into a flame, at which, with an unaccountable pleasure, they warm their hands.

2. The great peace-maker, and that is *love*, which *covers all sins*, that is, the offences among relations which occasion discord. Love, instead of proclaiming and aggravating the offence, conceals and extenuates it as far as it is capable of being concealed and extenuated. Love will excuse the offence which we give through mistake and unadvisedly; when we are able to say that

there was no ill intended, but it was an oversight, and we love our friend notwithstanding, this covers it. It will also overlook the offence that is given us, and so cover it, and make the best of it: by this means strife is prevented, or, if begun, peace is recovered and restored quickly. The apostle quotes this, 1 Pet. iv. 8. *Love will cover a multitude of sins*.

13 In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found: but a rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding.

Observe, 1. Wisdom and grace are the honour of good men: *He that has understanding*, that good understanding which those have that do the commandments, *wisdom is found in his lips*, that is, it is discovered to be there, and consequently that he has within a good treasure of it, and it is derived thence for the benefit of others. It is a man's honour to have wisdom, but much more to be instrumental to make others wise.

2. Folly and sin are the shame of bad men: *A rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding—of him that wants a heart*; he exposes himself to the lashes of his own conscience, to the scourges of the tongue, to the censures of the magistrate, and to the righteous judgments of God. Those that foolishly and wilfully go on in wicked ways are preparing rods for themselves, the marks of which will be their perpetual disgrace.

14 Wise men lay up knowledge: but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction.

Observe, 1. It is the wisdom of the wise that they treasure up a stock of useful knowledge, which will be their preservation: *Wisdom is therefore found in their lips* (v. 13), because it is laid up in their hearts, out of which store, like the good householder, they bring things new and old. Whatever knowledge may be at any time useful to us we must *lay it up*, because we know not but some time or other we may have occasion for it. We must continue laying up as long as we live; and be sure to lay it up safely, that it may not be to seek when we want it.

2. It is the folly of fools that they lay up mischief in their hearts, which is ready to them in all they say, and works terror and destruction both to others and to themselves. They *love devouring words* (Ps. lii. 4), and these come uppermost. Their *mouth is near destruction*, having the *sharp arrows of bitter words* always at hand to throw about.

15 The rich man's wealth is his strong city: the destruction of the poor is their poverty.

This may be taken two ways:—1. As a reason why we should be diligent in our business, that we may avoid that sinking dispiriting uneasiness which attends poverty, and may enjoy the benefit and comfort which

those have that are beforehand in the world. Taking pains is really the way to make ourselves and our families easy. Or, rather 2. As a representation of the common mistakes both of rich and poor, concerning their outward condition. (1.) Rich people think themselves happy because they are rich; but it is their mistake: *The rich man's wealth is, in his own conceit, his strong city*, whereas the worst of evils it is too weak and utterly insufficient to protect them from. It will prove that they are not so safe as they imagine; nay, their wealth may perhaps expose them. (2.) Poor people think themselves undone because they are poor; but it is their mistake: *The destruction of the poor is their poverty*; it sinks their spirits, and ruins all their comforts; whereas a man may live very comfortably, though he has but a little to live on, if he be but content, and keep a good conscience, and live by faith.

16 The labour of the righteous endeth to life: the fruit of the wicked to sin.

Solomon here confirms what his father had said (Ps. xxxvii. 16), *A little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked*. 1. Perhaps a righteous man has no more than what he works hard for; he eats only the labour of his hands, but that labour tends to life; he aims at nothing but to get an honest livelihood, covets not to be rich and great, but is willing to live and maintain his family. Nor does it tend only to his own life, but he would enable himself to do good to others; he labours that he may be able to give (Eph. iv. 28); all his business turns to some good account or other. Or it may be meant of his labour in religion; he takes most pains in that which has a tendency to eternal life; he sows to the Spirit, that he may reap life everlasting. 2. Perhaps a wicked man's wealth is fruit which he did not labour for, but came easily by, but it tends to sin. He makes it the food and fuel of his lusts, his pride and luxury; he does hurt with it and not good; he gets hurt by it and is hardened by it in his wicked ways. The things of this world are good or evil, life or death, as they are used, and as those are that have them.

17 He is in the way of life that keepeth instruction: but he that reuseth reproof erreth.

See here, 1. That those are in the right that do not only receive instruction, but retain it, that do not let it slip through carelessness, as most do, nor let it go to those that would rob them of it, that keep instruction safely, keep it pure and entire, keep it for their own use, that they may govern themselves by it, keep it for the benefit of others, that they may instruct them; those that do so are in the way of life, the way that has true comfort in it and eternal life at the end of it. 2.

That those are in the wrong that do not only not receive instruction, but wilfully and obstinately refuse it when it is offered them. They will not be taught their duty because it discovers their faults to them; that instruction which carries reproof in it they have a particular aversion to, and certainly they err; it is a sign that they err in judgment, and have false notions of good and evil; it is a cause of their erring in conversation. The traveller that has missed his way, and cannot bear to betold of it and shown the right way, must needs err still, err endlessly; he certainly misses the way of life.

18 He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool.

Observe here, Malice is folly and wickedness. 1. It is so when it is concealed by flattery and dissimulation: He is a fool, though he may think himself a politician, that hides hatred with lying lips, lest, if it break out, he should be ashamed before men and should lose the opportunity of gratifying his malice. Lying lips are bad enough of themselves, but have a peculiar malignity in them when they are made a cloak of maliciousness. But he is a fool who thinks to hide any thing from God. 2. It is no better when it is vented in spiteful and mischievous language: He that utters slander is a fool too, for God will sooner or later bring forth that righteousness as the light which he endeavours to cloud, and will find an expedient to roll the reproach away.

19 In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.

We are here admonished concerning the government of the tongue, that necessary duty of a Christian. 1. It is good to say little, because in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin, or sin doth not cease. Usually, those that speak much speak much amiss, and among many words there cannot but be many idle words, which they must shortly give an account of. Those that love to hear themselves talk do not consider what work they are making for repentance; for that will be wanted, and first or last will be had, where there wanteth not sin. 2. It is therefore good to keep our mouth as with a bridle: He that refrains his lips, that often checks himself, suppresses what he has thought, and holds in that which would transpire, is a wise man; it is an evidence of his wisdom, and he therein consults his own peace. Little said is soon amended, Amos v. 13; Jam. i. 19.

20 The tongue of the just is as choice silver: the heart of the wicked is little worth. 21 The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of wisdom.

We are here taught how to value men, not

by their wealth and preferment in the world, but by their virtue.

I. Good men are good for something. Though they may be poor and low in the world, and may not have power and riches to do good with, yet, as long as they have a mouth to speak, that will make them valuable and useful, and upon that account we must honour those that fear the Lord, because out of the good treasure of their heart they bring forth good things. 1. This makes them valuable: *The tongue of the just is as choice silver*; they are sincere, freed from the dross of guile and evil design. God's words are compared to *silver purified* (Ps. xii. 6), for they may be relied on; and such are the words of just men. They are of weight and worth, and will enrich those that hear them with wisdom, which is better than *choice silver*. 2. It makes them useful: *The lips of the righteous feed many*; for they are full of the word of God, which is the bread of life, and that sound doctrine wherewith souls are nourished up. Pious discourse is spiritual food to the needy, to the hungry.

II. Bad men are good for nothing. 1. One can get no good by them: *The heart of the wicked is little worth*, and therefore that which comes out of the abundance of his heart cannot be worth much. His principles, his notions, his thoughts, his purposes, and all the things that fill him, and affect him, are worldly and carnal, and therefore of no value. *He that is of the earth speaks of the earth*, and neither understands nor relishes the things of God, John iii. 31; 1 Cor. ii. 14. The wicked man pretends that, though he does not talk of religion as the just do, yet he has it within him, and thanks God that his heart is good; but he that searches the heart here says the contrary: *It is nothing worth*. 2. One can do no good to them. While many are fed by the lips of the righteous, fools die for want of wisdom; and fools indeed they are to die for want of that which they might so easily come by. *Fools die for want of a heart* (so the word is); they perish for want of consideration and resolution; they have no heart to do any thing for their own good. While the righteous feed others fools starve themselves.

22 The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.

Worldly wealth is that which most men have their hearts very much upon, but they generally mistake both in the nature of the thing they desire and in the way by which they hope to obtain it; we are therefore told here, 1. What that wealth is which is indeed desirable, not having abundance only, but having it and *no sorrow with it*, no disquieting care to get and keep it, no vexation of spirit in the enjoyment of it, no tormenting grief for the loss of it, no guilt contracted by the abuse of it—to have it and to have a heart

to take the comfort of it, to do good with and to serve God with joyfulness and gladness of heart in the use of it. 2. When this desirable wealth is to be expected, not by making ourselves drudges to the world (Psal. cxxvii. 2), but by the blessing of God. It is this that makes rich and adds no sorrow; which comes from the love of God has the grace of God for its companion, to preserve the soul from those turbulent lusts and passions which, otherwise, the increase of riches commonly the incentive. He had said (v. 4) *The hand of the diligent makes rich*, as means; but here he ascribes it to the blessing of the Lord; but that blessing is upon the hand of the diligent. It is thus in spiritual riches. Diligence in getting them is our duty, but God's blessing and grace must have all the glory of that which is acquired. Deut. viii. 17, 18.

23 It is as sport to a fool to do mischief: but a man of understanding hath wisdom.

Here is, 1. Sin exceedingly sinful: *It is as laughter to a fool to do mischief*; it is as natural to him, and as pleasant, as it is to a man to laugh. *Wickedness is his Isaac* (that is the word here); it is his delight, his darling, and that in which he pleases himself. He makes a laughing matter of sin. When he is warned not to sin, from the consideration of the law of God and the revelation of his wrath against sin, he makes a jest of the admonition, and laughs at the shaking of the spear; when he has sinned, instead of sorrowing for it, he boasts of it, ridicules reproofs, and laughs away the convictions of his own conscience, ch. xiv. 9. 2. Wisdom exceedingly wise, for it carries along with it the evidence of its own excellency; it may be predicated of itself, and this is encomium enough; you need say no more in praise of a man of understanding than this, "He is a *wise* understanding man; he has wisdom; he is so wise as not to do mischief, or if he has through oversight, offended, he is so wise as not to make a jest of it." Or, to pronounce wisdom wise indeed, read it thus: *As it is sport to a fool to do mischief, so it is to a man of understanding to have wisdom and to show it*. Besides the future recompence, a good man has as much present pleasure in the restraints and exercises of religion as sinners can pretend to in the liberties and enjoyment of sin, and much more, and much better.

24 The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him: but the desire of the righteous shall be granted. 25 As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked: no more: but the righteous is an everlasting foundation.

It is here said, and said again, to the righteous, that *it shall be well with them*, and to the wicked, *Woe to them*; and these at

at the one over against the other, for their mutual illustration.

I. It shall be as ill with the wicked as they are with the righteous as well with the righteous as they can desire. 1. The wicked, it is true, enjoy themselves up sometimes in their wickedness with vain hopes which will deceive them, but at other times they cannot but be haunted with just fears, and those fears shall come upon them; the God they provoke will be very whit as terrible as they, when they are under their greatest damps, apprehend him to be. *As is thy fear, so is thy wrath*, Ps. xc.

Wicked men fear the punishment of sin, but they have not wisdom to improve their fears by making their escape, and so the thing they feared comes upon them, and their present terrors are earnest of their future torments. 2. The righteous, it is true, sometimes have their fears, but their desire is towards the favour of God and a happiness in him, and that desire shall be granted. According to their faith, not according to their fear, it shall be unto them, Ps. xxxvii. 4.

II. The prosperity of the wicked shall quickly end, but the happiness of the righteous shall never end, v. 25. The wicked make a great noise, hurry themselves and others, like a whirlwind, which threatens to tear down all before it; but, like a whirlwind, they are presently gone, and they pass irreversibly; they are no more; all about them are quiet and glad when the storm is over, Ps. xxxvii. 10, 36; Job xx. 5. The righteous, on the contrary, make no show; they lie hid, like a foundation, which is low and out of sight, but they are fixed in their resolution to leave to God, established in virtue, and they shall be an everlasting foundation, immovably good. He that is holy shall be holy still and immovably happy; his hope is built on a rock, and therefore not shocked by the storm, Matt. vii. 24. The righteous is the pillar of the world (so some read it); the world stands for their sakes; the holy seed is the substance hereof.

26 As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him.

Observe, 1. Those that are of a slothful disposition, that love their ease and cannot apply their minds to any business, are not fit to be employed, no, not so much as to be sent on an errand, for they will neither deliver a message with any care nor make any haste back. Such therefore are very unmeet to be ministers, Christ's messengers; he will not own the sending forth of sluggards into his harvest. 2. Those that are guilty of so great an oversight as to entrust such with any affair, and put confidence in them, will certainly have vexation with them. A slothful servant is to his master as uneasy and troublesome as vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes; he provokes his passion, as vinegar sets the teeth on edge, and occasions him grief

to see his business neglected and undone, as smoke sets the eyes a weeping.

27 The fear of the Lord prolongeth days: but the years of the wicked shall be shortened. 28 The hope of the righteous shall be gladness: but the expectation of the wicked shall perish.

Observe, 1. Religion lengthens men's lives and crowns their hopes. *What man is he that loves life?* Let him fear God, and that will secure him from many things that would prejudice his life, and secure to him life enough in this world and eternal life in the other; the fear of the Lord will add days more than was expected, will add them endlessly, will prolong them to the days of eternity. *What man is he that would see good days?* Let him be religious, and then his days shall not only be many, but happy, very happy as well as very many, for the hope of the righteous shall be gladness; they shall have what they hope for, to their unspeakable satisfaction. It is something future and unseen that they place their happiness in (Rom. viii. 24, 25), not what they have in hand, but what they have in hope, and their hope will shortly be swallowed up in fruition, and it will be their everlasting gladness. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. 2. Wickedness shortens men's lives, and frustrates their hopes: The years of the wicked, that are spent in the pleasures of sin and the drudgery of the world, shall be shortened. Cut down the trees that cumber the ground. And whatever comfort or happiness a wicked man promises himself, in this world or the other, he will be frustrated; for the expectation of the wicked shall perish; his hope shall be turned into endless despair.

29 The way of the Lord is strength to the upright: but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity. 30 The righteous shall never be removed: but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth.

These two verses are to the same purport with those next before, intimating the happiness of the godly and the misery of the wicked; it is necessary that this be inculcated upon us, so loth are we to believe and consider it. 1. Strength and stability are entailed upon integrity: The way of the Lord (the providence of God, the way in which he walks towards us) is strength to the upright, confirms him in his uprightness. All God's dealings with him, merciful and afflictive, serve to quicken him to his duty and animate him against his discouragements. Or the way of the Lord (the way of godliness, in which he appoints us to walk) is strength to the upright; the closer we keep to that way, the more our hearts are enlarged to proceed in it, the better fitted we are both for services and sufferings. A good conscience,

kept pure from sin, gives a man boldness in a dangerous time, and constant diligence in duty makes a man's work easy in a busy time. The more we do for God the more we may do, Job xvii. 9. *That joy of the Lord which is to be found only in the way of the Lord will be our strength* (Neh. viii. 10), and therefore *the righteous shall never be removed*. Those that have an established virtue have an established peace and happiness which nothing can rob them of; they *have an everlasting foundation*, v. 25. 2. Ruin and destruction are the certain consequences of wickedness. *The wicked shall not only not inherit the earth, though they lay up their treasure in it, but they shall not so much as inhabit the earth*; God's judgments will root them out. *Destruction, swift and sure destruction, shall be to the workers of iniquity*, destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power. Nay, that way of the Lord which is the strength of the upright is consumption and terror *to the workers of iniquity*; the same gospel which to the one is a *savour of life unto life* to the other is a *savour of death unto death*; the same providence, like the same sun, softens the one and hardens the other, Hos. xiv. 9.

31 The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom: but the froward tongue shall be cut out. 32 The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable: but the mouth of the wicked speaketh frowardness.

Here, as before, men are judged of, and, accordingly, are justified or condemned, by their words, Matt. xii. 37. 1. It is both the proof and the praise of a man's wisdom and goodness that he speaks wisely and well. A good man, in his discourse, *brings forth wisdom* for the benefit of others. God gives him wisdom as a reward of his righteousness (Eccl. ii. 26), and he, in gratitude for that gift and justice to the giver, does good with it, and with his wise and pious discourses edifies many. *He knows what is acceptable*, what discourse will be pleasing to God (for that is it that he studies more than to oblige the company), and what will be agreeable both to the speaker and to the hearers, what will become him and benefit them, and that he will speak. 2. It is the sin, and will be the ruin, of a wicked man, that he speaks wickedly like himself. *The mouth of the wicked speaks frowardness*, that which is displeasing to God and provoking to those he converses with; and what is the issue of it? *Why, the froward tongue shall be cut out*, as surely as the *flattering one*, Ps. xii. 3.

CHAP. XI.

A FALSE balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight.

As religion towards God is a branch of universal righteousness (he is not an honest

man that is not devout), so righteousness towards men is a branch of true religion, for he is not a godly man that is not honest, nor can he expect that his devotion should be accepted; for, 1. Nothing is more offensive to God than deceit in commerce. *A false balance* is here put for all manner of unjust and fraudulent practices in dealing with any person, which are all an *abomination to the Lord*, and render those abominable to him that allow themselves in the use of such accursed arts of thriving. It is an affront to justice, which God is the patron of, as well as a wrong to our neighbour, whom God is the protector of. Men make light of such frauds, and think there is no sin in that which there is money to be got by, and, while it passes undiscovered, they cannot blame themselves for it; a blot is no blot till it is hit, Hos. xii. 7, 8. But they are not the less an abomination to God, who will be the avenger of those that are defrauded by their brethren. 2. Nothing is more pleasing to God than fair and honest dealing, nor more necessary to make us and our devotions acceptable to him: *A just weight is his delight*. He himself goes by a just weight, and holds the scale of judgment with an even hand, and therefore is pleased with those that are herein followers of him. A balance cheats, under pretence of doing right most exactly, and therefore is the greater abomination to God.

2 When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom.

Observe, 1. How he that exalts himself is here abased, and contempt put upon him. *When pride comes then comes shame*. Pride is a sin which men have reason to be themselves ashamed of; it is a shame to a man who springs out of the earth, who lives upon alms, depends upon God, and has forfeited all he has, to be proud. It is a sin which others cry out shame on and look upon with disdain; he that is haughty makes himself contemptible; it is a sin for which God often brings men down, as he did Nebuchadnezzar and Herod, whose ignominy immediately attended their vain-glory; for God *resists the proud*, contradicts them, and counterworks them, in the thing they are proud of, Isa. ii. 11, &c. 2. How he that humbles himself is here exalted, and a high character is given him. As with the proud there is folly, and will be shame, so *with the lowly there is wisdom*, and will be honour, for a man's wisdom gains him respect and makes his face to shine before men; or, if any be so base as to trample upon the humble, God will give them grace, which will be their glory. Considering how safe, and quiet, and easy, those are that are of a humble spirit, what communion they have with God and comfort in themselves, we will say, *With the lowly is wisdom*.

3 The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.

It is not only promised that God will guide

the upright, and threatened that he will destroy all transgressors, even that we may be the more fully assured of him. It is here represented as if the causes of the thing were such as must cause that it would be so itself.

1. The way of an honest man will itself be his guide in the way of life and the way of safety. His principles are fixed, he will be constant and therefore he will be a guide. He cannot be deceived, and he does not fluctuate every time the wind turns, having no other end or design as those to keep a good conscience. Integrity and uprightness will preserve men, Ps. xxv. 21.

2. The iniquity of a bad man will itself be his ruin. As the goodness of a good man will be his protection, though he is ever so much exposed, so the perverseness of sinners will be their destruction, though they think themselves ever so well fortified. They shall find out guns of their own digging, ch. v. 23.

3. Riches profit not in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivereth from death.

Note, 1. The day of death will be a day of wrath. It is a messenger of God's wrath, therefore when Moses had meditated on man's mortality he takes occasion thence to admire the power of God's anger, Ps. xc. 11. It is a felt sting, not to nature, but to God's justice. After death the judgment, and that is a day of wrath, Rev. vi. 17. 2. Riches will stand men in no stead in that day. They will neither put by the stroke nor ease the pain, much less take out the sting; what power will this world's riches have to do there. In the day of public judgment no other expose men rather than protect them, Eccl. vii. 19. 3. It is righteousness only that will deliver from the evil of death. A good conscience will make death easy, and take off the terror of it; it is the privilege of the righteous only not to be hurt of the second death, and so not much hurt by the first.

5. The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way: but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness. 6. The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them: but transgressors shall be taken in their own naughtiness.

These two verses are, in effect, the same, and both to the same purpose with c. 1. For the truths are here of such certainty and weight that they cannot be too often inculcated. Let us govern ourselves by these principles.

1. That the ways of religion are plain and safe, and in them we may enjoy a holy security. A living principle of honesty and grace will be, 1. Our best direction in the right way, in every doubtful case to say to us, *This is the way, walk in it*. He that acts without a guide looks right on and sees his way before him. 2. Our best deliverance from every false way. *The righteousness of*

the upright shall be armour of proof to them, to deliver them from the threatened evil of the devil and the world, and from their own weakness.

11. The way of wickedness is destruction and damnation: *The wicked shall fall into misery and ruin by their own weakness, and be taken in their own naughtiness as in a snare. A friend, a near friend, put up with them. Their sin will be their punishment; that very thing by which they counted on to deliver themselves will make against them.*

7. Where a wicked man dwells, his expectation shall perish, and the hope of unjust men perisheth.

Note, 1. Even wicked men, while they live, may keep up a foolish expectation, and imagine what they see to be a business in this world. The hypocrite has his hope, in which he wraps himself as the spider in her web. The worldling expects great matters from his wealth; he calls it *goods laid up for many years, and longer to the increase in it and to be merry*; but in death their expectation will be frustrated: the worldling must leave this world which he expected to continue in and the hypocrite will come short of that world which he expected to remove to, Job xxvii. 9. 2. It will be the great aggravation of the misery of wicked people that their hopes will sink into despair just when they expect them to be increased and fulfilled. When a godly man dies his expectations are out-done, and all his fears vanish; but when a wicked man dies his expectations are dashed, dashed to pieces; in that very day his thoughts perish with which he had pleased himself, his hopes vanish.

8. The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead.

As it was in death, so sometimes in life, the righteous are remarkably favoured and the wicked crossed. 1. Good people are helped out of the distresses which they thought themselves lost in, and their feet are set on a large rock, Ps. lxxv. 12; xxxix. 19. God has found out a way to deliver his people even when they have despaired and their enemies have triumphed, as if the wickedness had sent them in. 2. The wicked have fallen into the distresses which they thought themselves far from, nay, which they had been instrumental in bringing the righteous into, so that they seem to come in their stead, as a ransom for the just. Mordecai is saved from the gallows, Daniel from the lion's den, and Peter from the prison, and their persecutors come in their stead. The Israelites are delivered out of the Red Sea and the Egyptians drowned in it. So precious are the souls in God's eye that he goes *men for them*, but xliii. 1, 2.

9. A hypocrite with his mouth shall destroyeth his neighbour: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered.

Here is, 1. Hypocrisy designing ill. It is not only the murderer with his sword, but the hypocrite with his mouth, that destroys his neighbour, decoying him into sin, or into mischief, by the specious pretences of kindness and good-will. *Death and life are in the power of the tongue*, but no tongue more fatal than the flattering tongue. 2. Honesty defeating the design and escaping the snare: *Through knowledge of the devices of Satan shall the just be delivered* from the snares which the hypocrite has laid for him; seducers shall not deceive the elect. By the knowledge of God, and the scriptures, and their own hearts, shall the just be delivered from those that lie in wait to deceive, and so to destroy, Rom. xvi. 18, 19.

10 When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth: and when the wicked perish, *there is shouting*. 11 By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted: but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked.

It is here observed,

I. That good men are generally well-beloved by their neighbours, but nobody cares for wicked people. 1. It is true there are some few that are enemies to the righteous, that are prejudiced against God and godliness, and are therefore vexed to see good men in power and prosperity; but all indifferent persons, even those that have no great stock of religion themselves, have a good word for a good man; and therefore *when it goes well with the righteous*, when they are advanced and put into a capacity of doing good according to their desire, it is so much the better for all about them, and *the city rejoices*. For the honour and encouragement of virtue, and as it is the accomplishment of the promise of God, we should be glad to see virtuous men prosper in the world, and brought into reputation. 2. Wicked people may perhaps have here and there a well-wisher among those who are altogether such as themselves, but among the generality of their neighbours they get ill-will; they may be feared, but they are not loved, and therefore *when they perish there is shouting*; every body takes a pleasure in seeing them disgraced and disarmed, removed out of places of trust and power, chased out of the world, and wishes no greater loss may come to the town, the rather because they hope *the righteous may come in their stead*, as they into trouble instead of the righteous, v. 8. Let a sense of honour therefore keep us in the paths of virtue, that we may live desired and die lamented, and not be hissed off the stage, Job xxvii. 23; Ps. lii. 6.

II. That there is good reason for this, because those that are good do good, but *(as saith the proverb of the ancients) wickedness proceeds from the wicked*. 1. Good men are public blessings—*Vir bonus est commune bonum*

By the blessing of the upright, the blessing with which they are blessed, which enlarges their sphere of usefulness,—by the blessing with which they bless their neighbours, the advice, their example, their prayers, and all the instances of their serviceableness to the public interest,—by the blessings with which God blesses others for their sake,—by these *the city is exalted*, and made more comfortable to the inhabitants, and more considerable among its neighbours. 2. Wicked men are public nuisances, not only the burdens but the plagues of their generation. *The city is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked*, whose evil communications corrupt good manners, are enough to debauch a town, to ruin virtue in it, and bring down the judgment of God upon it.

12 He that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour: but a man of understanding holdeth his peace. 13 A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.

I. Silence is here recommended as an instance of true friendship, and a preservative of it, and therefore an evidence, 1. Of wisdom: *A man of understanding*, that has rule over his own spirit, if he be provoked, holds his peace, that he may neither give vent to his passion nor kindle the passion of others by any opprobrious language or peevish reflections. 2. Of sincerity: *He that is of a faithful spirit*, that is true, not only to his own promise, but to the interest of his friend, conceals every matter which, if divulged, may turn to the prejudice of his neighbour.

II. This prudent friendly concealment is here opposed to two very bad vices of the tongue:—1. Speaking scornfully of a man to his face: *He that is void of wisdom* discovers his folly by this; he despises his neighbour, calls him *Raca*, and *Thou fool*, upon the least provocation, and tramples upon him as not worthy to be set with the dogs of his flock. He undervalues himself who thus undervalues one that is made of the same mould. 2. Speaking spitefully of a man behind his back: *A tale-bearer*, that carries all the stories he can pick up, true or false, from house to house, to make mischief and sow discord, reveals secrets which he has been entrusted with, and so breaks the laws, and forfeits all the privileges, of friendship and conversation.

14 Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors *there is safety*.

Here is, 1. The bad omen of a kingdom's ruin: *Where no counsel is*, no consultation at all, but every thing done rashly, or no prudent consultation for the common good, but only caballing for parties and divided interests, *the people fall*, crumble into factions, fall to pieces, fall together by the ears, and fall an easy prey to their common enemies. Coun-

ills of war are necessary to the operations of war; two eyes see more than one; and mutual advice is in order to mutual assistance. The good presage of a kingdom's prosperity: *In the multitude of counsellors*, that see their need one of another, and act in concert and with concern for the public welfare, *there is safety*; for what prudent methods one discerns not another may. In our private affairs we shall often find it to our advantage to advise with many; if they agree in their advice, our way will be the more clear; if they differ, we shall hear what is to be said on all sides, and be the better able to determine.

15 He that is surety for a stranger shall smart *for it*: and he that hateth suretiship is sure.

Here we are taught, 1. In general, that we may not use our estates as we will (he that gave them to us has reserved to himself a power to direct us how we shall use them, for they are not our own; we are but stewards), and further that God in his law consults our interests and teaches us that charity which begins at home, as well as that which must not end there. There is a good husbandry which is good divinity, and a discretion in ordering our affairs which is part of the character of a good man, Ps. cxii. 5. Every man must be just to his family, else he is not true to his stewardship. 2. In particular, that we must not enter rashly into suretiship, (1.) Because there is danger of bringing ourselves into trouble by it, and our families too when we are gone: *He that is surety for a stranger, for any one that asks him and promises him to be bound for him another time, for one whose person perhaps he knows, and thinks he knows his circumstances, but is mistaken, shall smart for it. Contritione conteretur—He shall be certainly and sadly crushed and broken by it, and perhaps become a bankrupt.* Our Lord Jesus was surety for us when we were strangers, nay, enemies, and he smarted for it; *it pleased the Lord to bruise him.* (2.) Because he that resolves against all such suretiship keeps upon sure grounds, which a man may do if he take care not to launch out any further into business than his own credit will carry him, so that he needs not ask others to be bound for him.

16 A gracious woman retaineth honour: and strong men retain riches.

Here, 1. It is allowed that *strong men retain riches*, that those who bustle in the world, who are men of spirit and interest, and are able to make their part good against all who stand in their way, are likely to keep what they have and to get more, while those who are weak are preyed upon by all about them. 2. It is taken for granted that a *gracious woman* is as solicitous to preserve her reputation or wisdom and modesty, humility and courtesy, and all those other graces that are the true ornaments of her sex, as strong men are to secure their estates; and those women who

are truly gracious will, in like manner, effectually secure their honour by their prudence and good conduct. *A gracious woman* is as honourable as a valiant man and her honour is as sure.

17 The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but *he that is cruel* troubleth his own flesh.

It is a common principle, Every one for himself. *Proximus egomet mihi—None so near to me as myself.* Now, if this be rightly understood, it will be a reason for the cherishing of gracious dispositions in ourselves and the crucifying of corrupt ones. We are friends or enemies to ourselves, even in respect of present comfort, according as we are or are not governed by religious principles. 1. A *merciful, tender, good-humoured man, does good to his own soul*, makes and keeps himself easy. He has the pleasure of doing his duty, and contributing to the comfort of those that are to him as *his own soul*; for *we are members one of another*. He that waters others with his temporal good things shall find that God will water him with his spiritual blessings, which will do the best good to his own soul. See Isa. lviii. 7, &c. *If thou hide not thy eyes from thy own flesh*, but do good to others, as to thyself, if thou do good with thy own soul and draw that out to the hungry, thou wilt do good to thy own soul; for the Lord shall satisfy thy soul and make fat thy bones. Some make it part of the character of a *merciful man*, that he will make much of himself; that disposition which inclines him to be charitable to others will oblige him to allow himself also that which is convenient and to enjoy the good of all his labour. We may by the soul understand the inward man, as the apostle calls it, and then it teaches us that the first and great act of mercy is to provide well for our own souls the necessary supports of the spiritual life. 2. A *cruel, froward, ill-natured man, troubles his own flesh*, and so his sin becomes his punishment; he starves and dies for want of what he has, because he has not a heart to use it either for the good of others or for his own. He is vexatious to his nearest relations, that are, and should be, to him as his own flesh, Eph. v. 29. Envy, and malice, and greediness of the world, are the rottenness of the bones and the consumption of the flesh.

18 The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness *shall be* a sure reward.

Note, 1. Sinners put a most fatal cheat upon themselves: *The wicked works a deceitful work*, builds himself a house upon the sand, which will deceive him when the storm comes, promises himself that by his sin which he will never gain; nay, it is cutting his throat when it smiles upon him. *Sin deceived me, and by it slew me.* 2. Saints lay

up the best securities for themselves: He that sows righteousness, that is good, and makes it his business to do good, with an eye to a future recompence, he shall have a *sure reward*; it is made as sure to him as eternal truth can make it. If the seedness fail not, the harvest shall not, Gal. vi. 8.

19 As righteousness *tendeth* to life: so he that pursueth evil *pursueth* it to his own death.

It is here shown that righteousness, not only by the divine judgment, will end in life, and wickedness in death, but that righteousness, in its own nature, has a direct tendency to life and wickedness to death. 1. True holiness is true happiness; it is a preparative for it, a pledge and earnest of it. *Righteousness* inclines, disposes, and leads, the soul to life. 2. In like manner, those that indulge themselves in sin are fitting themselves for destruction. The more violent a man is in sinful pursuits the more eagerly bent he is upon his own destruction; he awakens it when it seemed to slumber and hastens it when it seemed to linger.

20 They that are of a froward heart are abomination to the LORD: but such as are upright in their way are his delight.

It concerns us to know what God hates and what he loves, that we may govern ourselves accordingly, may avoid his displeasure and recommend ourselves to his favour. Now here we are told, 1. That nothing is more offensive to God than hypocrisy and double-dealing, for these are signified by the word which we translate *frowardness*, pretending justice, but intending wrong, walking in crooked ways, to avoid discovery. Those are of a froward heart who act in contradiction to that which is good, under a profession of that which is good, and such are, more than any sinners, an *abomination to the Lord*, Isa. lxv. 5. 2. That nothing is more pleasing to God than sincerity and plain-dealing: *Such as are upright in their way*, such as aim and act with integrity, such as have their conversation in the world in *simplicity and godly sincerity*, not with *fleshy wisdom*, these God delights in, these he even boasts of (*Hast thou considered my servant Job?*) and will have us to admire. *Behold an Israelite indeed!*

21 Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished: but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered.

Observe, 1. That confederacies in sin shall certainly be broken, and shall not avail to protect the sinners: *Though hand join in hand*, though there are many that concur by their practice to keep wickedness in countenance, and engage to stand by one another in defending it against all the attacks of virtue and justice,—though they are in league for the sup-

port and propagation of it,—though wicked children tread in the steps of their wicked parents, and resolve to keep up the trade, in defiance of religion,—yet all this will not protect them from the justice of God; they shall not be held guiltless; it will not excuse them to say that they did as the most did and as their company did; they shall not be unpunished; witness the flood that was brought upon a whole world of ungodly men. The number, and strength, and unanimity in sin will stand them in no stead when the day of vengeance comes. 2. That entails of religion shall certainly be blessed: *The seed of the righteous*, that follow the steps of their righteousness, though they may fall into trouble, shall, in due time, be delivered. Though justice may come slowly to punish the wicked, and mercy may come slowly to save the righteous, yet both will come surely. Sometimes the seed of the righteous, though they are not themselves righteous, are delivered for the sake of their godly ancestors, as Israel often, and the seed of David.

22 As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion.

By discretion here we must understand religion and grace, a true taste and relish (so the word signifies) of the honours and pleasures that attend an unspotted virtue; so that a woman without discretion is a woman of loose and dissolute conversation; and then observe, 1. It is taken for granted here that beauty or comeliness of body is as a jewel of gold, a thing very valuable, and, where there is wisdom and grace to guard against the temptations of it, it is a great ornament, (*Gratior est pulchro veniens de corpore virtus*—*Virtue appears peculiarly graceful when associated with beauty*); but a foolish wanton woman, of a light carriage, is fitly compared to a swine, though she be ever so handsome, wallowing in the mire of filthy lusts, with which the mind and conscience are defiled, and, though washed, returning to them. 2. It is lamented that beauty should be so abused as it is by those that have not modesty with it. It seems ill-bestowed upon them; it is quite misplaced, as a jewel in a swine's snout, with which he roots in the dunghill. If beauty be not guarded by virtue, the virtue is exposed by the beauty. It may be applied to all other bodily endowments and accomplishments; it is a pity that those should have them who have not discretion to use them well.

23 The desire of the righteous is only good: but the expectation of the wicked is wrath.

This tells us what the desire and expectation of the righteous and of the wicked are and how they will prove, what they would have and what they shall have. 1. The righteous would have good, only good; all they

desire is that it may go well with all about them; they wish no hurt to any, but happiness to all; as to themselves, their desire is not to gratify any evil lust, but to obtain the favour of a good God and to preserve the peace of a good conscience; and good they shall have, that good which they desire, Ps. xxvii. 4. 2. *The wicked* would have *wrath*; they desire the woeful day, that God's judgments may gratify their passion and revenge, may remove those that stand in their way, and that they may make an advantage to themselves by fishing in troubled waters; and *wrath* they shall have, so shall their doom be. They expect and desire mischief to others, but it shall return upon themselves; as they loved cursing, they shall have enough of it.

24 There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and *there is* that withholdeth more than is meet, but *it tendeth* to poverty.

Note, 1. It is possible a man may grow rich by prudently spending what he has, may scatter in works of piety, charity, and generosity, and yet may increase; nay, by that means may increase, as the corn is increased by being sown. By cheerfully using what we have our spirits are exhilarated, and so fitted for the business we have to do, by finding which closely what we have is increased; it gains a reputation which contributes to the increase. But it is especially to be ascribed to God; he blesses the giving hand, and so makes it a getting hand, 2 Cor. ix. 10. *Give, and it shall be given you.* 2. It is possible a man may grow poor by meanly sparing what he has, *withholding more than is meet*, not paying just debts, not relieving the poor, not providing what is convenient for his family, not allowing necessary expenses for the preservation of the goods; this *tends to poverty*; it cramps men's ingenuity and industry, weakens their interest, destroys their credit, and forfeits the blessing of God: and, let men be ever so saving of what they are, if God blast it and blow upon it, it comes to nothing. *A fire not blown shall consume it*, Hag. i. 6, 9.

25 The liberal soul shall be made rich: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.

So backward we are to works of charity, and so ready to think that giving undoes us, that we need to have it very much pressed upon us how much it is for our own advantage to do good to others, as before, r. 17. We shall have the comfort of it in our own bosoms: *The liberal soul*, the soul of blessing, that prays for the afflicted and provides for them, that scatters blessings with gracious lips and generous hands, that soul *shall be made fat* with true pleasure and enriched with more grace. 2. We shall have the recompence of it both from God and man: *He that waters others* with the streams of his bounty

shall be also watered himself; God will certainly return it in the dews, in the plentiful showers, of his blessing, which he will *pour out, till there be not room enough to receive it*, Mal. iii. 10. Men that have any sense of gratitude will return it if there be occasion; the *merciful shall find mercy* and the kind be kindly dealt with. 3. We shall be enabled still to do yet more good: *He that waters, even he shall be as rain* (so some read it); he shall be recruited as the clouds are which return after the rain, and shall be further useful and acceptable, as the rain to the new-mown grass. *He that teaches shall learn* (so the Chaldee reads it); he that uses his knowledge in teaching others shall himself be taught of God; to him that has, and uses what he has, more shall be given.

26 He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him: but blessing *shall be* upon the head of him that selleth it.

See here, 1. What use we are to make of the gifts of God's bounty; we must not hoard them up merely for our own advantage, that we may be enriched by them, but we must bring them forth for the benefit of others, that they may be supported and maintained by them. It is a sin, when corn is dear and scarce, to withhold it, in hopes that it will still grow dearer, so to keep up and advance the market, when it is already so high that the poor suffer by it; and at such a time it is the duty of those that have stocks of corn by them to consider the poor, and to be willing to sell at the market-price, to be content with moderate profit, and not aim to make a gain of God's judgments. It is a noble and extensive piece of charity for those that have stores wherewithal to do it to help to keep the markets low when the price of our commodities grows excessive. 2. What regard we are to have to the voice of the people. We are not to think it an indifferent thing, and not worth heeding, whether we have the ill will and word, or the good will and word, of our neighbours, their prayers or their curses; for here we are taught to dread their curses, and forego our own profit rather than incur them; and to court their blessings, and be at some expense to purchase them. Sometimes, *vox populi est vox Dei—the voice of the people is the voice of God*.

27 He that diligently seeketh good procureth favour: but he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him.

Observe, 1. Those that are industrious to do good in the world get themselves beloved both with God and man: *He that rises early to that which is good* (so the word is), that seeks opportunities of serving his friends and relieving the poor, and lays out himself therein, *procures favour*. All about him love him, and speak well of him, and will be ready to do him a kindness; and, which is better than

that, better than life, he has God's loving-kindness. 2. Those that are industrious to do mischief are preparing ruin for themselves: *It shall come unto them*; some time or other they will be paid in their own coin. And, observe, *seeking mischief* is here set in opposition to *seeking good*; for those that are not doing good are doing hurt.

28 He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.

Observe, 1. Our riches will fail us when we are in the greatest need: *He that trusts in them*, as if they would secure him the favour of God and be his protection and portion, *shall fall*, as a man who lays his weight on a broken reed, which will not only disappoint him, but run into his hand and pierce him. 2. Our righteousness will stand us in stead when our riches fail us: *The righteous shall then flourish as a branch*, the branch of righteousness, like a tree whose leaf shall not wither, Ps. i. 3. Even in death, when riches fail men, the *bones* of the righteous *shall flourish as a herb*, Isa. lxvi. 14. When those that take root in the world wither those that are grafted into Christ and partake of his root and fatness shall be fruitful and flourishing.

29 He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind: and the fool shall be servant to the wise of heart.

Two extremes in the management of family-affairs are here condemned and the ill consequences of them foretold:—1. Carefulness and carnal policy, on the one hand. There are those that by their extreme earnestness in pursuit of the world, their anxiety about their business and fretfulness about their losses, their strictness with their servants and their niggardliness towards their families, *trouble their own houses* and give continual vexation to all about them; while others think, by supporting factions and feuds in their families, which are really a trouble to their houses, to serve some turn for themselves, and either to get or to save by it. But they will both be disappointed; they will *inherit the wind*. All they will get by these arts will not only be empty and worthless as the wind, but noisy and troublesome, vanity and vexation. 2. Carelessness and want of common prudence, on the other. He that is a fool in his business, that either minds it not or goes awkwardly about it, that has no contrivance and consideration, not only loses his reputation and interest, but becomes a *servant to the wise of heart*. He is impoverished, and forced to work for his living; while those that manage wisely raise themselves, and come to have dominion over him, and others like him. It is rational, and very fit, that *the fool should be servant to the wise of heart*, and upon that account, among others, we are bound to submit our wills to

the will of God, and to be subject to him because we are fools and he is infinitely wise.

30 The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.

This shows what great blessings good men are, especially those that are eminently wise to the places where they live, and therefore how much to be valued. 1. The righteous are as *trees of life*; the fruits of their piety and charity, their instructions, reproofs, examples, and prayers, their interest in heaven and their influence upon earth, are like the fruits of that tree, precious and useful, contributing to the support and nourishment of the spiritual life in many; they are the ornaments of paradise, God's church on earth, for whose sake it stands. 2. The wise are something more; they are as trees of knowledge not forbidden, but commanded knowledge. *He that is wise*, by communicating his wisdom, *wins souls*, wins upon them to bring them in love with God and holiness, and so wins them over into the interests of God's kingdom among men. The wise are said to *turn many to righteousness*, and that is the same with winning souls here, Dan. xii. 3. Abraham's proselytes are called *the souls that he had gotten*, Gen. xii. 5. Those that would win souls have need of wisdom to know how to deal with them; and those that do win souls show that they are wise.

31 Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner.

This, I think, is the only one of Solomon's proverbs that has that note of attention prefixed to it, *Behold!* which intimates that it contains not only an evident truth, which may be beheld, but an eminent truth, which must be considered. 1. Some understand both parts of a recompence in displeasure. *The righteous*, if they do amiss, shall be punished for their offences in this world; much more shall wicked people be punished in theirs, which are committed, not through infirmity, but with a high hand. If judgment begin at the house of God, what will become of the ungodly? 1 Pet. iv. 17, 18; Luke xxiii. 31. 2. I rather understand it of a recompence of reward to the righteous and punishment to sinners. Let us behold providential retributions. There are some recompences *in the earth*, in this world, and in the things of this world, which prove that *verily there is a God that judges in the earth* (Ps. lviii. 11); but they are not universal; many sinners go unpunished in the earth, and service unrewarded, which indicates that there is judgment to come, and that there will be more exact and full retributions in the future state. Many times *the righteous are recompensed* for their righteousness here *in the earth*, though that is not the principal, much less the only reward either intended for them

intended by them; but whatever the word of God has promised them, or the wisdom of God sees good for them, they shall have it on the earth. *The wicked also, and the sinner, are sometimes remarkably punished in this life, nations, families, particular persons. And if the righteous, who do not deserve the least reward, yet have part of their recompence here on earth, much more shall the wicked, who deserve the greatest punishment, have part of their punishment on earth, as an earnest of worse to come. Therefore stand in awe and sin not. If those have two heavens that merit none, much more shall those have two hells that merit both.*

CHAP. XII.

WHOSO loveth instruction loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof is brutish.

We are here taught to try whether we have grace or no by enquiring how we stand affected to the means of grace. 1. Those that have grace and love it will delight in all the instructions that are given them by way of counsel, admonition, or reproof, by the word or providence of God; they will value a good education, and think it not a hardship, but a happiness, to be under a strict and prudent discipline. Those that love a faithful ministry, that value it, and sit under it with pleasure, make it to appear that they *love knowledge*. 2. Those show themselves not only void of grace, but void of common sense, that take it as an affront to be told of their faults, and an imposition upon their liberty to be put in mind of their duty: *He that hates reproof* is not only foolish, but *brutish*, like the horse and the mule that have no understanding, or the ox that kicks against the goad. Those that desire to live in loose families and societies, where they may be under no check, that stifle the convictions of their own consciences, and count those their enemies that tell them the truth, are the *brutish* here meant.

A good man obtaineth favour of the Lord: but a man of wicked devices will he condemn.

Note, 1. We are really as we are with God. Those are happy, truly happy, for ever happy, that obtain favour of the Lord, though the world frown upon them, and they find little favour with men; for in God's favour is life, and that is the fountain of all good. On the other hand those are miserable whom he condemns, however men may applaud them, and try them up; whom he condemns he condemns to the second death. 2. We are with God as we are with men, as we have our conversation in this world. Our Father judges of his children very much by their conduct one to another; and therefore a good man, that is merciful, and charitable, and does good, draws out favour from the Lord by his prayers; but a malicious man, that devises

wickedness against his neighbours, he will condemn, as unworthy of a place in his kingdom.

3 A man shall not be established by wickedness: but the root of the righteous shall not be moved.

Note, 1. Though men may advance themselves by sinful arts, they cannot by such arts settle and secure themselves; though they may get large estates they cannot get such as will abide: *A man shall not be established by wickedness*; it may set him in high places, but they are slippery places, Ps. lxxiii. 18. That prosperity which is raised by sin is built on the sand, and so it will soon appear. 2. Though good men may have but little of the world, yet that little will last, and what is honestly got will wear well: *The root of the righteous shall not be moved*, though their branches may be shaken. Those that by faith are rooted in Christ are firmly fixed; in him their comfort and happiness are so rooted as never to be rooted up.

4 A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones.

Note, 1. He that is blessed with a good wife is as happy as if he were upon the throne, for she is no less than a crown to him. *A virtuous woman*, that is pious and prudent, ingenious and industrious, that is active for the good of her family and looks well to the ways of her household, that makes conscience of her duty in every relation, a woman of spirit, that can bear crosses without disturbance, such a one owns her husband for her head, and therefore she is a crown to him, not only a credit and honour to him, as a crown is an ornament, but supports and keeps up his authority in his family, as a crown is an ensign of power. She is submissive and faithful to him and by her example teaches his children and servants to be so too. 2. He that is plagued with a bad wife is as miserable as if he were upon the dunghill; for she is no better than rottenness in his bones, an incurable disease, besides that she makes him ashamed. She that is silly and slothful, wasteful and wanton, passionate and ill-tongued, ruins both the credit and comfort of her husband. If he go abroad, his head is hung down, for his wife's faults turn to his reproach. If he retire into himself, his heart is sunk; he is continually uneasy; it is an affliction that preys much upon the spirits.

5 The thoughts of the righteous are right: but the counsels of the wicked are deceit.

Note, 1. The word of God is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart, and judges them. We mistake if we imagine that thoughts are free. No, they are under the divine cognizance, and therefore under the divine command. 2. We ought to be observers of the thoughts and intents of our

own hearts, and to judge of ourselves by them; for they are the first-born of the soul, that have most of its image undisguised. Right thoughts are a righteous man's best evidences, as nothing more certainly proves a man wicked than wicked contrivances and designs. A good man may have in his mind bad suggestions, but he does not indulge them and harbour them till they are ripened into bad projects and resolutions. 3. It is a man's honour to mean honestly, and to have his thoughts right, though a word or action may be misplaced, or mistimed, or at least misinterpreted. But it is a man's shame to lie always at catch, to act with deceit, with trick and design, not only with a long reach, but with an overreach.

6 The words of the wicked *are* to lie in wait for blood: but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them.

In the foregoing verse the *thoughts* of the wicked and righteous were compared; here their *words*, and those are as the abundance of the heart is. 1. Wicked people speak mischief to their neighbours; and wicked indeed those are whose *words* are to *lie in wait for blood*; their tongues are swords to those that stand in their way, to good men whom they hate and persecute. See an instance, Luke xx. 20, 21. 2. Good men speak help to their neighbours: *The mouth of the upright* is ready to be opened in the cause of those that are oppressed (*ch. xxxi. 8*), to plead for them, to witness for them, and so to *deliver them*, particularly those whom the wicked *lie in wait for*. A man may sometimes do a very good work with one good word.

7 The wicked are overthrown, and *are not*: but the house of the righteous shall stand.

We are here taught as before (*v. 3 and ch. x. 25, 30*), 1. That the *triumphing of the wicked is short*. They may be exalted for a while, but in a little time they are *overthrown and are not*; their trouble proves their overthrow, and those who made a great show disappear, and their place knows them no more. *Turn the wicked, and they are not*; they stand in such a slippery place that the least touch of trouble brings them down, like the apples of Sodom, which look fair, but touch them and they go to dust. 2. That the prosperity of the righteous has a good bottom and will endure. Death will remove them, but their *house shall stand*, their families shall be kept up, and the generation of the upright shall be blessed.

8 A man shall be commended according to his wisdom: but he that is of a perverse heart shall be despised.

We are here told whence to expect a good name. Reputation is what most have a high regard to and stand much upon. Now it is certain, 1. The best reputation is that which attends virtue and serious piety, and the pru-

dent conduct of life: *A man shall be commended* by all that are wise and good, in conformity to the judgment of God himself, which we are sure is *according to truth*, not according to his riches or preferments, his craft and subtlety, but *according to his wisdom*, the honesty of his designs and the prudent choice of means to compass them. 2. The worst reproach is that which follows wickedness and an opposition to that which is good: *He that is of a perverse heart*, that turns aside to crooked ways, and goes on frowardly in them, *shall be despised*. Providence will bring him to poverty and contempt, and all that have a true sense of honour will despise him as unworthy to be dealt with and unfit to be trusted, as a blemish and scandal to mankind.

9 *He that is despised*, and hath a servant, *is better than he that honoureth himself*, and lacketh bread.

Note, 1. It is the folly of some that they covet to make a great figure abroad, take place, and take state, as persons of quality, and yet want necessities at home, and, if their debts were paid, would not be worth a morsel of bread, nay, perhaps, pinch their bellies to put it on their backs, that they may appear very gay, because fine feathers make fine birds. 2. The condition and character of those is every way better who content themselves in a lower sphere, where they are despised for the plainness of their dress and the meanness of their post, that they may be able to afford themselves; not only necessities, but conveniences, in their own houses, not only bread, but a servant to attend them and take some of their work off their hands. Those that contrive to live plentifully and comfortably at home are to be preferred before those that affect nothing so much as to appear splendid abroad, though they have not wherewithal to maintain their appearance, whose hearts are unhumbled when their condition is low.

10 A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked *are* cruel.

See here, 1. To how great a degree a good man will be merciful; he has not only a compassion for the human nature under its greatest abasements, but he regards even *the life of his beast*, not only because it is his servant, but because it is God's creature, and in conformity to Providence, which *preserves man and beast*. The beasts that are under our care must be provided for, must have convenient food and rest, must in no case be abused or tyrannised over. Balaam was checked for beating his ass. The law took care for oxen. Those therefore are unrighteous men that are not just to the brute-creatures; those that are furious and barbarous to them evidence, and confirm in themselves, a habit of barbarity, and help to make the crea-

tion groan, Rom. viii. 22. 2. To how great a degree a wicked man will be unmerciful; even his *tender mercies are cruel*; that natural compassion which is in him, as a man, is lost, and, by the power of corruption, is turned into hard-heartedness; even that which they will have to pass for compassion is really cruel, as Pilate's resolution concerning Christ the innocent, *I will chastise him and let him go*. Their pretended kindnesses are only a cover for purposed cruelties.

11 He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread: but he that followeth vain persons is void of understanding.

Note, 1. It is men's wisdom to mind their business and follow an honest calling, for that is the way, by the blessing of God, to get a livelihood: *He that tills his land, of which he is either the owner or the occupant, that keeps to his work and is willing to take pains, if he do not raise an estate by it (what need is there of that?), yet he shall be satisfied with bread*, shall have food convenient for himself and his family, enough to bear his charges comfortably through the world. Even the sentence of wrath has this mercy in it, Thou shalt *eat bread*, though it be *in the sweat of thy face*. Cain was denied this, Gen. iv. 12. Be busy, and that is the true way to be easy. Keep thy shop and thy shop will keep thee. *Thou shalt eat the labour of thy hands*. 2. It is men's folly to neglect their business. Those are *void of understanding* that do so, for then they fall in with idle companions and follow them in their evil courses, and so come to want bread, at least bread of their own, and make themselves burdensome to others, eating the bread out of other people's mouths.

12 The wicked desireth the net of evil men: but the root of the righteous yieldeth fruit.

See here, 1. What is the care and aim of a wicked man; he would do mischief: *He desires the net of evil men*. "Oh that I were but as cunning as such a man, to make a hand of those I deal with, that I had but his art of over-reaching, that I could but take my revenge on one I have spite to as effectually as he can!" He desires the *strong-hold, or fortress*, of evil men (so some read it), to act securely in doing mischief, that it may not turn upon him. 2. What is the care and aim of a good man: His *root yields fruit*, and is his strength and stability, and that is that he desires, to do good and to be fixed and confirmed in doing good. The wicked desires only a net wherewith to fish for himself; the righteous desires to yield fruit for the benefit of others and God's glory, Rom. xiv. 6.

13 The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips: but the just shall come out of trouble.

See here, 1. The wicked entangling themselves in trouble by their folly, when God in justice leaves them to themselves. They are often *snared by the transgression of their lips* and their throats are cut with their own tongues. By *speaking evil of dignities* they expose themselves to public justice; by giving ill language they become obnoxious to private resentments, are sued for defamation, and actions on the case for words are brought against them. Many a man has paid dearly in this world for the transgression of his lips, and has felt the lash on his back for want of a bridle upon his tongue, Ps. lxiv. 8. 2. The righteous extricating themselves out of trouble by their own wisdom, when God in mercy comes in for their succour: *The just shall come out of such troubles as the wicked throw themselves headlong into*. It is intimated that the just may perhaps come into trouble; but, *though they fall, they shall not be utterly cast down*, Ps. xxxiv. 19.

14 A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth: and the recompence of a man's hands shall be rendered unto him.

We are here assured, for our quickening to every good word and work, 1. That even good words will turn to a good account (*v. 14*): *A man shall be satisfied with good* (that is, he shall gain present comfort, that inward pleasure which is truly satisfying) *by the fruit of his mouth*, by the good he does with his pious discourse and prudent advice. While we are teaching others we may ourselves learn, and feed on the bread of life we break to others. 2. That good works, much more, will be abundantly rewarded: *The recompence of a man's hands* for all his work and labour of love, all he has done for the glory of God and the good of his generation, *shall be rendered unto him*, and he shall reap as he has sown. Or it may be understood of the general rule of justice; God will render to every man according to his work, Rom. ii. 6.

15 The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.

See here, 1. What it is that keeps a fool from being wise: *His way is right in his own eyes*; he thinks he is in the right in every thing he does, and therefore asks no advice, because he does not apprehend he needs it; he is confident he knows the way, and cannot miss it, and therefore never enquires the way. The rule he goes by is to do that which is *right in his own eyes*, to walk in the way of his heart. *Quicquid libet, licet*—He makes his will his law. He is a fool that is governed by his eye, and not by his conscience. 2. What it is that keeps a wise man from being a fool; he is willing to be advised, desires to have counsel given him, and *hearkens to counsel*, being diffident of his own judgment and

having a value for the directions of those that are wise and good. He is wise (it is a sign he is so, and he is likely to continue so) whose ear is always open to good advice.

16 A fool's wrath is presently known: but a prudent *man* covereth shame.

Note, 1. Passion is folly: *A fool is known by his anger* (so some read it); not but that a wise man may be angry when there is just cause for it, but then he has his anger under check and direction, is *lord of his anger*, whereas a fool's anger lords it over him. He that, when he is provoked, breaks out into indecent expressions, in words or behaviour, whose passion alters his countenance, makes him outrageous, and leads him to forget himself, *Nabal* certainly is his name and *folly is with him*. *A fool's indignation is known in the day*; he proclaims it openly, whatever company he is in. Or it is known in the day he is provoked; he cannot defer showing his resentments. Those that are soon angry, that are quickly put into a flame by the least spark, have not that rule which they ought to have over their own spirits. 2. Meekness is wisdom: *A prudent man covers shame*. (1.) He covers the passion that is in his own breast; when his *spirit is stirred*, and his *heart hot within him*, he keeps his mouth as with a bridle, and suppresses his resentments, by smothering and stifling them. Anger is shame, and, though a wise man be not perfectly free from it, yet he is ashamed of it, rebukes it, and suffers not the evil spirit to speak. (2.) He covers the provocation that is given him, the indignity that is done him, winks at it, covers it as much as may be from himself, that he may not carry his resentments of it too far. It is a kindness to ourselves, and contributes to the repose of our own minds, to extenuate and excuse the injuries and affronts that we receive, instead of aggravating them and making the worst of them, as we are apt to do.

17 *He that speaketh truth showeth forth righteousness: but a false witness deceit.*

Here is, 1. A faithful witness commended for an honest man. *He that makes conscience of speaking truth*, and representing every thing fairly, to the best of his knowledge, whether in judgment or in common conversation, whether he be upon his oath or no, *he shows forth righteousness*; he makes it to appear that he is governed and actuated by the principles and laws of righteousness, and he promotes justice by doing honour to it and serving the administration of it. 2. A false witness condemned for a cheat; *he shows forth deceit*, not only how little conscience he makes of deceiving those he deals with, but how much pleasure he takes in it, and that he is possessed by a lying spirit,

Jer. ix. 3—5. We are all concerned to possess ourselves with a dread and detestation of the sin of lying (Ps. cxix. 163) and with reigning principle of honesty.

18 There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health.

The tongue is death or life, poison or medicine, as it is used. 1. There are words that are cutting and killing, that are *like the piercing of a sword*. Opprobrious words grieve the spirits of those to whom they are spoken and cut them to the heart. Slanders, like a sword, wound the reputation of those of whom they are uttered, and perhaps incurably. Whisperings and evil surmises, like a sword, divide and cut asunder the bonds of love and friendship, and separate those that have been dearest to each other. 2. There are words that are curing and healing: *The tongue of the wise is health*, closing up those wounds which the backbiting tongue has given, making all whole again, restoring peace, and accommodating matters in variance and persuading to reconciliation. Wisdom will find out proper remedies against the mischiefs that are made by detraction and evil-speaking.

19 The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment.

Be it observed, to the honour of truth that sacred thing, 1. That, if truth be spoken it will hold good, and, whoever may be disobliged by it and angry at it, yet it will keep its ground. Great is the truth and will prevail. What is true will be always true; we may abide by it, and need not fear being disproved and put to shame. 2. That, if truth be denied, yet in time it will transpire. *A lying tongue*, that puts false colours upon things, *is but for a moment*. The lie will be disproved. The liar, when he comes to be examined, will be found in several stories and not consistent with himself as he that speaks truth; and, when he is found in a lie, he cannot gain his point, nor will he afterwards be credited. Truth may be eclipsed, but it will come to light. Those therefore that make a lie their refuge will find it a refuge of lies.

20 Deceit is in the heart of them that imagine evil: but to the counsellors of peace is joy.

Note, 1. Those that devise mischief contrive, for the accomplishing of it, how to impose upon others; but it will prove, in the end, that they deceive themselves. Those that *imagine evil*, under colour of friendship, have their hearts full of this and the other advantage and satisfaction which they shall gain by it, but it is all a cheat. Let them imagine it ever so artfully, deceivers will be deceived. 2. Those that consult the good

of their neighbours, that study the things which make for peace and give peaceable advice, promote healing attempts and conservative healing methods, and, according as their sphere is, further the public welfare, will have not only the credit, but the comfort of it. They will have joy and success, perhaps beyond their expectation. *Blessed are the peace-makers.*

21 There shall no evil happen to the just: but the wicked shall be filled with mischief.

Note, 1. Piety is a sure protection. If men be sincerely righteous, the righteous God has engaged that no evil shall happen to them. He will, by the power of his grace in them, that principle of justice, keep them from the evil of sin; so that, though they be tempted, yet they shall not be overcome by the temptation, and though they may come into trouble, into many troubles, yet among those troubles shall have no evil in them, whatever they have to others (Ps. xci. 10), for they shall be overruled to work for their good. 2. Wickedness is as sure a destruction. Those that live in contempt of God and man, that are set on mischief, with mischief they shall be filled. They shall be more mischievous, shall be filled with all unrighteousness, Rom. i. 29. Or they shall be made miserable with the mischiefs that shall come upon them. Those that delight in mischief shall have enough of it. Some read the whole verse thus, *There shall no evil happen to the just, though the wicked be filled with mischief and spite against them.* They shall be safe under the protection of Heaven, though hell itself break loose upon them.

22 Lying lips are abomination to the Lord: but they that deal truly are his delight.

We are here taught, 1. To hate lying, and to keep at the utmost distance from it, because it is an abomination to the Lord, and renders those abominable in his sight that follow themselves in it, not only because it is a breach of his law, but because it is destructive to human society. 2. To make conscience of truth, not only in our words, but in all our actions, because those that deal truly and sincerely in all their dealings are his delight, and he is well pleased with them. We delight to converse with, and make use of, those that are honest and that we may put a confidence in; such therefore let us be, that we may recommend ourselves to the favour both of God and man.

23 A prudent man concealeth knowledge: but the heart of fools proclaimeth foolishness.

Note, 1. He that is wise does not affect to proclaim his wisdom, and it is his honour that he does not. He communicates his

knowledge when it may turn to the edification of others, but he conceals it when the showing of it would only tend to his own commendation. Knowing men, if they be prudent men, will carefully avoid every thing that savours of ostentation, and not take all occasions to show their learning and reading, but only to use it for good purposes, and then let their own works praise them. *Ars est celare artem*—The perfection of art is to conceal it. 2. He that is foolish cannot avoid proclaiming his folly, and it is his shame that he cannot: *The heart of fools*, by their foolish words and actions, proclaims foolishness; either they do not desire to hide it, so little sense have they of good and evil, honour and dishonour, or they know not how to hide it, so little discretion have they in the management of themselves, Eccl. x. 3.

24 The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute.

Note, 1. Industry is the way to preferment. Solomon advanced Jeroboam because he saw that he was an industrious young man, and minded his business, 1 Kings xi. 28. Men that take pains in study and serviceableness will thereby gain such an interest and reputation as will give them a dominion over all about them, by which means many have risen strangely. He that has been faithful in a few things shall be made ruler over many things. The elders, that labour in the word and doctrine, are worthy of double honour; and those that are diligent when they are young will get that which will enable them to rule, and so to rest, when they are old. 2. Knavery is the way to slavery: *The slothful and careless, or rather the deceitful* (for so the word signifies), shall be under tribute. Those that, because they will not take pains in an honest calling, live by their shifts and arts of dishonesty, are paltry and beggarly, and will be kept under. Those that are diligent and honest when they are apprentices will come to be masters; but those that are otherwise are the fools who, all their days, must be servants to the wise in heart.

25 Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad.

Here is, 1. The cause and consequence of melancholy. It is heaviness in the heart; it is a load of care, and fear, and sorrow, upon the spirits, depressing them, and disabling them to exert themselves with any vigour in what is to be done or fortitude in what is to be borne; it makes them stoop, prostrates and sinks them. Those that are thus oppressed can neither do the duty nor take the comfort of any relation, condition, or conversation. Those therefore that are inclined to it should watch and pray against it. 2. The cure of it: *A good word* from God, applied by faith, makes it glad; such a word is that (says one

of the rabbin), *Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee*; the good word of God, particularly the gospel, is designed to make the hearts glad that are weary and heavy-laden, Matt. xi. 28. Ministers are to be helpers of this joy.

26 The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour: but the way of the wicked seduceth them.

See here, 1. That good men do well for themselves; for they have in themselves an excellent character, and they secure to themselves an excellent portion, and in both they excel other people: *The righteous is more abundant than his neighbour* (so the margin); he is richer, though not in this world's goods, yet in the graces and comforts of the Spirit, which are the true riches. There is a true excellency in religion; it ennobles men, inspires them with generous principles, makes them substantial; it is an excellency which is, in the sight of God, of great price, who is the true Judge of excellency. His neighbour may make a greater figure in the world, may be more applauded, but the righteous man has the intrinsic worth. 2. That wicked men do ill for themselves; they walk in a way which *seduces them*. It seems to them to be not only a pleasant way, but the right way; it is so agreeable to flesh and blood that they therefore flatter themselves with an opinion that it cannot be amiss, but they will not gain the point they aim at, nor enjoy the good they hope for. It is all a cheat; and therefore the righteous is wiser and happier than his neighbour, that yet despise him and trample upon him.

27 The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious.

Here is, 1. That which may make us hate slothfulness and deceit, for the word here, as before, signifies both: *The slothful* deceitful man has roast meat, but that which he roasts is not what he himself *took in hunting*; no, it is what others took pains for, and he lives upon the fruit of their labours, like the drones in the hive. Or, if slothful deceitful men have taken any thing by hunting (as sportsmen are seldom men of business), yet they do not roast it when they have taken it; they have no comfort in the enjoyment of it; perhaps God in his providence cuts them short of it. 2. That which may make us in love with industry and honesty, that the *substance of a diligent man*, though it be not great perhaps, is yet *precious*. It comes from the blessing of God; he has comfort in it; it does him good, and his family. It is his own daily bread, not bread out of other people's mouths, and therefore he sees God gives it to him in answer to his prayer.

28 In the way of righteousness is

life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death.

The way of religion is here recommended to us, 1. As a straight, plain, easy way; it is *the way of righteousness*. God's command (the rule we are to walk by) are all holy, just and good. Religion has right reason and equity on its side; it is a *path-way*, a way which God has cast up for us (Isa. xxxiv. 8) it is a highway, the king's highway, the King of kings' highway, a way which is tracked before us by all the saints, the good old way full of the footsteps of the flock. 2. As a safe, pleasant, comfortable way. (1.) There is no only life at the end, but there is life in the way; all true comfort and satisfaction. The favour of God, which is better than life; the Spirit, who is life. (2.) There is not only life in it, but so as that in it *there is no death*, none of that sorrow of the world which worketh death and is an alloy to our present joy and life. There is no end of that life that is in the way of righteousness. Here there is life but there is death too. *In the way of righteousness there is life, and no death*, life and immortality.

CHAP. XIII.

A WISE son heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke.

Among the children of the same parents there is no new thing for some to be hopeful and others the contrary; now here we are taught to distinguish. 1. There is great hope of those that have a reverence for their parents and are willing to be advised and admonished by them. He is a *wise son*, and is in a fair way to be wiser, that *hears his father's instruction*, desires to hear it, regards it, and complies with it, and does not merely give ear to the hearing. 2. There is little hope of those that will not so much as *hear rebuke* with any patience, but scorn to submit to government and scoff at those that deal faithfully with them. How can those mend a fault who will not be told of it, but count those their enemies who do them that kindness?

2 A man shall eat good by the fruit of his mouth: but the soul of the transgressors shall eat violence.

Note, 1. If that which comes from within out of the heart, be good, and from a good treasure, it will return with advantage. Inward comfort and satisfaction will be daily bread; nay, it will be a continual feast to those who delight in that communication which is *to the use of edifying*. 2. Violence done will recoil in the face of him that does it: *The soul of the transgressors* that harbour and plots mischief, and vents it by word and deed, *shall eat violence*; they shall have their belly full of it. *Reward her as she has rewarded thee*, Rev. xviii. 6. Every man shall drink as he brews, eat as he speaks; for by our words we must be justified or condemned.

att. xii. 37. As our fruit is, so will our food
Rom. vi. 21, 22.

3 He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: *but* he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.

Note, 1. A guard upon the lips is a guard upon the soul. He that is cautious, that thinks twice before he speaks once, that, if he have wrought evil, lays his hand upon his mouth to suppress it, that keeps a strong bridle on his tongue and a strict hand on that bridle, he keeps his soul from a great deal both of guilt and grief and saves himself the trouble of many bitter reflections on himself and rejections of others upon him. 2. There is no one ruined by an ungoverned tongue: *that opens widely his lips*, to let out *quod buccam tenerit—whatever comes uppermost*, that loves to bawl, and bluster, and make a noise, and affects such a liberty of speech as is defiance both to God and man, he shall have destruction. It will be the destruction of his reputation, his interest, his comfort, and his soul for ever, Jam. iii. 6.

4 The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.

Here is, 1. The misery and shame of the slothful. See how foolish and absurd they are; they desire the gains which the diligent have, but they hate the pains which the diligent take; they covet every thing that is to be gained, but will do nothing that is to be done; therefore it follows, They have nothing; he that will not labour let him hunger, let him not eat, 2 Thess. iii. 10. *The desire of the slothful*, which should be his excrement, is his torment, which should make him busy, makes him always uneasy, and is really a greater toil to him than labour would be. 2. The happiness and honour of the diligent: *Their soul shall be made fat*; they shall have abundance, and shall have the comfortable enjoyment of it, and the more for its being the fruit of their diligence. This is especially true in spiritual affairs. Those that sit in idle wishes know not what the advantages of religion are; whereas those that take pains in the service of God find both the pleasure and profit of it.

5 A righteous man hateth lying: but a wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame.

Note, 1. Where grace reigns sin is loathsome. It is the undoubted character of every righteous man that he hates lying (that is, all lies), for every sin is a lie, and particularly all fraud and falsehood in commerce and conversation, not only that he will not tell a lie, but he abhors lying, from a rooted reigning principle of love to truth and justice, and conformity to God. 2. Where sin reigns the man is loathsome. If his eyes were opened, and his conscience awakened, he would be so to himself, he would *abhor himself and repent in dust*

and ashes; however, he is so to God and all good men; particularly, he makes himself so by lying, than which there is nothing more detestable. And, though he may think to face it out awhile, yet he will come to shame and contempt at last and will blush to show his face, Dan. xii. 2.

6 Righteousness keepeth him that is upright in the way: but wickedness overthroweth the sinner.

See here, 1. Saints secured from ruin. Those that are *upright in their way*, that mean honestly in all their actions, adhere conscientiously to the sacred and eternal rules of equity, and deal sincerely both with God and man, their integrity will keep them from the temptations of Satan, which shall not prevail over them, the reproaches and injuries of evil men, which shall not fasten upon them, to do them any real mischief, Ps. xxv. 21.

Hic murus aeneus esto, nil conscire sibi.

Be this thy brazen bulwark of defence,
Still to preserve thy conscious innocence.

2. Sinners secured for ruin. Those that are wicked, even their wickedness will be their overthrow at last, and they are held in the cords of it in the mean time. Are they corrected, destroyed? It is their own wickedness that corrects them, that destroys them; they alone shall bear it.

7 There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: *there is* that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.

This observation is applicable,

I. To men's worldly estate. The world is a great cheat, not only the things of the world, but the men of the world. *All men are liars*. Here is an instance in two sore evils under the sun:—1. Some that are really poor would be thought to be rich and are thought to be so; they trade and spend as if they were rich, make a great bustle and a great show as if they had hidden treasures, when perhaps, if all their debts were paid, they are not worth a groat. This is sin, and will be shame; many a one hereby ruins his family and brings reproach upon his profession of religion. Those that thus live above what they have choose to be subject to their own pride rather than to God's providence, and it will end accordingly. 2. Some that are really rich would be thought to be poor, and are thought to be so, because they sordidly and meanly live below what God has given them, and choose rather to bury it than to use it, Eccl. vi. 1, 2. In this there is an ingratitude to God, injustice to the family and neighbourhood, and uncharitableness to the poor.

II. To their spiritual state. Grace is the riches of the soul; it is true riches; but men commonly misrepresent themselves, either designedly or through mistake and ignorance of themselves. 1. There are many presuming hypocrites, that are really poor and empty of

grace and yet either think themselves rich, and will not be convinced of their poverty, or pretend themselves rich, and will not own their poverty. 2. There are many timorous trembling Christians, that are spiritually rich, and full of grace, and yet think themselves poor, and will not be persuaded that they are rich, or, at least, will not own it; by their doubts and fears, their complaints and griefs, they *make themselves poor*. The former mistake is destroying at last; this is disquieting in the mean time.

8 The ransom of a man's life are his riches. but the poor heareth not rebuke.

We are apt to judge of men's blessedness, at least in this world, by their wealth, and that that they are more or less happy accordingly as they have more or less of this world's goods; but Solomon here shows what a gross mistake it is, that we may be reconciled to a poor condition, and may neither covet riches ourselves nor envy those that have abundance. 1. Those that are rich, if by some they are respected for their riches, yet, to balance that, by others they are envied and struck at, and brought in danger of their lives, which therefore they are forced to ransom with their riches. *Slay us not, for we have treasures in the field*, Jer. xli. 8. Under some tyrants, it has been crime enough to be rich; and how little is a man beholden to his wealth when it only serves to redeem that life which otherwise would not have been exposed! 2. Those that are poor, if by some, that should be their friends, they are despised and overlooked, yet, to balance that, they are also despised and overlooked by others that would be their enemies if they had any thing to lose: *The poor hear not rebuke*, are not censured, reproached, accused, nor brought into trouble, as the rich are; for nobody thinks it worth while to take notice of them. When the rich Jews were carried captives to Babylon the poor of the land were left, 2 Kings xxv. 12. Welcome nothing, once in seven years. *Cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator—When a traveller is met by a robber he will rejoice at not having much property about him.*

9 The light of the righteous rejoiceth: but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out.

Here is, 1. The comfort of good men flourishing and lasting: *The light of the righteous rejoices*, that is, it increases, and makes them glad. Even their outward prosperity is their joy, and much more those gifts, graces, and comforts, with which their souls are illuminated; these *shine more and more*, ch. iv. 18. The Spirit is their light, and he gives them a fulness of joy, and *rejoices to do them good*. 2. The comfort of bad men withering and dying: *The lamp of the wicked burns dimly and faint*; it looks melancholy, like a taper in an urn, and it will shortly be put out in

utter darkness, Isa. 1. 11. The light of the righteous is as that of the sun, which may be eclipsed and clouded, but will continue; that of the wicked is as a lamp of their own kindling, which will presently go out and is easily put out.

10 Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised wisdom.

Note, 1. Foolish pride is the great mate. Would you know whence come wars and fightings? They come from this root of bitterness. Whatever hand other lusts may have in contention (passion, envy, covetousness) pride has the great hand; it is its pride that it will itself sow discord and needs no help. Pride makes men impatient of contradiction in either their opinions or their desires, impatient of competition and rivalry, impatient of contempt, or any thing that looks like a slight, and impatient of concession, and receding, from a conceit of certain right and truth on their side; and hence arise quarrels among relations and neighbours, quarrels of states and kingdoms, in churches and Christian societies. Men will be revenged, will not forgive, because they are proud. 2. Those that are humble and peaceable are wise as well advised. Those that will ask and take advice, that will consult their own conscience, their Bibles, their ministers, their friends, and will do nothing rashly, are wise, and other things, so in this, that they will humble themselves, will stoop and yield, to preserve quietness and prevent quarrels.

11 Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase.

This shows that riches wear as they are won and woven. 1. That which is won will never wear well, for a curse attends which will waste it, and the same corrupt dispositions which incline men to the sinful ways of getting will incline them to the sinful ways of spending: *Wealth gotten by vanity will be bestowed upon vanity, and then it will be diminished*. That which is gotten by such employments as are not lawful, not becoming Christians, such as only serve to feed pride and luxury, that which is gotten by gaming or by the stage, may as truly be said to be gotten by vanity as that which is got by fraud and lying, and will be diminished. *De male quaesitis vix gaudet tertius haeres—The man that gets wealth ill will scarcely be enjoyed by the third generation*. 2. That which is got by industry and honesty will grow more, instead of growing less; it will be a maintenance; it will be an inheritance; it will be an abundance. *For he that labours, working with his hands, shall increase as that he shall have to give to him that needs* (Eph. iv. 28); and, when it comes to that, it will increase yet more and more.

12 Hope deferred maketh the heart sick

ck: but *when the desire cometh, it* a tree of life.

Note, 1. Nothing is more grievous than the disappointment of a raised expectation, though not in the thing itself by a denial, but in the time of it by a delay: *Hope deferred makes the heart sick* and languishing, fretful and peevish; but hope quite dashed kills the heart, and the more high the expectation was raised the more cutting is the frustration of it.

It is therefore our wisdom not to promise ourselves any great matters from the creature, nor to feed ourselves with any vain hopes from this world, lest we lay up matter for our own vexation; and what we do hope let us prepare to be disappointed in, that, if it should prove so, it may prove the easier; and let us not be hasty. 2. Nothing is more grateful than to enjoy that, at last, which we have long wished and waited for: *When the desire does come it puts men into a sort of paradise, a garden of pleasure, for it is a tree of life.* It will aggravate the eternal misery of the wicked that their hopes will be frustrated; and it will make the happiness of heaven the more welcome to the saints that is what they have earnestly longed for as the crown of their hopes.

13 Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed: but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded.

Here is, 1. The character of one that is marked for ruin: He that *despises the word of God*, and has no regard to it, no veneration for it, nor will be ruled by it, certainly *shall be destroyed*, for he slights that which is the only means of curing a destructive disease and makes himself obnoxious to that divine wrath which will certainly be his deduction. Those that prefer the rules of carnal policy before divine precepts, and the allurements of the world and the flesh before God's promises and comforts, despise his word, giving the preference to those things that stand in competition with it; and it is their own just destruction: they would not take warning. 2. The character of one that is sure to be happy: *He that fears the commandment*, that stands in awe of God, pays reverence to his authority, has a reverence for his word, is afraid of displeasing God and incurring the penalties annexed to the commandment, shall not only escape destruction, but *shall be rewarded* for his godly fear. *Keeping the commandment there is great reward.*

14 The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.

By the law of the wise and righteous, here, we may understand either the principles and rules by which they govern themselves or (which comes all to one) the instructions which they give to others, which ought to be a law to all about them; and if they be so,

1. They will be constant springs of comfort and satisfaction, as a *fountain of life*, sending forth streams of living water; the closer we keep to those rules the more effectually we secure our own peace. 2. They will be constant preservatives from the temptations of Satan. Those that follow the dictates of this law will keep at a distance from the snares of sin, and so escape *the snares of death* which those run into that forsake *the law of the wise*.

15 Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard.

If we compare not only the end, but the way, we shall find that religion has the advantage; for, 1. The way of saints is pleasant and agreeable: *Good understanding gains favour with God and man*; our Saviour grew in that favour when he *increased in wisdom*. Those that conduct themselves prudently, and order their conversation aright in every thing, that *serve Christ in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, are accepted of God and approved of men*, Rom. xiv. 17, 18. And how comfortably will that man pass through the world who is well understood and is therefore well accepted! 2. The way of sinners is rough and uneasy, and, for this reason, unpleasant to themselves, because unacceptable to others. It is *hard*, hard upon others, who complain of it, hard to the sinner himself, who can have little enjoyment of himself while he is doing that which is disobliging to all mankind. The service of sin is perfect slavery, and the road to hell is strewn with the thorns and thistles that are the products of the curse. Sinners labour in the very fire.

16 Every prudent man dealeth with knowledge: but a fool layeth open his folly.

Note, 1. It is wisdom to be cautious. *Every prudent discreet man* does all *with knowledge* (considering with himself and consulting with others), acts with deliberation and is upon the reserve, is careful not to meddle with that which he has not some knowledge of, nor to launch out into business which he has not acquainted himself with, will not *deal with* those that he has not some knowledge of, whether they may be confided in. He is still dealing in knowledge, that he may increase the stock he has. 2. It is folly to be rash, as the *fool* is, who is forward to talk of things he knows nothing of and undertake that which he is no way fit for, and so *lays open his folly* and makes himself ridiculous. *He began to build and was not able to finish.*

17 A wicked messenger falleth into mischief: but a faithful ambassador is health.

Here we have, 1. The ill consequences of betraying a trust. *A wicked messenger, who,*

being sent to negociate any business, is false to him that employed him, divulges his counsels, and so defeats his designs, cannot expect to prosper, but will certainly *fall into some mischief* or other, will be discovered and punished, since nothing is more hateful to God and man than the treachery of those that have a confidence reposed in them. 2. The happy effects of fidelity: An ambassador who *faithfully* discharges his trust, and serves the interests of those who employ him, *is health*; he is health to those by whom and for whom he is employed, heals differences that are between them, and preserves a good understanding; he is health to himself, for he secures his own interest. This is applicable to ministers, Christ's messengers and ambassadors; those that are wicked and false to Christ and the souls of men do mischief and *fall into mischief*, but those that are faithful will find sound words to be healing words to others and themselves.

18 Poverty and shame *shall be to him* that refuseth instruction: but he that regardeth reproof shall be honoured.

Note, 1. He that is so proud that he scorns to be taught will certainly be abased. He that *refuses* the good instruction offered him, as if it were a reflection upon his honour and an abridgment of his liberty, *poverty and shame shall be to him*: he will become a beggar and live and die in disgrace; every one will despise him as foolish, and stubborn, and ungovernable. 2. He that is so humble that he takes it well to be told of his faults shall certainly be exalted: *He that regards a reproof*, whoever gives it to him, and will mend what is amiss when it is shown him, gains respect as wise and candid; he avoids that which would be a disgrace to him and is in a fair way to make himself considerable.

19 The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul: but *it is* abomination to fools to depart from evil.

This shows the folly of those that refuse instruction, for they might be happy and will not. 1. They might be happy. There are in man strong desires of happiness; God has provided for the accomplishment of those desires, and that would be *sweet to the soul*, whereas the pleasures of sense are grateful only to the carnal appetite. *The desire of good men towards the favour of God and spiritual blessings brings that which is sweet to their souls*; we know those that can say so by experience, Ps. iv. 6, 7. 2. Yet they will not be happy; for *it is an abomination to them to depart from evil*, which is necessary to their being happy. Never let those expect any thing truly sweet to their souls that will not be persuaded to leave their sins, but that roll them under their tongues as a sweet morsel.

20 He that walketh with wise *men*

shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

Note, 1. Those that would be good must keep good company, which is an evidence for them that they would be good (men's character is known by the company they choose and will be a means of making them good, showing them the way and of quickening and encouraging them in it. He that would be himself wise must walk with those that are so, must choose such for his intimate acquaintance, and converse with them accordingly; must ask and receive instruction from them, and keep up pious and profitable talk with them. *Miss not the discourse of the elders, for they also learned of their fathers* Ecclesiasticus viii. 9. And (Ecclesiasticus 35), *Be willing to hear every godly discourse and let not the parables of understanding escape thee*. 2. Multitudes are brought to ruin by bad company: *A companion of fools shall be broken* (so some), *shall be known* (the LXX.), known to be a fool; *nosceitur socio—he is known by his company*. He will be like them (so some), will be made wicked (so others); it comes all to one, for all those and those only, that make themselves wicked will be destroyed, and those that associate with evil-doers are debauched, and so undone, and at last ascribe their death to it.

21 Evil pursueth sinners: but the righteous good shall be repayed.

Here see, 1. How unavoidable the destruction of sinners is; the wrath of God pursues them, and all the terrors of his wrath: *Evil pursues them closely* wherever they go, as the avenger of blood pursued the manslayer, and they have no city of refuge to flee to; they attempt an escape, but in vain. Whom God pursues he is sure to overtake. They may prosper for a while and grow very secure, but their damnation slumbers not, though they do. 2. How indefeasible the happiness of the saints is; the Good that cannot lie has engaged that *to the righteous good shall be repaid*. They shall be abundantly recompensed for all the good they have done, and all the ill they have suffered, in this world; so that, though many have been losers for their righteousness, they shall not be losers by it. Though the recompence do not come quickly, it will come at the day of payment, in the world of retribution; and it will be an abundant recompence.

22 A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.

See here, 1. How a good man's estate lasts. He leaves an inheritance to his children's children. It is part of his praise that he is thoughtful for posterity, that he does not lay all out upon himself, but is in care to do well for those that come after him, not by wit

ding more than is meet, but by a prudent and decent frugality. He trains up his children to this, that they may leave it to their children; and especially he is careful, both justice and charity, to obtain the blessing of God upon what he has, and to entail that blessing upon his children, without which the greatest industry and frugality will be in vain: *A good man*, by being good and doing good, by honouring the Lord with his substance and spending it in his service, secures it to his posterity; or, if he should not leave much of this world's goods, his prayers, instructions, his good example, will be the best entail, and the promises of the covenant shall be an inheritance to his *children's children*, ciii. 17. 2. How it increases by the accession of the *wealth of the sinner* to it, for that *laid up for the just*. If it be asked, How could good men grow so rich, who are not eager upon the world as others are and so commonly suffer for their well-doing? It is here answered, God, in his providence, often brings into their hands that which wicked people had laid up for themselves. *The innocent shall divide the silver*, Job xxvii. 17. The Israelites shall spoil the Egyptians c. xii. 36) and eat the riches of the Gens, Isa. lxi. 6.

23 Much food is in the tillage of the poor: but there is that is destroy-
for want of judgment.

See here, 1. How a small estate may be improved by industry, so that a man, by making the best of every thing, may live comfortably upon it: *Much food is in the tillage of the poor*, the poor farmers, that have but a little, but take pains with that little and husband it well. Many make it an excuse for their idleness that they have but a little to work on, a very little to be doing with; but the less compass the field is of the more they let the skill and labour of the owner be employed about it, and it will turn to a very good account. Let him dig, and he needs not beg. 2. How a great estate may be ruined by indiscretion: *There is that has a great deal, but it is destroyed* and brought to nothing *for want of judgment*, that is, prudence in the management of it. Men over-ruled themselves or over-bought themselves, or a greater company, or a better table, or more servants, than they can afford, suffer at last they have to go to decay and do not make the most of it; by taking up money themselves, or being bound for others, their estates are sunk, their families reduced, and they suffer *for want of judgment*.

24 He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.

Note, 1. To the education of children in that which is good there is necessary a due correction of them for what is amiss; every child of ours is a child of Adam, and there-

fore has that foolishness bound up in its heart which calls for rebuke, more or less, the rod and reproof which give wisdom. Observe, It is *his rod* that must be used, the rod of a parent, directed by wisdom and love, and designed for good, not the rod of a servant. 2. It is good to begin betimes with the necessary restraints of children from that which is evil, before vicious habits are confirmed. The branch is easily bent when it is tender. 3. Those really hate their children, though they pretend to be fond of them, that do not keep them under a strict discipline, and by all proper methods, severe ones when gentle ones will not serve, make them sensible of their faults and afraid of offending. They abandon them to their worst enemy, to the most dangerous disease, and therefore hate them. Let this reconcile children to the correction their good parents give them; it is from love, and for their good, Heb. xii. 7—9.

25 The righteous eateth to the satisfying of his soul: but the belly of the wicked shall want.

Note, 1. It is the happiness of the righteous that they shall have enough and that they know when they have enough. They desire not to be surfeited, but, being moderate in their desires, they are soon satisfied. Nature is content with a little and grace with less; enough is as good as a feast. Those that feed on the bread of life, that feast on the promises, meet with abundant satisfaction of soul there, eat, and are filled. 2. It is the misery of the wicked that, through the insatiableness of their own desires, they are always needy; not only their souls shall not be satisfied with the world and the flesh, but even their *belly shall want*; their sensual appetite is always craving. In hell they shall be denied a drop of water.

CHAP. XIV.

EVERY wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.

Note, 1. A good wife is a great blessing to a family. By a fruitful wife a family is multiplied and replenished with children, and so built up. But by a prudent wife, one that is pious, industrious, and considerate, the affairs of the family are made to prosper, debts are paid, portions raised, provision made, the children well educated and maintained, and the family has comfort within doors and credit without; thus is the house built. She looks upon it as her own to take care of, though she knows it is her husband's to bear rule in, Esth. i. 22. 2. Many a family is brought to ruin by ill housewifery, as well as by ill husbandry. A *foolish* woman, that has no fear of God nor regard to her business, that is wilful, and wasteful, and humoursome, that indulges her ease and appetite, and is all for jaunting and feasting,

cards and the play-house, though she come to a plentiful estate, and to a family beforehand, she will impoverish and waste it, and will as certainly be the ruin of her house as if she *plucked it down with her hands*; and the husband himself, with all his care, can scarcely prevent it.

2 He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the LORD: but *he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him*.

Here are, 1. Grace and sin in their true colours. Grace reigning is a reverence of God, and gives honour to him who is infinitely great and high, and to whom all honour is due, than which what is more becoming or should be more pleasing to the rational creature? Sin reigning is no less than a contempt of God. In this, more than in any thing, sin appears exceedingly sinful, that it despises God, whom angels adore. Those that despise God's precepts, and will not be ruled by them, his promises, and will not accept of them, despise God himself and all his attributes. 2. Grace and sin in their true light. By this we may know a man that has grace, and the fear of God, reigning in him, *he walks in his uprightness*, he makes conscience of his actions, is faithful both to God and man, and every step he makes, as well as every step he takes, is by rule; here is one that honours God. But, on the contrary, *he that is perverse in his ways*, that willfully follows his own appetites and passions, that is unjust and dishonest and contradicts his profession in his conversation, however he may pretend to devotion, he is a wicked man, and will be reckoned with as a despiser of God himself.

3 In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride: but the lips of the wise shall preserve them.

See here, 1. A proud fool exposing himself. Where there is pride in the heart, and no wisdom in the head to suppress it, it commonly shows itself in the words: *In the mouth there is pride*, proud boasting, proud censuring, proud scorning, proud commanding and giving law; this is the *rod*, or branch, of pride; the word is used only here and Isa. xi. 1. It grows from that root of bitterness which is in the heart; it is a rod from that stem. The root must be plucked up, or we cannot conquer this branch. Or it is meant of a smiting beating rod, a *rod of pride* which strikes others. The proud man with his tongue lays about him and deals blows at pleasure, but it will in the end be a rod to himself; the proud man shall come under an ignominious correction by the words of his own mouth, not cut as a soldier, but caned as a servant; and herein he will be beaten with his own rod, Ps. lxxiv. 8. 2. A humble wise man saving himself and consulting his own good: *The lips of the wise shall preserve them* from doing that mischief to others which

proud men do with their tongues, and from bringing that mischief on themselves which haughty scorers are often involved in.

4 Where no oxen are, the crib clean: but much increase is by the strength of the ox.

Note, 1. The neglect of husbandry is the way to poverty: *Where no oxen are*, to till the ground and tread out the corn, *the ground is empty, is clean*; there is no straw for cattle, and consequently no bread for the service of man. Scarcity is represented by *cleanness of teeth*, Amos iv. 6. *Where no oxen are* there is nothing to be done at the ground, and then nothing to be had out of it; *the crib* indeed *is clean from dung*, which pleases the neat and nice, that cannot endure husbandry because there is so much dirt and work in it, and therefore will sell their oxen to keep the crib clean; but then not only the labour, but even the dung of the ox is wanted. This shows the folly of those who addict themselves to the pleasures of the country, but do not mind the business of it, who (as we say) keep more horses than kine, more dogs than swine; their families must needs suffer by it. 2. Those who take pains about their ground are likely to reap the profit of it. Those who keep that about them which is for use and service, not for state and show, more husbandmen than footmen are likely to thrive: *Much increase is by the strength of the ox*; that is made for our service, and is profitable alive and dead.

5 A faithful witness will not lie, but a false witness will utter lies.

In the administration of justice much depends upon the witnesses, and therefore it is necessary to the common good that witnesses be principled as they ought to be; for, 1. A witness that is conscientious will not dare to give in a testimony that is in the least untrue, nor, for good-will or ill-will, represent a thing otherwise than according to the best of his knowledge, whoever is pleased or displeased, and then judgment runs down like a river. 2. But a witness that will be bribed and biassed, and browbeaten, *will utter lies* (and not stick nor startle at it), with a much readiness and assurance as if what he said were all true.

6 A scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not: but knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth.

Note, 1. The reason why some people seek wisdom, and do not find it, is because they do not seek it from a right principle and in a right manner. They are scorers, and it is in scorn that they ask instruction, that they may ridicule what is told them and may cavil at it. Many put questions to Christ, tempting him, and that they might have wherewith to accuse him, but they were never the wiser. No marvel if those who seek wisdom, as Simon Magus sought the gifts of the Holy

host, to serve their pride and covetousness, and not find it, for they seek amiss. Herod desired to see a miracle, but he was a scorner, and therefore it was denied him, Luke xxiii.

Scorners speed not in prayer. 2. To those who understand aright, who depart from evil (for that is understanding), the knowledge of God and of his will is easy. The parables which harden scorners in their morning, and make divine things more difficult to them, enlighten those who are willing to learn, and make the same things more plain, and intelligible, and familiar to them, Matt. xiii. 11, 15, 16. The same word which the scornful is a savour of death unto death, the humble and serious is a savour of life to life. He that understands, so as to depart from evil (for that is understanding), to quit his prejudices, to lay aside all corrupt dissensions and affections, will easily apprehend instruction and receive the impressions of it.

7 Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge.

See here, 1. How we may discern a fool and discover him, a wicked man, for he is a foolish man. If we perceive not in him the lips of knowledge, if we find there is no relish or savour of piety in his discourse, that his communication is all corrupt and corrupting, and nothing in it good and to the use of edifying, we may conclude the treasure is bad.

How we must decline such a one and depart from him: Go from his presence, for thou perceivest there is no good to be gotten by his company, but danger of getting hurt by it! Sometimes the only way we have of proving wicked discourse and witnessing against it is by leaving the company and going out of the hearing of it.

8 The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way: but the folly of fools is deceit.

See here, 1. The good conduct of a wise and good man; he manages himself well. It is not the wisdom of the learned, which consists only in speculation, that is here recommended, but the wisdom of the prudent, which is practical, and is of use to direct our counsels and actions. Christian prudence consists in a right understanding of our way; for we are travellers, whose concern it is, not to spy wonders, but to get forward towards their journey's end. It is to understand our own way, not to be critics and busybodies in other men's matters, but to look well to ourselves and ponder the path of our feet, to understand the directions of our way, that we may observe them, the dangers of our way, that we may avoid them, the difficulties of our way, that we may break through them, and the advantages of our way, that we may improve them—to understand the rules we are to walk by and the ends we are to walk towards, and walk accordingly. 2.

The bad conduct of a bad man; he puts a cheat upon himself. He does not rightly understand his way; he thinks he does, and so misses his way, and goes on in his mistake: The folly of fools is deceit; it cheats them into their own ruin. The folly of him that built on the sand was deceit.

9 Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous there is favour.

See here, 1. How wicked people are hardened in their wickedness: they make a mock at sin. They make a laughing matter of the sins of others, making themselves and their companions merry with that for which they should mourn, and they make a light matter of their own sins, both when they are tempted to sin and when they have committed it; they call evil good and good evil (Isa. v. 20), turn it off with a jest, rush into sin (Jer. viii. 6) and say they shall have peace though they go on. They care not what mischief they do by their sins, and laugh at those that tell them of it. They are advocates for sin, and are ingenious at framing excuses for it. Fools make a mock at the sin-offering (so some); those that make light of sin make light of Christ. Those are fools that make light of sin, for they make light of that which God complains of (Amos ii. 13), which lay heavily upon Christ, and which they themselves will have other thoughts of shortly. 2. How good people are encouraged in their goodness: Among the righteous there is favour; if they in any thing offend, they presently repent and obtain the favour of God. They have a goodwill one to another; and among them, in their societies, there is mutual charity and compassion in cases of offences, and no mocking.

10 The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy.

This agrees with 1 Cor. ii. 11, What man knows the things of a man, and the changes of his temper, save the spirit of a man? 1. Every man feels most from his own burden, especially that which is a burden upon the spirits, for that is commonly concealed and the sufferer keeps it to himself. We must not censure the griefs of others, for we know not what they feel; their stroke perhaps is heavier than their groaning. 2. Many enjoy a secret pleasure, especially in divine consolations, which others are not aware of, much less are sharers in; and, as the sorrows of a penitent, so the joys of a believer are such as a stranger does not intermeddle with and therefore is no competent judge of.

11 The house of the wicked shall be overthrown: but the tabernacle of the upright shall flourish.

Note, 1. Sin is the ruin of great families: The house of the wicked, though built ever so strong and high, shall be overthrown, shall be brought to poverty and disgrace, and at

length be extinct. His hope for heaven, the house on which he leans, shall not stand, but fail in the storm; the deluge that comes will sweep it away. 2. Righteousness is the rise and stability even of mean families: *Even the tabernacle of the upright, though movable and despicable as a tent, shall flourish, in outward prosperity if Infinite Wisdom see good, at all events in graces and comfort, which are true riches and honours.*

12 There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

We have here an account of the way and end of a great many self-deluded souls. 1. Their way is seemingly fair: *It seems right to themselves*; they please themselves with a fancy that they are, as they should be, that their opinions and practices are good, and such as will bear them out. The way of ignorance and carelessness, the way of worldliness and earthly-mindedness, the way of sensuality and flesh-pleasing, seem right to those that walk in them, much more the way of hypocrisy in religion, external performances, partial reformation, and blind zeal; this they imagine will bring them to heaven; they flatter themselves in their own eyes that all will be well at last. 2. Their end is really fearful, and the more so for their mistake: *It is the ways of death, eternal death*; their iniquity will certainly be their ruin, and they will perish with a lie in their right hand. Self-deceivers will prove in the end self-destroyers.

13 Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful: and the end of that mirth is heaviness.

This shows the vanity of carnal mirth, and proves what Solomon said of laughter, that *it is mad*; for, 1. There is sadness under it. Sometimes when sinners are under convictions, or some great trouble, they dissemble their grief by a forced mirth, and put a good face on it, because they will not seem to yield: they cry not when he binds them. Nay, when men really are merry, yet at the same time there is some alloy or other to their mirth, something that casts a damp upon it, which all their gaiety cannot keep from their heart. Their consciences tell them they have no reason to be merry (Hos. ix. 1); they cannot but see the vanity of it. Spiritual joy is seated in the soul; the joy of the hypocrite is but from the teeth outward. See John xvi. 22; 2 Cor. vi. 10. 2. There is worse after it: *The end of that mirth is heaviness*. It is soon over, like the crackling of thorns under a pot; and, if the conscience be awake, all sinful and profane mirth will be reflected upon with bitterness; if not, the heaviness will be so much the greater when *for all these things God shall bring the sinner into judgment*. The sorrows of the saints will end in everlasting joys (Ps. cxxvi. 5),

but the laughter of fools will end in endless weeping and wailing.

14 The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself.

Note, 1. The misery of sinners will be eternal surfeit upon their sins: *The backslider in heart, who for fear of suffering, in hope of profit or pleasure, forsakes God and his duty, shall be filled with his own way*. God will give him enough of them. They would not leave their brutish lusts and passions, and therefore they shall stick by them to their everlasting terror and torment. *That is filthy shall be filthy still*. "Son, remember," shall fill them with their own way, and set their sins in order before them. Backsliding begins in the heart; it is the evil heart of unbelief that departs from God, and of all sinners backsliders will have most terror when they reflect on *their own way*. Luke xi. 26. 2. The happiness of the saint will be an eternal satisfaction in their graces as tokens of and qualifications for God's peculiar favour: *A good man shall be abundantly satisfied from himself*, from what God has wrought in him. He has *rejoiced himself alone*, Gal. vi. 4. As sinners never think they have sin enough till it brings them to hell, so saints never think they have grace enough till it brings them to heaven.

15 The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going.

Note, 1. It is folly to be credulous, to be every flying report, to give ear to every man's story, though ever so improbable, to take things upon trust from common fame, to depend upon every man's profession of friendship and give credit to every one that will promise payment; those are *simple* who *believe every word*, forgetting that all men in some sense, are liars in comparison with God, all whose words we are to believe with an implicit faith, for he cannot lie. 2. It is wisdom to be cautious: *The prudent man will try before he trusts, will weigh both the credibility of the witness and the probability of the testimony, and then give judgment*. If the thing appears or suspend his judgment till it appears. *Prove all things, and believe not every spirit*.

16 A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident.

Note, 1. Holy fear is an excellent guard upon every holy thing, and against everything that is unholy. It is wisdom to depart from evil, from the evil of sin, and therefore from all other evil; and therefore it is wisdom to fear, that is, to be jealous over ourselves with a godly jealousy, to keep up a dread of God's wrath, to be afraid of coming near the borders of sin or dallying with the beginning of it. A wise man, for fear of harm, keeps

of harm's way, and starts back in a fright when he finds himself entering into temptation. 2. Presumption is folly. He who, when he is warned of his danger, *rages* is *confident*, furiously pushes on, cannot or to be checked, bids defiance to the wrath and curse of God, and, fearless of danger, persists in his rebellion, makes bold with the occasions of sin, and plays upon the pre-ice, he is a fool, for he acts against his son and his interest, and his ruin will quickly be the proof of his folly.

17 *He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices hathed.*

Note, 1. Passionate men are justly laughed at. Men who are peevish and touchy, and *soon angry* upon every the least provocation, *deal foolishly*; they say and do that which is ridiculous, and so expose themselves to contempt; they themselves cannot but be ashamed of it when the heat is over. The consideration of this should engage those especially who are in reputation for wisdom and honour with the utmost care to bridle their passion. 2. Malicious men are justly hated and detested, for they are much more dangerous and mischievous to all societies: *A man of wicked devices*, who stifles his resentments till he has an opportunity of being revenged, and is secretly plotting how to wrong his neighbour and to do him an ill, as Cain to kill Abel, such a man as this is hated by all mankind. The character of an angry man is pitiable; through the sur-ge of a temptation he disturbs and dis-ces himself, but it is soon over, and he is sorry for it. But that of a spiteful revenge-man is odious; there is no fence against him nor cure for him.

18 *The simple inherit folly: but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.*

Note, 1. Sin is the shame of sinners: *The simple*, who love simplicity, get nothing by it; they *inherit folly*. They have it *by inheritance*, so some. This corruption of nature derived from our first parents, and all the infirmities that attend it we have by kind; was the inheritance they transmitted to their degenerate race, an hereditary disease. They are as fond of it as a man of his inheritance, hold it as fast, and are as loth to part with it. What they value themselves upon is really foolish; and what will be the issue of their simplicity but folly? They will for- give their own foolish choice. 2. Wisdom is the honour of the wise: *The prudent on themselves with knowledge*, they look upon it as their brightest ornament, and it is nothing they are so ambitious of; they bind it to their heads as a crown, which they will by no means part with; they press towards the top and perfection of knowledge, which will crown their beginnings and pro-

gress. They shall have the praise of it; wise heads shall be respected as if they were crowned heads. *They crown knowledge* (so some read it); they are a credit to their profession. Wisdom is not only justified, but glorified, of all her children.

19 *The evil bow before the good; and the wicked at the gates of the righteous.*

That is, 1. The wicked are oftentimes impoverished and brought low, so that they are forced to beg, their wickedness having reduced them to straits; while good men, by the blessing of God, are enriched, and enabled to give, and do give, even to the evil; for where God grants life we must not deny a livelihood. 2. Sometimes God extorts, even from bad men, an acknowledgment of the excellency of God's people. The evil ought always to bow before the good, and sometimes they are made to do it and to know that God has loved them, Rev. iii. 9. They desire their favour (Esth. vii. 7), their prayers, 2 Kings iii. 12. 3. There is a day coming when the upright shall have the dominion (Ps. xlix. 14), when the foolish virgins shall come begging to the wise for oil, and shall knock in vain at that gate of the Lord at which the righteous entered.

20 *The poor is hated even of his own neighbour: but the rich hath many friends.*

This shows, not what should be, but what is the common way of the world—to be shy of the poor and fond of the rich. 1. Few will give countenance to those whom the world frowns upon, though otherwise worthy of respect: *The poor*, who should be pitied, and encouraged, and relieved, is *hated*, looked strange upon, and kept at a distance, even by his own neighbour, who, before he fell into disgrace, was intimate with him and pretended to have a kindness for him. Most are swallow-friends, that are gone in winter. It is good having God our friend, for he will not desert us when we are poor. 2. Every one will make court to those whom the world smiles upon, though otherwise unworthy: *The rich have many friends*, friends to their riches, in hope to get something out of them. There is little friendship in the world but what is governed by self-interest, which is no true friendship at all, nor what a wise man will either value himself on or put any confidence in. Those that make the world their God idolize those that have most of its good things, and seek their favour as if indeed they were Heaven's favourites.

21 *He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he.*

See here how men's character and condition are measured and judged of by their conduct towards their poor neighbours. 1. Those that look upon them with contempt

have here assigned them a bad character, and their condition will be accordingly: *He that despises his neighbour* because he is low in the world, because he is of a mean extraction, rustic education, and makes but a mean figure, that thinks it below him to take notice of him, converse with him, or concern himself about him, and sets him with the dogs of his flock, *is a sinner*, is guilty of a sin, is in the way to worse, and shall be dealt with as a sinner; unhappy is he. 2. Those that look upon them with compassion are here said to be in a good condition, according to their character: *He that has mercy on the poor*, is ready to do all the good offices he can to him, and thereby puts an honour upon him, *happy is he*; he does that which is pleasing to God, which he himself will afterwards reflect upon with great satisfaction, for which the loins of the poor will bless him, and which will be abundantly recompensed in the resurrection of the just.

22 Do they not err that devise evil? but mercy and truth *shall be* to them that devise good.

See here, 1. How miserably mistaken those are that not only do evil, but devise it: *Do they not err?* Yes, certainly they do; every one knows it. They think that by sinning with craft and contrivance, and carrying on their intrigues with more plot and artifice than others, they shall make a better hand of their sins than others do, and come off better. But they are mistaken. God's justice cannot be out-witted. Those that devise evil against their neighbours greatly err, for it will certainly turn upon themselves and end in their own ruin, a fatal error! 2. How wisely those consult their own interest that not only do good but devise it: *Mercy and truth* shall be to them, not a reward of debt (they will own that they merit nothing), but a reward of mercy, mere mercy, mercy according to the promise, mercy and truth, to which God is pleased to make himself a debtor. Those that are so liberal as to devise liberal things, that seek opportunities of doing good, and contrive how to make their charity most extensive and most acceptable to those that need it, *by liberal things they shall stand*, Isa. xxxii. 8.

23 In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips *tendeth* only to penury.

Note, 1. Working, without talking, will make men rich: *In all labour* of the head, or of the hand, *there is profit*; it will turn to some good account or other. Industrious people are generally thriving people, and where there is something done there is something to be had. *The stirring hand gets a penny*. It is good therefore to keep in business, and to keep in action, and what our hand finds to do to do it with all our might. 2. Talking, without working, will make men

poor. Those that love to boast of their business and make a noise about it, and waste their time in tittle-tattle, in telling and hearing new things, like the Athenians, and under pretence of improving themselves in conversation, neglect the work of their piety and day, they waste what they have, and of course they take *tends to penury*, and wind in it. It is true in the affairs of souls; those that take pains in the service of God, that strive earnestly in prayer, will profit in it. But if men's religion runs out in talk and noise, and their praying only the labour of the lips, they will be spiritually poor, and come to nothing.

24 The crown of the wise *is* the riches: but the foolishness of fools *is* folly.

Observe, 1. If men be wise and good, riches make them so much the more honourable and useful: *The crown of the wise is the riches*; their riches make them to be so much the more respected, and give them the more authority and influence upon others. Those that have wealth, and wisdom to use it, will have a great opportunity of honouring God and doing good in the world. *Wisdom is good without an inheritance*, but better with it. 2. If men be wicked and corrupt, their wealth will but the more expose them: *The foolishness of fools*, put them in what condition you will, *is folly*, and will show its shame and shame them; if they have riches, they do mischief with them and are the more hardened in their foolish practices.

25 A true witness delivereth souls: but a deceitful witness speaketh lies.

See here, 1. How much praise is due to a faithful witness: *He delivers the souls* of the innocent, who are falsely accused, and their good names, which are as dear to them as their lives. A man of integrity will venture the displeasure of the greatest, to bring truth to light and rescue those who are injured by falsehood. A faithful minister, who is true witnesses for God against sin, is therefore instrumental to deliver souls from eternal damnation. 2. How little regard is to be had to a false witness. *He forges lies*, and yet pours them out with the greatest assurance imaginable for the destruction of the innocent. It is therefore the interest of a nation by all means possible to detect and punish false-witness bearing, yea, and lying in common conversation; for truth is the cement of society.

26 In the fear of the LORD *is* strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge. 27 The fear of the LORD *is* a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.

In these two verses we are invited and encouraged to live in the fear of God by the advantages which attend a religious life. The fear of the LORD is here put for all gracious principles, producing gracious practices.

There this reigns it produces a holy security and serenity of mind. There is in it a *strong confidence*; it enables a man still to hold fast with his purity and his peace, whatever happens, and gives him holdness before God and the world. *I know that I shall be justified—one of these things move me*; such is the language of this confidence. 2. It entails a blessing upon posterity. The children of those that by faith make God their confidence shall be encouraged by the promise that God will be a God to believers and to their seed flee to him as their refuge, and they shall find shelter in him. The children of religious parents often do the better for their parents' instructions and example and fare the better for their faith and prayers. "*Our fathers trusted in thee, therefore we will.*" 3. It is ever-flowing ever-flowing spring of comfort and joy; it is a *fountain of life*, yielding instant pleasure and satisfaction to the soul, waters that are pure and fresh, are life to the soul, and quench its thirst, and can never be drawn dry; it is a *well of living water*, that springing up to, and is the earnest of, eternal life. 4. It is a sovereign antidote against sin and temptation. Those that have true relish of the pleasures of serious godliness will not be allured by the baits of sin swallow its hook; they know where to obtain better things than any it can pretend to offer, and therefore it is easy to them to depart from the snares of death and to keep their foot from being taken in them.

28 In the multitude of people is the king's honour: but in the want of people is the destruction of the prince. Here are two maxims in politics, which carry their own evidence with them:—1. That it is much for the honour of a king to have a populous kingdom; it is a sign that rules well, since strangers are hereby induced to come and settle under his protection and his own subjects live comfortably; it is a sign that he and his kingdom are under the blessing of God, the effect of which is being fruitful and multiplying. It is his strength, and makes him considerable and formidable; copy is the king, the father of his country, who has his *quiver full of arrows*; he shall be ashamed, but shall speak with his enemy the gate, Ps. cxxvii. 4, 5. It is therefore wisdom of princes, by a mild and gentle government, by encouraging trade and husbandry, and by making all easy under them, to promote the increase of their people. And all that wish well to the kingdom of Christ, and to his honour, do what they can to their places that many may be added to his church. 2. That when the people are lessened the prince is weakened: *In the want of people is the leanness of the prince* (so some read it); trade lies dead, the ground lies unworked, the army wants to be recruited, the country to be manned, and all because there are hands sufficient. See how much the ho-

nour and safety of kings depend upon their people, which is a reason why they should rule by love, and not with rigour. Princes are corrected by those judgments which abate the number of the people, as we find, 2 Sam. xxiv. 13.

29 He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.

Note, 1. Meekness is wisdom. He rightly understands himself, and his duty and interest, the infirmities of human nature, and the constitution of human society, who is *slow to anger*, and knows how to excuse the faults of others as well as his own, how to adjourn his resentments, and moderate them, so as by no provocation to be put out of the possession of his own soul. A mild patient man is really to be accounted an intelligent man, one that learns of Christ, who is Wisdom itself. 2. Unbridled passion is folly proclaimed: *He that is hasty of spirit*, whose heart is tinder to every spark of provocation, that is all fire and tow, as we say, he thinks hereby to magnify himself and make those about stand in awe of him, whereas really he exalts his own folly; he makes it known, as that which is lifted up is visible to all, and he submits himself to it as to the government of one that is exalted.

30 A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones.

The foregoing verse showed how much our reputation, this how much our health, depends on the good government of our passions and the preserving of the temper of the mind. 1. A healing spirit, made up of love and meekness, a hearty, friendly, cheerful disposition, is the *life of the flesh*; it contributes to a good constitution of body; people grow fat with good humour. 2. A fretful, envious, discontented spirit, is its own punishment; it consumes the flesh, preys upon the animal spirits, makes the countenance pale, and is the *rottenness of the bones*. Those that see the prosperity of others and are grieved, let them gnash with their teeth and melt away, Ps. cxii. 10.

Rumpatur, quisquis rumpitur invidia.

Whoever bursts for envy, let him burst.

31 He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor.

God is here pleased to interest himself more than one would imagine in the treatment given to the poor. 1. He reckons himself affronted in the injuries that are done them. Whosoever he be that wrongs a poor man, taking advantage against him because he is poor and cannot help himself, let him know that he puts an affront upon his Maker. God made him, and gave him his be-

ing, the same that is the author of our being; we have all one Father, one Maker; see how Job considered this, Job xxxi. 15. God made him poor, and appointed him his lot, so that, if we deal hardly with any because they are poor, we reflect upon God as dealing hardly with them in laying them low, that they might be trampled upon. 2. He reckons himself honoured in the kindnesses that are done them; he takes them as done to himself, and will show himself accordingly pleased with them. *I was hungry, and you gave me meat.* Those therefore that have any true honour for God will show it by compassion to the poor, whom he has undertaken in a special manner to protect and patronise.

32 The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.

Here is, 1. The desperate condition of a wicked man when he goes out of the world: *He is driven away in his wickedness.* He cleaves so closely to the world that he cannot find in his heart to leave it, but is driven away out of it; his soul is required, is forced from him. And sin cleaves so closely to him that it is inseparable; it goes with him into another world; *he is driven away in his wickedness,* dies in his sins, under the guilt and power of them, unjustified, unsanctified. His wickedness is the storm in which he is hurried away, as chaff before the wind, chased out of the world. 2. The comfortable condition of a godly man when he finishes his course: *He has hope in his death* of a happiness on the other side death, of better things in another world than ever he had in this. *The righteous* then have the grace of hope in them; though they have pain, and some dread of death, yet they have hope. They have before them the good hoped for, even the blessed hope which God, who cannot lie, has promised.

33 Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding: but that which is in the midst of fools is made known.

Observe, 1. Modesty is the badge of wisdom. He that is truly wise hides his treasure, so as not to boast of it (Matt. xiii. 44), though he does not hide his talent, so as not to trade with it. His *wisdom rests in his heart*; he digests what he knows, and has it ready to him, but does not unseasonably talk of it and make a noise with it. The heart is the seat of the affections, and there wisdom must rest in the practical love of it, and not swim in the head. 2. Openness and ostentation are a mark of folly. If fools have a little smattering of knowledge, they take all occasions, though very foreign, to produce it, and bring it in by head and shoulders. Or the folly that *is in the midst of fools is made known* by their forwardness to talk. Many a foolish man takes more pains to show his

folly than a wise man thinks it worth while to take to show his wisdom.

34 Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.

Note, 1. Justice, reigning in a nation, puts an honour upon it. A righteous administration of the government, impartial equity between man and man, public countenance given to religion, the general practice or profession of virtue, the protecting and serving of virtuous men, charity and compassion to strangers (*alms* are sometimes called *righteousness*), these *exalt a nation*; they uphold the throne, elevate the people's minds, and qualify a nation for the favour of God, which will make them high, as a *honor*, Deut. xxvi. 19. 2. Vice, reigning in a nation, puts disgrace upon it: *Sin is a reproach* to any city or kingdom, and renders them despicable among their neighbours. The people of Israel were often instances in both parts of this observation; they were great when they were good, but when they forsook God all about them insulted them and trampled on them. It is therefore the interest and duty of princes to use the power for the suppression of vice and support of virtue.

35 The king's favour is toward the wise servant: but his wrath is against him that causeth shame.

This shows that in a well-ordered court and government smiles and favours are dispensed among those that are employed in public trusts according to their merits; Solomon lets them know he will go by the rule, 1. That those who behave themselves wisely shall be respected and preferred, whatever enemies they may have that seek to undermine them. No man's services shall be neglected to please a party or a favourite. 2. That those who are selfish and false, who betray their country, oppress the poor, and sow discord, and thus *cause shame*, shall be displaced and banished the court, whatever friends they may make to speak for them.

CHAP. XV.

A SOFT answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.

Solomon, as conservator of the public peace, here tells us, 1. How the peace may be kept, that we may know how in our places to keep it; it is by soft words. If wrath be risen like a threatening cloud, pregnant with storms and thunder, a *soft answer* will dissipate it and turn it away. When men are provoked, speak gently to them, and give them good words, and they will be pacified, as the Ephraimites were by Gideon's mildness (Judg. viii. 1—3); whereas, upon a like occasion, by Jephthah's roughness, they were exasperated, and the consequences were bad, Judg. xii. 1—3. Reason will be better spoken, and a righteous cause better pleaded.

meekness than with passion; hard arguments do beat with soft words. 2. How peace will be broken, that we, for our may do nothing towards the breaking. Nothing stirs up anger, and sows dislike *grievous words*, calling foul names, *and Thou fool*, upbraiding men with infirmities and infelicities, their extraneous education, or any thing that lessens and makes them mean; scornful spite-lections, by which men affect to show wit and malice, stir up the anger of us, which does but increase and inflame our own anger. Rather than lose a jest will lose a friend and make an enemy.

The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of the fool poureth out foolishness.

te, 1. A good heart by the tongue becomes very useful. He that has knowledge is not only to enjoy it, for his own entertainment, but to use it, to use it aright, for the edification of others; and it is *the tongue* must make use of it in pious profitable discourse, in giving suitable and seasonable instructions, counsels, and comforts, with all able expressions of humility and love, when *knowledge is used aright*; and to that has, and thus uses what he has, shall be given. 2. A wicked heart by the tongue becomes very hurtful; for *the tongue of fools belches out foolishness*, which is offensive; and the corrupt communication which proceeds from an evil heart within (the filthiness, and foolish talking and jesting) corrupts the good manners of men and debauches them, and grieves the good hearts of others and disturbs them.

The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.

The great truths of divinity are of great use to enforce the precepts of morality, and more than this—That the eye of God rays upon the children of men. 1. An eye discerns all, not only from which no sin can be concealed, but by which every sin is actually inspected, and nothing overlooked or looked slightly upon: *The eyes of the LORD are in every place*; for he not only sees all from on high (Ps. xxxiii. 13), but he is every where present. Angels are full of eyes (Rev. iv. 8), but God is all eye. It denotes not only his omniscience, that he sees out his universal providence, that he upholds and governs all. Secret sins, services, sorrows, are under his eye. 2. An eye distinguishes both persons and actions. He *sees the evil and the good*, is displeased with the evil and approves of the good, and judges men according to the sight of his face (Ps. i. 6; xi. 4). The wicked shall not be punished, nor the righteous unrewarded. God has his eye upon both and knows all. OL. IV.

their true character; this speaks as much comfort to saints as terror to sinners.

4 A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit.

Note, 1. A good tongue is healing, healing to wounded consciences by comforting them, to sin-sick souls by convincing them, to peace and love when it is broken by accommodating differences, compromising matters in variance, and reconciling parties at variance; this is the healing of the tongue, which is *a tree of life*, the leaves of which have a sanative virtue, Rev. xxii. 2. He that knows how to discourse will make the place he lives in a paradise. 2. An evil tongue is wounding (*perverseness*, passion, falsehood, and filthiness *there, are a breach in the spirit*); it wounds the conscience of the evil speaker, and occasions either guilt or grief to the hearers, and both are to be reckoned *breaches in the spirit*. Hard words indeed break no bones, but many a heart has been broken by them.

5 A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent.

Hence, 1. Let superiors be admonished to give instruction and reproof to those that are under their charge, as they will answer it in the day of account. They must not only instruct with the light of knowledge, but reprove with the heat of zeal; and both these must be done with the authority and affection of a father, and must be continued, though the desired effect be not immediately perceived. If the instruction be despised, give reproof, and rebuke sharply. It is indeed against the grain with good-humoured men to find fault, and make those about them uneasy; but better so than to suffer them to go on undisturbed in the way to ruin. 2. Let inferiors be admonished, not only to submit to instruction and reproof (even hardships must be submitted to), but to value them as favours and not despise them, to make use of them for their direction, and always to have a regard to them; this will be an evidence that they are wise and a means of making them so; whereas he that slights his good education is a fool and is likely to live and die one.

6 In the house of the righteous is much treasure: but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble.

Note, 1. Where righteousness is riches are, and the comforts of them: *In the house of the righteous is much treasure*. Religion teaches men to be diligent, temperate, and just, and by these means, ordinarily, the estate is increased. But that is not all: God *blesses the habitation of the just*, and that blessing makes rich without trouble. Or, if there be not much of this world's goods, yet where there is grace there is true treasure; and those who

have but little, if they have a heart to be therewith content, and to enjoy the comfort of that little, it is enough; it is all riches. The righteous perhaps are not themselves enriched, but there is treasure in their house, a blessing in store, which their children after them may reap the benefit of. A wicked worldly man is only for having his belly filled with those treasures, his own sensual appetite gratified (Ps. xvii. 14); but a righteous man's first care is for his soul and then for his seed, to have treasure in his heart and then in his house, which his relations and those about him may have the benefit of. 2. Where wickedness is, though there may be riches, yet there is vexation of spirit with them: *In the revenues of the wicked*, the great incomes they have, *there is trouble*; for there is guilt and a curse; there is pride and passion, and envy and contention; and those are troublesome lusts, which rob them of the joy of their revenues and make them troublesome to their neighbours.

7 The lips of the wise disperse knowledge: but the heart of the foolish *doeth* not so.

This is to the same purport with v. 2, and shows what a blessing a wise man is and what a burden a fool is to those about him. Only here observe further, 1. That we then use knowledge aright when we disperse it, not confine it to a few of our intimates, and grudge it to others who would make as good use of it, but *give a portion* of this spiritual alms *to seven and also to eight*, not only be communicative, but diffusive, of this good, with humility and prudence. We must take pains to spread and propagate useful knowledge, must teach some that they may teach others, and so it is dispersed. 2. That it is not only a fault to *pour out foolishness*, but it is a shame not to *disperse knowledge*, at least not to drop some wise word or other: *The heart of the foolish does not so*; it has nothing to disperse that is good, or, if it had, has neither skill nor will to do good with it and therefore is little worth.

8 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.

Note, 1. God so hates wicked people, whose hearts are malicious and their lives mischievous, that even their *sacrifices are an abomination* to him. God has sacrifices brought him even by wicked men, to stop the mouth of conscience and to keep up their reputation in the world, as malefactors come to a sanctuary, not because it is a holy place, but because it shelters them from justice; but their sacrifices, though ever so costly, are not accepted of God, because not offered in sincerity nor from a good principle; they dissemble with God, and in their conversations give the lie to their devotions, and for that reason they are an *abomination* to him, because they are

made a cloak for sin, *ch. vii. 14*. See Isa. i. 2. God has such a love for upright good people that, though they are not at the expense of a sacrifice (he himself has provided that their *prayer is a delight* to him. Prayers and graces are his own gift, and the work of his own Spirit in them, with which he is pleased. He not only answers their prayers but delights in their addresses to him, and in doing them good.

9 The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the LORD: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness.

This is a reason of what was said in foregoing verse. 1. *The sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to God*, not for want of some nice points of ceremony, but because *their way*, the whole course and tenour of their conversation, is wicked, and consequently an abomination to him. Sacrifices for sin were not accepted of those that resolved to go on in sin, and were to the highest degree abominable if intended to obtain connivance at sin and a permission to go on in it. 2. Therefore *the prayer of the upright is his delight*, because he is a friend of God and *he loves him who*, though he have not attained, is *following after righteousness*, aiming at it and pressing towards it, as St. Paul Phil. iii. 13.

10 Correction is grievous unto them that forsaketh the way: and he that hateth reproof shall die.

This shows that those who cannot bear to be corrected must expect to be destroyed. It is common for those who have known the way of righteousness, but have forsaken it to reckon it a great affront to be reproved and admonished. They are very uneasy at reproof; they cannot, they will not, bear it, because they hate to be reformed, to hate to be reproofed, and hate those who reprove faithfully and kindly with them. Of all sinners, reproofs are worst resented by apostates. 2. It is certain that those who will not be reproofed will be ruined: *He that hates reproof and hardens his heart against it*, is joined to his idols; let him alone. *He shall die*, he shall perish for ever, in his sins, since he will not be parted from his sins. 2 Chron. xvi. 16, *I know that God has determined to destroy thee*, because thou couldst not bear to be reproofed; see also *ch. xxix. 1*.

11 Hell and destruction are before the LORD: how much more then are the hearts of the children of men?

This confirms what was said (v. 3) concerning God's omnipresence, in order to judging of evil and good. 1. God knows all things, even those things that are hid from the eyes of all living: *Hell and destruction are before the Lord*, not only the centre of the earth, and its subterraneous cave

the grave, and all the dead bodies which there buried out of our sight; they are before the Lord, all under his eye, so that none of them can be lost or be to seek when they are to be raised again. He knows where every man lies buried, even Moses, even those that are buried in the greatest obscurity; nor does he any monument with a *Hic jacet—here he lies*, to direct him. The place of the damned in particular, and all their torments, which are inexpressible, the state of separate souls in general, and all their circumstances, are under God's eye. The word here used *destruction* is *Abaddon*, which is one of the devil's names, Rev. ix. 11. That destroyer, though he deceives us, cannot evade or elude divine cognizance. God examines him when he comes (Job i. 7), and sees through his disguises though he is sly, and subtle, swift, Job xxvi. 6. 2. He knows particularly the hearts of the children of men. If he sees through the depths and wiles of Satan himself, much more can he search men's hearts, though they be deceitful, since they need all their fraudulent arts of Satan. *His knowledge is greater than our hearts*, and knows us better than we know them ourselves, therefore is an infallible Judge of every man's character, Heb. iv. 13.

12 A scorner loveth not one that reproveh him: neither will he go to the wise.

A scorner is one that not only makes a jest of God and religion, but bids defiance to the methods employed for his conviction and reformation, and, as an evidence of that, 1. He will not endure the checks of his own conscience, nor will he suffer it to deal plainly with him: *He loves not to reprove him* (so read it); he cannot endure to retire into his own heart and commune seriously with himself, will not admit of any free thought or reasoning with himself, nor let his own heart smite him, if he can help it. That man's case is sad who is afraid of being accented and of arguing with himself. 2. He will not endure the advice and admonitions of friends: *He will not go unto the wise*, lest they should give him wise counsel. We ought only to bid the wise welcome when they come to us, but to go to them, as beggars to a rich man's door for an alms; but this the scorner will not do, for fear of being told of his faults and prevailed upon to reform.

13 A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of heart the spirit is broken.

Here, 1. Harmless mirth is recommended, as that which contributes to the health of the body, making men lively and fit for business, and to the acceptableness of the conversation, making the face to shine and rendering us pleasant one to another. A cheerful spirit, under the government of wisdom and grace, is a great ornament to reli-

gion, puts a further lustre upon the beauty of holiness, and makes men the more capable of doing good. 2. Hurtful melancholy is what we are cautioned against, as a great enemy to us, both in our devotion and in our conversation: *By sorrow of the heart*, when it has got dominion and plays the tyrant, as it will be apt to do if it be indulged awhile, *the spirit is broken* and sunk, and becomes unfit for the service of God. *The sorrow of the world works death*. Let us therefore weep as though we wept not, in justice to ourselves, as well as in conformity to God and his providence.

14 The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness.

Here are two things to be wondered at:— 1. A wise man not satisfied with his wisdom, but still seeking the increase of it; the more he has the more he would have: *The heart of him that has understanding*, rejoices so in the knowledge it has attained to that it is still coveting more, and in the use of the means of knowledge is still labouring for more, *growing in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ*. *Si dixisti, Sufficit, periisti*—If you say, I have enough, you are undone. 2. A fool well satisfied with his folly and not seeking the cure of it. While a good man hungers after the solid satisfactions of grace, a carnal mind feasts on the gratifications of appetite and fancy. Vain mirth and sensual pleasures are its delight, and with these it can rest contented, flattering itself in these foolish ways.

15 All the days of the afflicted are evil: but he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast.

See here what a great difference there is between the condition and temper of some and others of the children of men. 1. Some are much in affliction, and of a sorrowful spirit, and all their days are evil days, like those of old age, and days of which they say they have no pleasure in them. *They eat in darkness* (Eccl. v. 17) and never eat with pleasure, Job. xxi. 25. How many are the afflictions of the afflicted in this world! Such are not to be censured or despised, but pitied and prayed for, succoured and comforted. It might have been our own lot, or may be yet, merry as we are at present. 2. Others enjoy great prosperity and are of a cheerful spirit; and they have not only good days, but have a continual feast; and if in the abundance of all things they serve God with gladness of heart, and it is oil to the wheels of their obedience (all this, and heaven too), then they serve a good Master. But let not such feast without fear; a sudden change may come; therefore rejoice with trembling.

16 Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and

trouble therewith. 17 Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.

Solomon had said in the foregoing verse that he who has not a large estate, or a great income, but a cheerful spirit, has a *continual feast*; Christian contentment, and joy in God, make the life easy and pleasant; now here he tells us what is necessary to that cheerfulness of spirit which will furnish a man with a *continual feast*, though he has but little in the world—holiness and love.

I. Holiness. A little, if we manage it and enjoy it in the *fear of the Lord*, if we keep a good conscience and go on in the way of duty, and serve God faithfully with the little we have, will be more comfortable, and turn to a better account, *than great treasure and trouble therewith*. Observe here, 1. It is often the lot of those that fear God to have but a little of this world. *The poor receive the gospel*, and poor they still are, Jam. ii. 5. 2. Those that have *great treasure* have often *great trouble therewith*; it is so far from making them easy that it increases their care and hurry. *The abundance of the rich will not suffer them to sleep*. 3. If great treasure bring trouble with it, it is for want of the fear of God. If those that have great estates would do their duty with them, and then trust God with them, their treasure would not have so much trouble attending it. 4. It is therefore far better, and more desirable, to have but a little of the world and to have it with a good conscience, to keep up communion with God, and enjoy him in it, and live by faith, than to have the greatest plenty and live without God in the world.

II. Love. Next to the fear of God, peace with all men is necessary to the comfort of this life. 1. If *brethren dwell together in unity*, if they are friendly, and hearty, and pleasant, both in their daily meals and in more solemn entertainments, that will make a *dinner of herbs* a feast sufficient; though the fare be coarse, and the estate so small that they can afford no better, yet love will sweeten it and they may be as merry over it as if they had all dainties. 2. If there be mutual enmity and strife, though there be a whole ox for dinner, a fat ox, there can be no comfort in it; the leaven of malice, of hating and being hated, is enough to sour it all. Some refer it to him that makes the entertainment; better have a slender dinner and be heartily welcome than a table richly spread with a grudging evil eye.

Cum torvo vultu mihi cenula nulla placeat,
Cum placido vultu cenula ulla placet.

The most sumptuous entertainment, presented with a sullen brow, would offend me; while the plainest repast, presented kindly, would delight me.

18 A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but *he that is slow to anger appeaseth* strife.

Here is, 1. Passion the great make-bate.

Thence *come wars and fightings*. Anger stirs the fire which sets cities and churches in flame: *A wrathful man*, with his peevish sionate reflections, *stirs up strife*, and people together by the ears; he gives occasion to others to quarrel, and takes the occasion that others give, though ever so trifling. When men carry their resentments too one quarrel still produces another. 2. Hence the great peace-maker: *He that is slow to anger* not only prevents strife, that is not kindled, but *appeases* it if it be already kindled, brings water to the flame, and those again that have fallen out, and by gentle methods brings them to mutual concessions for peace-sake.

19 The way of the slothful man is as a hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is made plain.

See here, 1. Whence those difficulties arise which men pretend to meet with in the way of their duty, and to be insuperable; they arise not from any thing in the nature of duty, but from the slothfulness of those who have really no mind to it. Those that have no heart to their work pretend that their way is hedged up with thorns, and they cannot do their work at all (as if God were a hard Master, reaping where he had not sown), at least that their way is strewn with thorns, that they cannot do their work without a great deal of hardship and danger; and therefore they go about it with as much reluctance as if they were to go barefoot through a thorny hedge. 2. How these imaginary difficulties may be conquered. An honest man sires and endeavour to do our duty with the grace of God, make it easy, and we shall find it strewn with roses: *The way of the righteous is made plain*; it is easy to be trodden and not rough, easy to be found, and not intricate.

20 A wise son maketh a glad mother: but a foolish man despiseth his mother.

Observe here, 1. To the praise of good children, that they are the joy of their parents who ought to have joy of them, having taken so much care and pains about them. A good child adds much to the satisfaction of those that are good if they have reason to think that they have been a comfort to their parents in their declining years, when evil days come. 2. To the shame of wicked children, that their wickedness they put contempt upon their parents, slight their authority, and make an ill requital for their kindness: *A foolish son despises his mother*, that had most sorrow with him and perhaps had too much indulged him, which makes his sin in despising her the more sinful and her sorrow the more sorrowful.

21 Folly is joy to him that is des

ite of wisdom : but a man of understanding walketh uprightly.

Note, 1. It is the character of a wicked man that he takes pleasure in sin; he has an appetite to the bait, and swallows it greedily, and has no dread of the hook, nor feels from when he has swallowed it: *Folly is joy to him*; the folly of others is so, and his own much more. He sins, not only without regret, but with delight, not only repents not it, but makes his boast of it. This is a certain sign of one that is graceless. 2. It is the character of a wise and good man that he takes conscience of his duty. A fool lives large, walks at all adventures, by no rule, and with no sincerity or steadiness; *but a man of understanding*, the eyes of whose understanding are enlightened by the Spirit and those that have not a good understanding have no understanding), *walks uprightly*, as a sober, orderly, regular life, and studies every thing to conform himself to the will of God; and this is a constant pleasure and *profit to him*. But what foolishness remains in him, or proceeds from him at any time, is a grief to him, and he is ashamed of it. By these characters we may try ourselves.

22 Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.

See here, 1. Of what ill consequence it is to be precipitate and rash, and to act without advice: Men's *purposes are disappointed*, their measures broken, and they come short of their point, gain not their end, because they would not ask counsel about the way. Men will not take time and pains to deliberate with themselves, or are so confident of their own judgment that they scorn to consult with others, they are not likely to bring any thing considerable to pass; circumstances meet them which, with a little consultation, might have been foreseen and obviated. It is a good rule, both in public and domestic affairs, to do nothing rashly and of one's own head. *Plus vident oculi quam oculus*—Many see more than one. That often proves true which was least our own doing. 2. How much it will be for our advantage to ask the advice of our friends: *In the multitude of counsellors* (provided they be discreet and honest, and will not give counsel with a spirit of contradiction) *purposes are established*. Solomon's son made no good use of this proverb when he acquiesced not in the counsel of the old men, but because he would have a multitude of counsellors, regarding number more than weight, advised with the young men.

23 A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!

Note, 1. We speak wisely when we speak seasonably: *The answer of the mouth* will bring credit and joy when it is pertinent and

to the purpose, and is *spoken in due season*, when it is needed and will be regarded, and, as we say, hits the joint. Many a good word comes short of doing the good it might have done, for want of being well-timed. Nor is any thing more the beauty of discourse than to have a proper answer ready off-hand, just when there is occasion for it, and it comes in well. 2. If we speak wisely and well, it will redound to our own comfort and to the advantage of others: *A man has joy by the answer of his mouth*; he may take a pleasure, but may by no means take a pride, in having spoken so acceptably and well that the hearers admire him and say, "*How good is it, and how much good does it do!*"

24 The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath.

The way of wisdom and holiness is here recommended to us, 1. As very safe and comfortable: It is *the way of life*, the way that leads to eternal life, in which we shall find the joy and satisfaction which will be the life of the soul, and at the end of which we shall find the perfection of blessedness. Be wise and live. It is the way to escape that misery which we cannot but see ourselves exposed to, and in danger of. It is to *depart from hell beneath*, from the snares of hell, the temptations of Satan, and all his wiles, from the pains of hell, that everlasting destruction which our sins have deserved. 2. As very sublime and honourable: *It is above*. A good man sets his affections on things above, and deals in those things. His *conversation is in heaven*; his way leads directly thither; there his treasure is, *above*, out of the reach of enemies, above the changes of this lower world. A good man is truly noble and great; his desires and designs are high, and he lives above the common rate of other men. It is above the capacity and out of the sight of foolish men.

25 The LORD will destroy the house of the proud: but he will establish the border of the widow.

Note, 1. Those that are elevated God delights to abase, and commonly does it in the course of his providence: *The proud*, that magnify themselves, bid defiance to the God above them and trample on all about them, are such as God resists and *will destroy*, not them only, but *their houses*, which they are proud of and are confident of the continuance and perpetuity of. Pride is the ruin of multitudes. 2. Those that are dejected God delights to support, and often does it remarkably: *He will establish the border of the poor widow*, which proud injurious men break in upon, and which the poor widow is not herself able to defend and make good. It is the honour of God to protect the weak and appear for those that are oppressed.

26 The thoughts of the wicked are

an abomination to the LORD : but *the words of the pure are pleasant words.*

The former part of this verse speaks of thoughts, the latter of words, but they come all to one; for thoughts are words to God, and words are judged of by the thoughts from which they proceed, so that, 1. *The thoughts and words of the wicked, which are, like themselves, wicked, which aim at mischief, and have some ill tendency or other, are an abomination to the Lord; he is displeased at them and will reckon for them. The thoughts of wicked men, for the most part, are such as God hates, and are an offence to him, who not only knows the heart and all that passes and repasses there, but requires the innermost and uppermost place in it.* 2. *The thoughts and words of the pure, being pure like themselves, clean, honest, and sincere, are pleasant words and pleasant thoughts, well-pleasing to the holy God, who delights in purity.* It may be understood both of their devotions to God (*the words of their mouth and the meditations of their heart, in prayer and praise, are acceptable to God, Ps. xix. 14; lxix. 13*) and of their discourses with men, tending to edification. Both are pleasant when they come from a pure, a purified, heart.

27 He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live.

Note, 1. Those that are covetous entail trouble upon their families: *He that is greedy of gain*, and therefore makes himself a slave to the world, rises up early, sits up late, and eats the bread of carefulness, in pursuit of it—he that hurries, and puts himself and all about him upon the stretch, in business, frets and vexes at every loss and disappointment, and quarrels with every body that stands in the way of his profit—he *troubles his own house*, is a burden and vexation to his children and servants. He that, in his greediness of gain, takes bribes, and uses unlawful ways of getting money, leaves a curse with what he gets to those that come after him, which sooner or later will bring trouble into the house, Hab. ii. 9, 10. 2. Those that are generous as well as righteous entail a blessing upon their families: *He that hates gifts*, that shakes his hands from holding the bribes that are thrust into his hand to pervert justice and abhors all sinful indirect ways of getting money—that hates to be paltry and mercenary, and is willing, if there be occasion, to do good gratis—he shall live; he shall have the comfort of life, shall live in prosperity and reputation; his name and family shall live and continue.

28 The heart of the righteous studieth to answer : but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things.

Here is, 1. A good man proved to be a wise man by this, that he governs his tongue

well; he that does so *the same is a perfect man*, Jam. iii. 2. It is part of the character of a righteous man that being convinced the account he must give of his words, of the good and bad influence of them to others, he makes conscience of speaking truth (it is his heart that answers, that is, he speaks as he thinks, and dares not do otherwise *speaks the truth in his heart*, Ps. xv. 2), of speaking pertinently and profitably; therefore he *studies to answer*, that his speech may be with grace, Neh. ii. 4; v. 7. 2. A wicked man is proved to be a fool by this, that he never heeds what he says, but *his mouth pours out evil things*, to the dishonour of God and religion, his own reproach, the hurt of others. Doubtless that is an heart which thus overflows with evil.

29 The LORD is far from the wicked, but he heareth the prayer of the righteous.

Note, 1. God sets himself at a distance from those that set him at defiance: *wicked say to the Almighty, Depart from me*, and he is, accordingly, *far from them*; does not manifest himself to them, has communion with them, will not bear their sin, will not help them, no, not in the time of their need. They shall be for ever banished from his presence and he will behold them afar off. *Depart from me, you cursed.* He will draw nigh to those in a way of mercy who draw nigh to him in a way of duty: *he hears the prayer of the righteous*, accepts it, is well pleased with it, and will grant an answer of peace to it. It is *the prayer of a righteous man that avails much*, Jam. v. 16. *He is near to them*, a present help, in all that they need upon him for.

30 The light of the eyes rejoiceth in the heart : and a good report maketh the bones fat.

Two things are here pronounced pleasant.—1. It is pleasant to have a good prospect to see the light of the sun (Eccl. xi. 7) by it to see the wonderful works of God with which this lower world is beautified and enriched. Those that want the mercy know how to value it; how would the light of God's eyes rejoice their hearts! The consideration of this should make us thankful for our sight. 2. It is more pleasant to have a good name, a name for good things with God and good people; this is as precious ointment (Eccl. vii. 1). *It makes the bones fat*; it gives a secret pleasure, and that which is strengthening. It is also very comfortable to be known (as some understand it) a good report concerning others; a good man has no greater joy than to hear that his friends walk in truth.

31 The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise.

Note, 1. It is the character of a wise man that he is very willing to be reproved.

therefore chooses to converse with those that, both by their words and example, will show him what is amiss in him: *The ear that can take the reproof* will love the reproof. Faithful friendly reproofs are here called *the reproofs of life*, not only because they are to be given in a lively manner, and with a prudent zeal (and we must reprove by our lives as well as by our doctrine), but because, where they are well-taken, they are signs of spiritual life, and lead to eternal life, and (as some think) to distinguish them from rebukes and reproaches for well-doing, which are rather reproofs of death, which we must not regard nor be influenced by. 2. Those that are so wise as to bear reproof will hereby be made wiser (*ch. ix. 9*), and come at length to be numbered among the wise men of the age, and will have both wisdom and authority to reprove and instruct others. Those that learn well, and obey well, are likely in time to teach well and wisely.

32 He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul: but he that receiveth reproof getteth understanding.

See here, 1. The folly of those that will not be taught, that *refuse instruction*, that will not heed it, but turn their backs upon it, or will not hear it, but turn their hearts from it. They *refuse correction* (margin); they will not *take it*, no, not from God himself, but kick against the pricks. Those that *despise their own souls*; they show that they have a low and mean opinion of them, and are in little care and concern about them, considering as rational and immortal, instructions being designed to cultivate reason and prepare for the immortal state. The fundamental error of sinners is undervaluing their souls; therefore they neglect to provide them, abuse them, expose them, prefer the body before the soul, and wrong the soul to please the body. 2. The wisdom of those that are willing, not only to be taught, but to be reproved: *He that hears reproof*, and understands the faults he is reproved for, *gets understanding*, by which his soul is secured from bad ways and directed in good ways, whereby he both evidences the value he sets on his own soul and puts true honour on it.

33 The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility.

See here how much it is our interest, as well as duty, 1. To submit to our God, and to set up a reverence for him: *The fear of the LORD*, as it is *the beginning of wisdom*, so it is *instruction* and *correction of wisdom*; the principles of religion, closely adhered to, will improve our knowledge, rectify our mistakes, and be the best and surest guide of our way. A true awe of God upon our spirits will put us in the wisest counsels and chastise us

when we say or do unwisely. 2. To stoop to our brethren, and keep up a respect for them. Where there is humility there is a happy presage of honour and preparative for it. Those that humble themselves shall be exalted here and hereafter.

CHAP. XVI.

THE preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD.

As we read this, it teaches us a great truth, that we are not sufficient of ourselves to *think or speak any thing of ourselves* that is wise and good, but that *all our sufficiency is of God*, who is with the heart and with the mouth, and *works in us both to will and to do*, *Phil. ii. 13; Ps. x. 17*. But most read it otherwise: *The preparation of the heart is in man* (he may contrive and design this and the other) but *the answer of the tongue*, not only the delivering of what he designed to speak, but the issue and success of what he designed to do, *is of the Lord*. That is, in short, 1. *Man purposes*. He has a freedom of thought and a freedom of will permitted him; let him form his projects, and lay his schemes, as he thinks best: but, after all, 2. *God disposes*. Man cannot go on with his business without the assistance and blessing of God, who made *man's mouth* and teaches us what we shall say. Nay, God easily can, and often does, cross men's purposes, and break their measures. It was a curse that was prepared in Balaam's heart, but the answer of the tongue was a blessing.

2 All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits.

Note, 1. We are all apt to be partial in judging of ourselves: *All the ways of a man*, all his designs, all his doings, *are clean in his own eyes*, and he sees nothing amiss in them, nothing for which to condemn himself, or which should make his projects prove otherwise than well; and therefore he is confident of success, and that the answer of the tongue shall be according to the expectations of the heart; but there is a great deal of pollution cleaving to our ways, which we are not aware of, or do not think so ill of as we ought. 2. The judgment of God concerning us, we are sure, is according to truth: He *weighs the spirits* in a just and unerring balance, knows what is in us, and passes a judgment upon us accordingly, writing *Tekel* upon that which passed our scale with approbation—*weighed in the balance and found wanting*—and by his judgment we must stand or fall. He not only sees men's ways but tries their spirits, and we are as our spirits are.

3 Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.

Note, 1. It is a very desirable thing to have *our thoughts established*, and not tossed, and

put into a hurry, by disquieting cares and fears,—to go on in an even steady course of honesty and piety, not disturbed, or put out of frame, by any event or change,—to be satisfied that all shall work for good and issue well at last, and therefore to be always easy and sedate. 2. The only way to have our *thoughts established* is to *commit our works to the Lord*. The great concerns of our souls must be committed to the grace of God, with a dependence upon and submission to the conduct of that grace (2 Tim. i. 12); all our outward concerns must be committed to the providence of God, and to the sovereign, wise, and gracious disposal of that providence. *Roll thy works upon the Lord* (so the word is); roll the burden of thy care from thyself upon God. Lay the matter before him by prayer. *Make known thy works unto the Lord* (so some read it), not only the works of thy hand, but the workings of thy heart; and then leave it with him, by faith and dependence upon him, submission and resignation to him. *The will of the Lord be done*. We may then be easy when we resolve that whatever pleases God shall please us.

4 The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

Note, 1. That God is the first cause. He is the former of all things and all persons, the fountain of being; he gave every creature the being it has and appointed it its place. Even the wicked are his creatures, though they are rebels; he gave them those powers with which they fight against him, which aggravates their wickedness, that they will not let him that made them rule them, and therefore, though he made them, he will not save them. 2. That God is the last end. All is of him and from him, and therefore all is to him and for him. He made all according to his will and for his praise; he designed to serve his own purposes by all his creatures, and he will not fail of his designs; all are his servants. The wicked he is not glorified by, but he will be glorified upon. He makes no man wicked, but he made those who he foresaw would be wicked: yet he made them (Gen. vi. 6), because he knew how to *get himself honour upon them*. See Rom. ix. 22. Or (as some understand it) he made the wicked to be employed by him as the instruments of his wrath in the day of evil, when he brings judgments on the world. He makes some use even of wicked men, as of other things, to be his sword, his hand (Ps. xvii. 14), *flagellum Dei—the scourge of God*. The king of Babylon is called his *servant*.

5 Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished.

Note, 1. The pride of sinners sets God against them. He that, being high in estate is proud

in heart, whose spirit is elevated with his condition, so that he becomes insolent in conduct towards God and man, let him know that though he admires himself, and of himself he is nothing, yet he is an *abomination to the Lord*. The great God despises him; holy God detests him. 2. The power of sinners cannot secure them against God, though they strengthen themselves with both hands. Though they may strengthen one another with their confederacies and combinations, joining forces against God, they shall not escape his righteous judgment. *Woe unto them that strive with his Maker*, ch. xi. 21; xlv. 9.

6 By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.

See here, 1. How the guilt of sin is taken away from us—by the *mercy and truth* of God, mercy in promising, truth in performing, the mercy and truth which kiss one another in Jesus Christ the Mediator—by the covenant of grace, in which mercy and truth shine so brightly—by our mercy and truth as the condition of the pardon and a necessary qualification for it—by these, and not by the legal sacrifices, Mic. vi. 7, 8. 2. How the power of sin is broken in us. By the principles of *mercy and truth* commanding in the corrupt inclinations are purged out (so some may take the former part); however, by the *fear of the Lord*, and the influence of that fear, *men depart from evil*; those will dare to sin against God who keep up in their minds a holy dread and reverence of him.

7 When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

Note, 1. God can turn foes into friends when he pleases. He that has all hearts in his hand has access to men's spirits, and his power over them, working insensibly, but insistently upon them, can make a man's enemies to be at peace with him, can change their minds, or force them into a feigned submission. He can slay all enemies, and bring those together that were at the greatest distance from each other. 2. He will do it for us when we please him. If we make it our duty to be reconciled to God, and to keep ourselves in his love, he will incline those that have been envious towards us, and vexatious to us, to entertain a good opinion of us, and to become our friends. God made Esau be at peace with Jacob, Abimelech with Isaac, and David's enemies to court his favour, and desire a league with Israel. The image of God appearing upon the righteous, and particular loving kindness to them, are enough to recommend them to the respect of all, and of those that have been most prejudiced against them.

8 Better is a little with righteousness

ss than great revenues without
ht.

Here, 1. It is supposed that an honest good
n may have but a little of the wealth of
s world (all the righteous are not rich),—
t a man may have but little, and yet may
honest (though poverty is a temptation to
honesty, *ch. xxx. 9*, yet not an invincible
),—and that a man may grow rich, for a
le, by fraud and oppression, may have
t revenues, and those got and kept *with-
right*, may have no good title to them nor
ke any good use of them. 2. It is main-
ted that a small estate, honestly come by,
ch a man is content with, enjoys comfort-
y, serves God with cheerfully, and puts to
ght use, is much better and more valu-
e than a great estate ill-got, and then ill-
t or ill-spent. It carries with it more in-
d satisfaction, a better reputation with all
are wise and good; it will last longer,
will turn to a better account in the great
when men will be judged, not according
what they had, but what they did.

O A man's heart deviseth his way:
the LORD directeth his steps.

Man is here represented to us, 1. As a rea-
ble creature, that has the faculty of con-
ng for himself: *His heart devises his way*,
gns an end, and projects ways and means
ing to that end, which the inferior crea-
s, who are governed by sense and natural
inct, cannot do. The more shame for
if he do not devise the way how to please
and provide for his everlasting state. 2.
as a depending creature, that is subject
e direction and dominion of his Maker.
en *devise their way*, so as to make God's
y their end and his will their rule, they
expect that he will *direct their steps* by
Spirit and grace, so that they shall not
their way nor come short of their end.
let men devise their worldly affairs ever
olitically, and with ever so great a proba-
y of success, yet God has the ordering of
event, and sometimes *directs their steps*
at which they least intended. The de-
of this is to teach us to say, *If the Lord
we shall live and do this or that* (*Jam. iv.*
15), and to have our eye to God, not only
e great turns of our lives, but in every
we take. *Lord, direct my way*, 1 *Thess.*
1.

O A divine sentence is in the lips
he king: his mouth transgresseth
in judgment.

We wish this were always true as a propo-
n, and we ought to make it our prayer
kings, and all in authority, that a *divine*
nce may be in their lips, both in giving
rs, that they may do that in wisdom, and
ving sentence, that they may do that in
ty, both which are included in *judgment*,
that in neither *their mouth may trans-*
gress, 1 *Tim. ii. 1*. But it is often otherwise;

and therefore, 1. It may be read as a precept
to the kings and judges of the earth to be
wise and instructed. Let them be just, and
rule in the fear of God; let them act with
such wisdom and conscience that there may
appear a holy divination in all they say or do,
and that they are guided by principles su-
pernatural: let not their mouths transgress
in judgment, for the judgment is God's. 2.
It may be taken as a promise to all good
kings, that if they sincerely aim at God's
glory, and seek direction from him, he will
qualify them with wisdom and grace above
others, in proportion to the eminency of their
station and the trusts lodged in their hands.
When Saul himself was made king God gave
him another spirit. 3. It was true concerning
Solomon who wrote this; he had extraordi-
nary wisdom, pursuant to the promise God
made him, See 1 *Kings iii. 28*.

11 A just weight and balance *are*
the LORD's: all the weights of the
bag *are* his work.

Note, 1. The administration of public jus-
tice by the magistrate is an ordinance of God;
in it the scales are held, and ought to be held
by a steady and impartial hand; and we
ought to submit to it, for the Lord's sake,
and to see his authority in that of the magis-
trate, *Rom. xiii. 1*; 1 *Pet. ii. 13*. 2. The ob-
servance of justice in commerce between man
and man is likewise a divine appointment.
He taught men discretion to make scales and
weights for the adjusting of right exactly be-
tween buyer and seller, that neither may be
wronged; and all other useful inventions for
the preserving of right are from him. He has
also appointed by his law that they be just.
It is therefore a great affront to him, and to
his government, to falsify, and so to do wrong
under colour and pretence of doing right,
which is *wickedness in the place of judgment*.

12 *It is* an abomination to kings
to commit wickedness: for the throne
is established by righteousness.

Here is, 1. The character of a good king,
which Solomon intended not for his own
praise, but for instruction to his successors,
his neighbours, and the viceroys under him.
A good king not only does justice, but it is
an abomination to him to do otherwise. He
hates the thought of doing wrong and per-
verting justice; he not only abhors the wick-
edness done by others, but abhors to do any
himself, though, having power, he might
easily and safely do it. 2. The comfort of a
good king: *His throne is established by righ-
teousness*. He that makes conscience of using
his power aright shall find that to be the best
security of his government, both as it will
oblige people, make them easy, and keep
them in the interest of it, and as it will ob-
tain the blessing of God, which will be a firm
basis to the throne and a strong guard about it.

13 Righteous lips *are* the delight

of kings; and they love him that speaketh right.

Here is a further character of good kings, that they *love and delight* in those that *speak right*. 1. They hate parasites and those that flatter them, and are very willing that all about them should deal faithfully with them and tell them that which is true, whether it be pleasing or displeasing, both concerning persons and things, that every thing should be set in a true light and nothing disguised, *ch. xxix. 12*. 2. They not only do righteousness themselves, but take care to employ those under them that do righteousness too, which is of great consequence to the people, who must be subject not only to the king as supreme, but to the governors sent by him, 1 Pet. ii. 14. A good king will therefore put nose in power who are conscientious, and will say that which is righteous and discreet, and know how to speak aright and to the purpose.

14 The wrath of a king is as messengers of death: but a wise man will pacify it. 15 In the light of the king's countenance is life; and his favour is as a cloud of the latter rain.

These two verses show the power of kings, which is every where great, but was especially so in those eastern countries, where they were absolute and arbitrary. Whom they would they slew and whom they would they kept alive. Their will was a law. We have reason to bless God for the happy constitution of the government we live under, which maintains the prerogative of the prince without any injury to the liberty of the subject. But here it is intimated, 1. How formidable the wrath of a king is: It is as messengers of death; the wrath of Ahasuerus was so to Haman. An angry word from an incensed prince has been to many a messenger of death, and has struck so great a terror upon some as if a sentence of death had been pronounced upon them. He must be a very wise man that knows how to *pacify* the wrath of a king with a word fitly spoken, as Jonathan once pacified his father's rage against David, 1 Sam. xix. 6. A prudent subject may sometimes suggest that to an angry prince which will cool his resentments. 2. How valuable and desirable the king's favour is to those that have incurred his displeasure; it is life from the dead if the king be reconciled to them. To others it is as a cloud of the latter rain, very refreshing to the ground. Solomon put his subjects in mind of this, that they might not do any thing to incur his wrath, but be careful to recommend themselves to his favour. We ought by it to be put in mind how much we are concerned to escape the wrath and obtain the favour of the King of kings. His frowns are worse than death, and his favour is better than life; and therefore those are fools who to escape the wrath, and

obtain the favour, of an earthly prince, throw themselves out of God's favour, make themselves obnoxious to his wrath.

16 How much better is it to wisdom than gold? and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver?

Solomon here not only asserts that it is better to get wisdom than gold (*ch. i. viii. 19*), but he speaks it with assurance; it is much better, better beyond expression with admiration (*How much better!*) as amazed at the disproportion—with an appeal to men's consciences ("Judge in yourse how much better it is")—and with an assertion to the same purport, that understanding is *rather to be chosen than silver* and all treasures of kings and their favourites. 1. Heavenly wisdom is better than worldly wealth, and to be preferred before it. Grace is more valuable than gold. Grace is a gift of God's peculiar favour; gold only a common providence. Grace is for ourselves, gold for others. Grace is for the soul's eternity; gold only for the body and time. Grace will stand us in stead in a dying hour when gold will do us no good. 2. The getting of this heavenly wisdom is better than the getting of worldly wealth. Many care and pains to get wealth, and yet are short of it; but grace was never denied any that sincerely sought it. There is no vexation of spirit in getting wealth, joy and satisfaction of spirit in getting wisdom. *Great peace have those that love it.*

17 The highway of the upright to depart from evil: he that keepeth his way preserveth his soul.

Note, 1. It is the way of the upright to avoid sin, and every thing that looks like it and leads towards it; and this is a highway marked out by authority, tracked by many that have gone before us, and in which we meet with many that keep company with it. It is easy to find and safe to be travelled like a highway, Isa. xxxv. 8. *To depart from evil is understanding*. 2. It is the care of the upright to preserve their own souls, that they be not polluted with sin, and that by the troubles of the world they may not be out of the possession of them, especially if they may not perish for ever, Matt. xvi. And it is therefore their care to keep the way, and not turn aside out of it, on either hand, but to press towards perfection. They that adhere to their duty secure their felicity. Keep thy way and God will keep thee.

18 Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Note, 1. Pride will have a fall. Those who are of a *haughty spirit*, that think of themselves above what is meet, and look with contempt upon others, that with their pride affront God and disquiet others, will be brought down, either by repentance or

It is the honour of God to humble the
d, Job xl. 11, 12. It is the act of jus-
that those who have lifted up themselves
ld be laid low. Pharaoh, Sennacherib,
uchadnezzar, were instances of this. Men
ot punish pride, but either admire it or
it, and therefore God will take the pu-
ing of it into his own hands. Let him
e to deal with proud men. 2. Proud
are frequently most proud, and insolent,
haughty, just before their destruction,
at it is a certain presage that they are
at the brink of it. When proud men set
s judgments at defiance, and think them-
es at the greatest distance from them, it
sign that they are at the door; witness
case of Benhadad and Herod. *While the
was in the king's mouth*, Dan. iv. 31.
efore let us not fear the pride of others,
greatly fear pride in ourselves.

9 *Better it is to be of a humble
it with the lowly, than to divide
spoil with the proud.*

is is a paradox which the children of
world cannot understand and will not
cribe to, that it is better to be poor and
ble than to be rich and proud. 1. Those
divide the spoil are commonly proud;
value themselves and despise others,
their mind rises with their condition;
e therefore that are *rich in this world*
need to be charged that they be not
-minded, 1 Tim. vi. 17. Those that are
d and will put forth themselves, that
st, and shove, and scramble, for prefer-
t, are the men that commonly *divide the
and share it among them*; they have
world at will and the ball at their foot.
is upon all accounts better to take our
with those whose condition is low, and
r minds brought to it, than to covet and
to make a figure and a bustle in the
ld. Humility, though it should expose
to contempt in the world, yet while it re-
mends us to the favour of God, qualifies
or his gracious visits, prepares us for his
y, secures us from many temptations, and
erves the quiet and repose of our own
s, is much better than that high-spirited-
which, though it carry away the honour
wealth of the world, makes God a man's
ny and the devil his master.

20 *He that handleth a matter wise-
hall find good: and whoso trusteth
the LORD, happy is he.*

ote, 1. Prudence gains men respect and
ess: *He that handles a matter wisely*
t is master of his trade and makes it to
ear he understands what he undertakes,
is considerate in his affairs, and, when
peaks or writes on any subject, does it
nently shall *find good*, shall come into
l repute, and perhaps may make a good
l of it. 2. But it is piety only that will
re men's true happiness: Those that

handle a matter wisely, if they are proud and
lean to their own understanding, though they
may find some good, yet they will have no
great satisfaction in it; but he that *trusts in
the LORD*, and not in his own wisdom, *happy
is he*, and shall speed better at last. Some
read the former part of the verse so as to ex-
pound it of piety, which is indeed true wis-
dom: *He that attends to the word* (the word
of God, ch. xiii. 13) *shall find good* in it and
good by it. And whoso *trusts in the LORD*,
in his word which he attends to, is happy.

21 *The wise in heart shall be called
prudent: and the sweetness of the
lips increaseth learning.*

Note, 1. Those that have solid wisdom will
have the credit of it; it will gain them repu-
tation, and they *shall be called prudent* grave
men, and a deference will be paid to their
judgment. *Do that which is wise and good
and thou shalt have praise of the same.* 2.
Those that with their wisdom have a happy
elocation, that deliver their sentiments easily
and with a good grace, are communicative of
their wisdom and have words at will, and
good language as well as good sense, *increase
learning*; they diffuse and propagate know-
ledge to others, and do good with it, and by
that means increase their own stock. They
add doctrine, improve sciences, and do ser-
vice to the commonwealth of learning. *To
him that has*, and uses what he has, *more
shall be given.*

22 *Understanding is a wellspring
of life unto him that hath it: but the
instruction of fools is folly.*

Note, 1. There is always some good to be
gotten by a wise and good man. His *under-
standing is a well-spring of life to him*, which
always flows and can never be drawn dry;
he has something to say upon all occasions
that is instructive, and of use to those that
will make use of it, things new and old to
bring out of his treasure; at least, his under-
standing is a *spring of life* to himself, yield-
ing him abundant satisfaction; within his
own thoughts he entertains and edifies him-
self, if not others. 2. There is nothing that
is good to be gotten by a fool. Even his in-
struction, his set and solemn discourses, are
but folly, like himself, and tending to make
others like him. When he does his best it
is but folly, in comparison even with the
common talk of a wise man, who speaks bet-
ter at table than a fool in Moses's seat.

23 *The heart of the wise teacheth
his mouth, and addeth learning to his
lips.*

Solomon had commended eloquence, or
the sweetness of the lips (v. 21), and seemed
to prefer it before wisdom; but here he cor-
rects himself, as it were, and shows that un-
less there be a good treasure within to sup-
port the eloquence it is worth little. Wis-
dom in *the heart* is the main matter. 1. It

is this that directs us in speaking, that *teaches the mouth* what to speak, and when, and how, so that what is spoken may be proper, and pertinent, and seasonable; otherwise, though the language be ever so fine, it had better be unsaid. 2. It is this that gives weight to what we speak and *adds learning* to it, strength of reason and force of argument, without which, let a thing be ever so well worded, it will be rejected, when it comes to be considered, as trifling. Quaint expressions please the ear, and humour the fancy, but it is learning in the lips that must convince the judgment, and sway that, to which wisdom in the heart is necessary.

24 Pleasant words *are as a honey-comb*, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.

The *pleasant words* here commended must be those which *the heart of the wise teaches, and adds learning* to (v. 23), words of seasonable advice, instruction, and comfort, words taken from God's word, for that is it which Solomon had learned from his father to account *sweeter than honey and the honey-comb*, Ps. xix. 10. These words, to those that know how to relish them, 1. Are pleasant. They are like the *honey-comb, sweet to the soul*, which tastes in them that *the Lord is gracious*; nothing more grateful and agreeable to the new man than the word of God, and those words which are borrowed from it, Ps. xix. 103. 2. They are wholesome. Many things are pleasant that are not profitable, but these *pleasant words are health to the bones*, to the inward man, as well as *sweet to the soul*. They make *the bones*, which sin has broken and put out of joint, *to rejoice*. The bones are the strength of the body; and the good word of God is a means of spiritual strength, curing the diseases that weaken us.

25 There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are the ways of death*.

This we had before (*ch. xiv. 12*), but here it is repeated, as that which is very necessary to be thought of, 1. By way of caution to us all to take heed of deceiving ourselves in the great concerns of our souls by resting in that which *seems right* and is not really so, and, for the preventing of a self-delusion, to be impartial in self-examination and keep up a jealousy over ourselves. 2. By way of terror to those whose way is not right, is not as it should be, however it may seem to themselves or others; the end of it will certainly be death; to that it has a direct and certain tendency.

26 He that laboureth laboureth for himself; for his mouth craveth it of him.

This is designed to engage us to diligence, and quicken us, *what our hand finds to do, to do it with all our might*, both in our worldly

business and in the work of religion; for the original it is, *The soul that labours labours for itself*. It is heart-work which is here intended, the labour of the soul, which is recommended to us, 1. As that which be absolutely needful. Our mouth is continually craving it of us; the necessities of soul and body are pressing, and require constant relief, so that we must either starve. Both call for daily bread, therefore there must be daily labour; for the sweat of our face we must eat, 2 Th. iii. 10. 2. As that which will be unspeakably gainful. We know on whose errand he go: *He that labours shall reap the fruit of his labour*; it shall be *for himself*; he shall rejoice in his own work and *eat the labour of his hands*. If we make religion our business, God will make it our blessedness.

27 An ungodly man diggeth evil: and in his lips *there is as a burning fire*. 28 A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends.

There are those that are not only violent to themselves, but spiteful and mischievous to others, and they are the worst of men; sorts of such are here described:—1. Such as envy a man the honour of his good name and do all they can to blast that by calumnies and misrepresentations: They *dig evil*; they take a great deal of pains to throw out something or other on which to ground a slander, or which may give some colour to it. If none appear above ground, rather than want it they will dig for it, by diving into what is secret, or looking a great way back, or by evil suspicions and surmises, and for innuendos. In the lips of a slanderer or backbiter *there is as a fire*, not only to burn his neighbour's reputation, to smoke and sully it, but *as a burning fire* to consume it. And how great a matter does a little of this fire kindle, and how hardly is it extinguished, James iii. 5, 6. 2. Such as envy a man the comfort of his friendship, and do all they can to break that, by suggesting that on both sides which will set those at variance that most nearly related and have been long intimate, or at least cool and alienate their affections one from another: *A froward man that cannot find in his heart to love any body but himself*, is vexed to see others live in love, and therefore makes it his business *sow strife*, by giving men base characters of another, telling lies, and carrying ill-told stories between *chief friends*, so as to *separate* them one from another, and make them angry at or at least suspicious of another. Those are bad men, and bad men too, that do such ill offices; they do the devil's work, and his will they wages be.

29 A violent man enticeth his neighbour, and leadeth him into

ray that is not good. 30 He shutteth his eyes to devise froward things: moving his lips he bringeth evil to pass.

Here is another sort of evil men described to us, that we may neither do like them nor have any thing to do with them. 1. Such as (like Satan) do all the mischief they can by force and violence, as roaring lions, and not only by fraud and insinuation, as subtle serpents: They are *violent men*, that do all by rapine and oppression, that *shut their eyes*, meditating with the closest intention and application of mind to *devise froward things*, to contrive how they may do the greatest mischief to their neighbour, to do it effectually and yet securely to themselves; and then *moving their lips*, giving the word of command to their agents, they *bring the evil to pass*, and accomplish the wicked device, *moving his lips* (so some read it) for vexation. When the wicked plots against the just he *dasheth upon him with his teeth*. 2. Such as (like Satan still) do all they can to *entice* and draw in others to join with them in doing mischief, *leading them in a way that is not good*, that is not honest, nor honourable, nor safe, but offensive to God, and which will be the end pernicious to the sinner. Thus he aims to ruin some in this world by bringing them into trouble, and others in the other world by bringing them into sin.

31 The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.

Note, 1. It ought to be the great care of old people to be found in the way of righteousness, the way of religion and serious godliness. Both God and man will look for them in that way; it will be expected that those that are old should be good, that the multitude of their years should teach them the best wisdom; let them therefore be found in that way. Death will come; the Judge is coming; the Lord is at hand. That they may be found of him in peace, let them be found in the way of righteousness (2 Pet. iii. 4), found so doing, Matt. xxiv. 46. Let old people be old disciples; let them persevere to the end in the way of righteousness, which they long since set out in, that they may be found in it. 2. If old people be found in the way of righteousness, their age will be their honour. Old age, as such, is honourable, and commands respect (*Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head*, Lev. xix. 32); but, if it be found in the way of wickedness, its honour is forfeited, its crown pronounced and laid in the dust, Isa. lxxv. 20. Old people therefore, if they would preserve their honour, must still hold fast their integrity, and then their gray hairs are indeed a crown to them; they are *worthy of double honour*. Grace is the glory of old age.

32 He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.

This recommends the grace of meekness to us, which will well become us all, particularly the hoary head, v. 31. Observe, 1. The nature of it. It is to be slow to anger, not easily put into a passion, nor apt to resent provocation, taking time to consider before we suffer our passion to break out, that it may not transgress due bounds, so slow in our motions towards anger that we may be quickly stopped and pacified. It is to have the rule of our own spirits, our appetites and affections, and all our inclinations, but particularly our passions, our anger, keeping that under direction and check, and the strict government of religion and right reason. We must be lords of our anger, as God is, Nah. i.

3. *Aeolus sis, affectuum tuorum*—Rule your passions, as *Aeolus* rules the winds. 2. The honour of it. He that gets and keeps the mastery of his passions is better than the mighty, better than he that by a long siege takes a city or by a long war subdues a country. Behold, a greater than Alexander or Cæsar is here. The conquest of ourselves, and our own unruly passions, requires more true wisdom, and a more steady, constant, and regular management, than the obtaining of a victory over the forces of an enemy. A rational conquest is more honourable to a rational creature than a brutal one. It is a victory that does nobody any harm; no lives or treasures are sacrificed to it, but only some base lusts. It is harder, and therefore more glorious, to quash an insurrection at home than to resist an invasion from abroad; nay, such are the gains of meekness that by it we are more than conquerors.

33 The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.

Note, 1. The divine Providence orders and directs those things which to us are perfectly casual and fortuitous. Nothing comes to pass by chance, nor is an event determined by a blind fortune, but every thing by the will and counsel of God. What man has neither eye nor hand in God is intimately concerned in. 2. When solemn appeals are made to Providence by the casting of lots, for the deciding of that matter of moment which could not otherwise be at all, or not so well, decided, God must be eyed in it, by prayer, that it may be disposed aright (*Give a perfect lot*, 1 Sam. xiv. 41; Acts i. 24), and by acquiescing in it when it is disposed, being satisfied that the hand of God is in it and the hand directed by infinite wisdom. All the disposals of Providence concerning our affair we must look upon to be the directing of our lot, the determining of what we referred to God, and must be reconciled to them accordingly.

CHAP. XVII.

BBETTER is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than a house full of sacrifices *with strife*.

These words recommend family-love and peace, as conducing very much to the comfort of human life. 1. Those that live in unity and quietness, not only free from jealousies and animosities, but vying in mutual endearments, and that study to make themselves easy and obliging to one another, live very comfortably, though they are low in the world, work hard and fare hard, though they have but each of them *a morsel*, and that *a dry morsel*. There may be peace and quietness where there are not three meals a day, provided there be a joint satisfaction in God's providence and a mutual satisfaction in each other's prudence. Holy love may be found in a cottage. 2. Those that live in contention, that are always jarring and brawling, and reflecting upon one another, though they have plenty of dainties, *a house full of sacrifices*, live uncomfortably; they cannot expect the blessing of God upon them and what they have, nor can they have any true relish of their enjoyments, much less any peace in their own consciences. Love will sweeten *a dry morsel*, but strife will sour and embitter *a house full of sacrifices*. A little of the leaven of malice will leaven all the enjoyments.

2 A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame, and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren.

Note 1. True merit does not go by dignity. All agree that the son in the family is more worthy than the servant (John viii. 35), and yet sometimes it so happens that the servant is wise, and a blessing and credit to the family, when the son is a fool, and a burden and shame to the family. Eliezer of Damascus, though Abram could not bear to think that he should be his heir, was a stay to the family, when he obtained a wife for Isaac; whereas Ishmael, a son, was a shame to it, when he mocked Isaac. 2. True dignity will go by merit. If a servant be wise, and manage things well, he shall be further trusted, and not only *have rule* with, but *rule over a son that causes shame*; for God and nature have designed that *the fool shall be servant to the wise in heart*. Nay, a prudent servant may perhaps come to have such an interest in his master as to be taken in for a child's share of the estate and to *have part of the inheritance among the brethren*.

3 The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the LORD trieth the hearts.

Note, 1. The hearts of the children of men are subject, not only to God's view, but to his judgment? *As the fining-pot is for silver*, both to prove it and to improve it so the

Lord tries the hearts; he searches whether they are standard or no, and those that are he refines and makes purer, Jer. xvii. 1. God tries the heart by affliction (Ps. lvi. 11), and often chooses his people in the furnace (Isa. xlviii. 10) and makes them his choice. 2. It is God only that *tries the heart*. Men may try their *silver* and *gold* with the *fining-pot* and the *furnace*, but they have not such way of trying one another's hearts. God only does that, who is both the searcher and the sovereign of the heart.

4 A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips; and a liar giveth ear to naughty tongue.

Note, 1. Those that design to do ill support themselves by falsehood and lying: *wicked doer gives ear*, with a great deal of pleasure, to *false lips*, that will justify him in the ill he does, to those that aim to make public disturbances, catch greedily at libels and false stories, that defame the government and the administration. 2. Those that take the liberty to tell lies take a pleasure in hearing them told: *A liar gives heed* to a malicious backbiting tongue, that he may have something to graft his lies upon, and with which to give them some colour of truth and so to support them. Sinners will strengthen one another's hands; and those show that they are bad themselves who court the acquaintance and need the assistance of those that are bad.

5 Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker: and he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished.

See here, 1. What a great sin those are guilty of who trample upon the poor, who ridicule their wants and the meanness of their appearance, upbraid them with their poverty and take advantage from their weakness to be abusive and injurious to them. They *reproach their Maker*, put a great contempt and affront upon him, who allotted the poor to the condition they are in, owns them, and takes care of them, and can, when he pleases, reduce us to that condition. Let those that thus reproach their Maker know that they shall be called to an account for it, Matt. xxv. 40, 41; Prov. xiv. 31. 2. What great danger those are in of falling into trouble themselves who are pleased to see and hear of the troubles of others: *He that is glad at calamities* that he may be built up upon the ruins of others, and regales himself with the judgments of God when they are abroad, let him know that he *shall not go unpunished*; the cup shall be put into his hand, Ezek. xxv. 6, 7.

6 Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers.

They are so, that is, they should be so, and if they conduct themselves worthily, they are so. 1. It is an honour to parents when they

re old to leave children, and *children's children*, growing up, that tread in the steps of their virtues, and are likely to maintain and advance the reputation of their families. It is an honour to a man to live so long as to see his children's children (Ps. cxxviii. 6; Gen. i. 23), to see his house built up in them, and to see them likely to serve their generation according to the will of God. This crowns and completes their comfort in this world. 2. It is an honour to children to have wise and godly parents, and to have them continued to them even after they have themselves grown up and settled in the world. Those are unnatural children who reckon their aged parents a burden to them, and think they live too long; whereas, if the children be wise and good, it is as much their honour as can be that thereby they are comforts to their parents in the unpleasant days of their old age.

7 Excellent speech becometh not a fool: much less do lying lips a prince.

Two things are here represented as very absurd: 1. That men of no repute should be dictators. What can be more unbecoming than for fools, who are known to have little sense and discretion, to pretend to that which is above them and which they were never cut out for? A fool, in Solomon's proverbs, signifies a wicked man, whom *excellent speech* does not become, because his conversation gives the lie to his excellent speech. What have those to do to declare God's statutes who *hate instruction*? Ps. l. 16. Christ would not suffer the unclean spirits to say that they knew him to be the Son of God. See Acts vi. 17, 18. 2. That men of great repute should be deceivers. If it is unbecoming a respectable man to presume to speak as a philosopher or politician, and nobody hears him, being prejudiced against his character, much more unbecoming is it for a prince, for a man of honour, to take advantage from his character and the confidence that is put in him to lie, and dissemble, and make no conscience of breaking his word. Lying ill becomes any man, but worst a prince, so corrupt is the modern policy, which insinuates that princes ought not to make themselves slaves to their words further than is for their interest, and *Qui nescit dissimulare nescit regnare*—He who knows not how to dissemble knows not how to reign.

8 A gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it: whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth.

The design of this observation is to show, That those who have money in their hand think they can do any thing with it. Rich men value a little money as if it were a *precious stone*, and value themselves on it as if it gave them not only ornament, but power, and every one were bound to be at their beck, even justice itself. Whithersoever they turn this sparkling diamond they expect it should

dazzle the eyes of all, and make them do just what they would have them do in hopes of it. The deepest bag will carry the cause. Fee high, and you may have what you will. 2. That those who have money in their eye, and set their hearts upon it, will do any thing for it: *A bribe is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that takes it*; it has a great influence upon him, and he will be sure to go the way that it leads him, hither and thither, though contrary to justice and not consistent with himself.

9 He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth *very* friends.

Note, 1. The way to preserve peace among relations and neighbours is to make the best of every thing, not to tell others what has been said or done against them when it is not at all necessary to their safety, nor to take notice of what has been said or done against ourselves, but to excuse both, and put the best construction upon them. "It was an oversight; therefore overlook it. It was done through forgetfulness; therefore forget it. It perhaps made nothing of you; do you make nothing of it." 2. The ripping up of faults is the ripping out of love, and nothing tends more to the separating of friends, and setting them at variance, than the *repeating of matters* that have been in variance; for they commonly lose nothing in the repetition, but the things themselves are aggravated and the passions about them revived and exasperated. The best method of peace is by an amnesty or act of oblivion.

10 A reproof entereth more into a wise man than a hundred stripes into a fool.

Note, 1. A word is enough to the wise. A gentle reproof will enter not only into the head, but into the heart of a wise man, so as to have a strong influence upon him; for, if but a hint be given to conscience, let it alone to carry it on and prosecute it. 2. Stripes are not enough for a fool, to make him sensible of his errors, that he may repent of them, and be more cautious for the future. He that is sottish and wilful is very rarely benefited by severity. David is softened with, *Thou art the man*; but Pharaoh remains hard under all the plagues of Egypt.

11 An evil man seeketh only rebellion: therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him.

Here is the sin and punishment of an evil man. 1. His sin. He is an evil man indeed that seeks all occasions to rebel against God, and the government God has set over him, and to contradict and quarrel with those about him. *Querit jurgia*—He picks quarrels; so some. There are some that are actuated by a spirit of opposition, that will contradict for contradiction-sake, that will go on frowardly in their wicked ways in spite of all

restraint and check. *A rebellious man seeks mischief* (so some read it), watches all opportunities to disturb the public peace. 2. His punishment: Because he will not be reclaimed by mild and gentle methods, a *cruel messenger shall be sent against him*, some dreadful judgment or other, as a messenger from God. Angels, God's messengers, shall be employed as ministers of his justice against him, Ps. lxxviii. 49. Satan, the angel of death, shall be let loose upon him, and the messengers of Satan. His prince shall send a sergeant to arrest him, an executioner to cut him off. He that *kicks against the pricks is waited for of the sword*.

12 Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly.

Note, 1. A passionate man is a brutish man. However at other times he may have some wisdom, take him in his passion ungoverned, and he is a *fool in his folly*; those are fools in whose bosom anger rests and in whose countenance anger rages. He has put off man, and is become like a bear, a raging bear, a *bear robbed of her whelps*; he is as fond of the gratifications of his lusts and passions as a bear of her whelps (which, though ugly, are her own), as eager in the pursuit of them as she is in quest of her whelps when they are missing, and as full of indignation if crossed in the pursuit. 2. He is a dangerous man, falls foul of every one that stands in his way, though innocent, though his friend, as a bear robbed of her whelps sets upon the first man she meets as the robber. *Ira furor brevis est—Anger is temporary madness*. One may more easily stop, escape, or guard against an enraged bear, than an outrageous angry man. Let us therefore watch over our own passions (lest they get head and do mischief) and so consult our own honour; and let us avoid the company of furious men, and get out of their way when they are in their fury, and so consult our own safety. *Currenti cede furori—Give place unto wrath*.

13 Whoso rewardeth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house.

A malicious mischievous man is here represented, 1. As ungrateful to his friends. He oftentimes is so absurd and insensible of kindnesses done him that he renders *evil for good*. David met with those that were his adversaries for his love, Ps. cix. 4. To render evil for evil is brutish, but to render evil for good is devilish. He is an ill-natured man who, because he is resolved not to return a kindness, will revenge it. 2. As therein unkind to his family, for he entails a curse upon it. This is a crime so heinous that it shall be punished, not only in his person, but in his posterity, for whom he thus treasures up wrath. *The sword shall not depart from David's house* because he rewarded

Uriah with evil for his good services. The Jews stoned Christ for his good works; therefore is his blood upon them and upon their children.

14 The beginning of strife is when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with.

Here is, 1. The danger that there is *the beginning of strife*. One hot word, one peevish reflection, one angry demand, one spiteful contradiction, begets another, and that a third, and so on, till it proves like the cutting of a dam; when the water has got a little passage it does itself widen the breach bears down all before it, and there is then no stopping it, no reducing it. 2. A good caution inferred thence, to take heed of the first spark of contention and to put it out as soon as ever it appears. Dread the breaking of the ice, for, if once broken, it will break further; *therefore leave it off*, not only when you see the worst of it, for then it may be too late, but when you see the first of it. *Obsta principiis—Resist its earliest display*. Leave it off even before it be meddled with, leave it off, if it were possible, before you begin.

15 He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord.

This shows what an offence it is to God. 1. When those that are entrusted with the administration of public justice, judges, juries, witnesses, prosecutors, counsel, do either acquit the guilty or condemn those that are not guilty, or in the least contribute to either, this defeats the end of government, which is to protect the good and punish the bad. Rom. xiii. 3, 4. It is equally provoking to God to *justify the wicked*, though it be in pity and in *favorem vitæ—to save life*, as to *condemn the just*. 2. When any private persons plead for sin and sinners, palliate and excuse wickedness, or argue against virtue and piety, and so *pervert the right ways of the Lord* and confound the eternal distinctions between good and evil.

16 Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?

Two things are here spoken of with astonishment:—1. God's great goodness to foolish man, in putting a *price into his hand to get wisdom*, to get knowledge and grace to fit him for both worlds. We have rational souls, the means of grace, the strivings of the Spirit, access to God by prayer; we have time and opportunity. He that has a good estate (so some understand it) has advantages thereby of getting wisdom by purchasing instruction. Good parents, relations, ministers, friends, are helps to get wisdom. It is a *price*, therefore of value, a talent. It

is a price in the hand, in possession; *the word is nigh thee*. It is a price for getting; it is for our own advantage; it is for getting wisdom, the very thing which, being fools, we have most need of. We have reason to wonder that God should so consider our necessity, and should entrust us with such advantages, though he foresaw we should not make a right improvement of them. 2. Man's great wickedness, his neglect of God's favour and his own interest, which is very absurd and unaccountable: *He has no heart to it*, not to the wisdom that is to be got, nor to the price in the use of which it may be got. *He has no heart*, no skill, nor will, nor courage, to improve his advantages. He has set his heart upon other things, so that he has no heart to his duty or the great concerns of his soul. Wherefore should a price be thrown away and lost upon one so undeserving of it?

17 A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

This intimates the strength of those bonds by which we are bound to each other and which we ought to be sensible of. 1. Friends must be constant to each other *at all times*. That is not true friendship which is not constant; it will be so if it be sincere, and actuated by a good principle. Those that are fanciful or selfish in their friendship will love no longer than their humour is pleased and their interest served, and therefore their affections turn with the wind and change with the weather. Swallow-friends, that fly to you in summer, but are gone in winter; such friends there is no loss of. But if the friendship be prudent, generous, and cordial, if I love my friend because he is wise, and virtuous, and good, as long as he continues so, though he fall into poverty and disgrace, still I shall love him. Christ is a friend that loves at all times (John xiii. 1) and we must so love him, Rom. viii. 35. 2. Relations must in a special manner be careful and tender of one another in affliction: *A brother is born to succour a brother or sister in distress*, to whom he is joined so closely by nature that he may the more sensibly feel from their burdens, and be the more strongly inclined and engaged, as it were by instinct, to help them. We must often consider what we were born for, not only as men, but as in such a station and relation. *Who knows but we came into such a family for such a time as this?* We do not answer the end of our relations if we do not do the duty of them. Some take it thus: *A friend that loves at all times is born* (that is, becomes) *a brother in adversity*, and is so to be valued.

18 A man void of understanding striketh hands, and becometh surety in the presence of his friend.

Though Solomon had commended friendship in adversity (v. 17), yet let not any, under pretence of being generous to their friends, be unjust to their families and wrong them;

one part of our duty must be made to consist with another. Note, 1. It is a piece of wisdom to keep out of debt as much as may be, especially to dread suretiship. There may be a just occasion for a man to pass his word for his friend in his absence, till he come to engage himself; but to be *surety in the presence of his friend*, when he is upon the spot, supposes that his own word will not be taken, he being deemed insolvent or dishonest, and then who can with safety pass his word for him? 2. Those that are *void of understanding* are commonly taken in this snare, to the prejudice of their families, and therefore ought not to be trusted too far with their own affairs, but to be under direction.

19 He loveth transgression that loveth strife: and he that exalteth his gate seeketh destruction.

Note, 1. Those that are quarrelsome involve themselves in a great deal of guilt: *He that loves strife*, that in his worldly business loves to go to law, in religion loves controversies, and in common conversation loves to thwart and fall out, that is never well but when he is in the fire, *he loves transgression*: for a great deal of sin attends that sin, and the way of it is down-hill. He pretends to stand up for truth, and for his honour and right, but really he loves sin, which God hates. 2. Those that are ambitious and aspiring expose themselves to a great deal of trouble, such as often ends in their ruin: *He that exalts his gate*, builds a stately house, at least a fine frontispiece, that he may overtop and outshine his neighbours, seeks his own destruction and takes a deal of pains to ruin himself; he makes his gate so large that his house and estate go out at it.

20 He that hath a froward heart findeth no good: and he that hath a perverse tongue falleth into mischief.

Note, 1. Framing ill designs will be of no advantage to us; there is nothing got by them: *He that has a froward heart*, that sows discord and is full of resentment, cannot promise himself to get by it sufficient to counterbalance the loss of his repose and reputation, nor can he take any rational satisfaction in it; *he finds no good*. 2. Giving ill language will be a great disadvantage to us: *He that has a perverse tongue*, spiteful and abusive, scurrilous or backbiting, *falls into one mischief* or other, loses his friends, provokes his enemies, and pulls trouble upon his own head. Many a one has paid dearly for an unbridled tongue.

21 He that begetteth a fool doeth it to his sorrow: and the father of a fool hath no joy

This expresses that very emphatically which many wise and good men feel very sensibly, what a grievous vexatious thing it is to have a foolish wicked child. See here,

1. How uncertain all our creature-comforts are, so that we are often not only disappointed in them, but that proves the greatest cross in which we promised ourselves most satisfaction. There was *joy when a man-child was born into the world*, and yet, if he prove vicious, his own father will wish he had never been born. The name of Absalom signifies his *father's peace*, but he was his greatest trouble. It should moderate the desire of having children, and the delight of their parents in them, that they may prove a grief to them; yet it should silence the murmurings of the afflicted father in that case that if his son be a fool he is a fool of his own begetting, and therefore he must make the best of him, and take it up as his cross, the rather because Adam begets a son in his own likeness. 2. How unwise we are in suffering one affliction (and that of an untoward child as likely as any other) to drown the sense of a thousand mercies: *The father of a fool* lays that so much to heart that he *has no joy* of any thing else. For this he may thank himself; there are joys sufficient to counterbalance even that sorrow.

22 A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.

Note, 1. It is healthful to be cheerful. The Lord is for the body, and has provided for it, not only meat, but medicine, and has nere told us that the best medicine is a *merry heart*, not a heart addicted to vain, carnal, sensual mirth; Solomon himself said of that mirth, It is not medicine, but madness; it is not food, but poison; *what doth it?* But he means a heart rejoicing in God, and serving him with gladness, and then taking the comfort of outward enjoyments and particularly that of pleasant conversation. It is a great mercy that God gives us leave to be cheerful and cause to be cheerful, especially if by his grace he gives us hearts to be cheerful. This *does good to a medicine* (so some read it); it will make physic more efficient. Or it *does good as a medicine* to the body, making it easy and fit for business. But, if mirth be a medicine (understand it of diversion and recreation), it must be used sparingly, only when there is occasion, not turned into food, and it must be used medicinally, *sub regimine—as a prescribed regimen*, and by rule. 2. The sorrows of the mind often contribute very much to the sickness of the body: *A broken spirit*, sunk by the burden of afflictions, and especially a conscience wounded with the sense of guilt and fear of wrath, *dries the bones*, wastes the radical moisture, exhausts the very marrow, and makes the body a mere skeleton. We should therefore watch and pray against all melancholy dispositions, for they lead us into trouble as well as into temptation.

23 A wicked man taketh a gift out

of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment.

See here, 1. What an evil thing bribery is. He is a *wicked man* that will take a gift to engage him to give a false testimony, verdict or judgment; when he does it he is ashamed of it, for he takes it, with all the secrecy imaginable, *out of the bosom* where he knows it is laid ready for him; it is industriously concealed, and so slyly that, if he could, would hide it from his own conscience. *A gift is taken out of the bosom of a wicked man* (so some read it); for he is a bad man that gives bribes, as well as he that takes them. 2. What a powerful thing it is. It is of such force that it *perverts the ways of judgment*. The course of justice is not only obstructed but turned into injustice; and the greatest wrongs are done under colour of doing right.

24 Wisdom is before him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth.

Note, 1. He is to be reckoned an intelligent man that not only has wisdom, but has it ready when he has occasion for it. He lays his *wisdom before him*, as his card and compass which he steers by, has his eye always upon it, as he that writes has on his copy; and then he has it *before him*; it is not to seek, but still at hand. 2. He that has a giddy head, a roving rambling fancy will never be fit for any solid business. He is a fool, and good for nothing, whose *eyes are in the ends of the earth*, here, and there, and every where, any where but where he should be, who cannot fix his thoughts to one subject nor pursue any one purpose with any thing of steadiness. When his mind should be applied to his study and business it is filled with a thousand things foreign and impertinent.

25 A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him.

Observe, 1. Wicked children are an affliction to both their parents. They are an occasion of *anger* to the father (so the word signifies), because they contemn his authority, but of sorrow and *bitterness* to the mother, because they abuse her tenderness. The parents, being joint-sufferers, should therefore bring mutual comfort to bear their up under it, and strive to make it as easy as they can, the mother to mollify the father's anger, the father to alleviate the mother's grief. 2. That Solomon often repeats this remark, probably because it was his own case; however, it is a common case.

26 Also to punish the just is no good, nor to strike princes for equity.

In differences that happen between magistrates and subjects, and such differences often arise, 1. Let magistrates see to it that they never *punish the just*, that they be in n

use a terror to good works, for that is to abuse their power and betray that great trust which is reposed in them. It is *not good*, that is, it is a very evil thing, and will end ill, whatever end they may aim at in it. When princes become tyrants and persecutors their thrones will be neither easy nor firm. 2. Let subjects see to it that they do not find fault with the government for doing its duty, for it is a wicked thing to *strike princes for equity*, by defaming their administration or by any secret attempts against them to strike at them, as the ten tribes that revolted reflected upon Solomon for imposing necessary taxes. Some read it, *Nor to strike the ingenuous for equity*. Magistrates must take heed that none suffer under them for well doing; nor must parents *provoke their children to wrath* by unjust rebukes.

27 He that hath knowledge spareth his words: *and* a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit. 28 Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: *and* he that shutteth his lips is *esteemed* a man of understanding.

Two ways a man may show himself to be a wise man:—1. By the good temper, the sweetness and the sedateness, of his mind: *a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit, a precious spirit* (so the word is); he is one that looks well to his spirit, that it be as he should be, and so keeps it in an even frame, easy to himself and pleasant to others. A gracious spirit is a precious spirit, and renders a man amiable and *more excellent than his neighbour*. He is of a *cool spirit* (so some read it), not heated with passion, nor put into any tumult or disorder by the *impetus* of any abrupt affection, but even and stayed. A cool head with a warm heart is an admirable composition. 2. By the good government of his tongue. (1.) A wise man will be of *few words*, as being afraid of speaking amiss: *He that has knowledge*, and aims to do good with it, is careful, when he does speak to speak to the purpose, and says little in order that he may take time to deliberate. He *s pares his words*, because they are better spared than ill-spoken. (2.) This is generally taken for a sure indication of wisdom that a fool may gain the reputation of being a wise man if he have but wit enough to hold his tongue, to hear, and see, and say little. If a fool hold his peace, men of candour will think him wise, because nothing appears to the contrary, and because it will be thought that he is making observations on what others say, and gaining experience, and is consulting with himself what he shall say, that he may speak pertinently. See how easy it is to gain men's good opinion and to impose upon them. But when a *fool holds his peace* God knows his heart, and the folly that is bound up there; thoughts are words to him, and there-

fore he cannot be deceived in his judgment of men.

CHAP. XVIII.

THROUGH desire a man, having separated himself, seeketh *and* intermeddleth with all wisdom.

The original here is difficult, and differently understood. 1. Some take it as a rebuke to an affected singularity. When men take a pride in *separating themselves* from the sentiments and society of others, in contradicting all that has been said before them and advancing new notions of their own, which, though ever so absurd, they are wedded to, it is to gratify a desire or lust of vain-glory, and they are seekers and meddlers with that which does not belong to them. He *seeks according to his desire, and intermeddles with every business*, pretends to pass a judgment upon every man's matter. He is morose and supercilious. Those generally are so that are opinionative and conceited, and they thus make themselves ridiculous, and are vexatious to others. 2. Our translation seems to take it as an excitement to diligence in the pursuit of wisdom. If we would get knowledge or grace, we must desire it, as that which we need and which will be of great advantage to us, 1 Cor. xii. 31. We must *separate ourselves* from all those things which would divert us from or retard us in the pursuit, retire out of the noise of this world's vanities, and then *seek and intermeddle with all the means and instructions of wisdom*, be willing to take pains and try all the methods of improving ourselves, be acquainted with a variety of opinions, that we may prove all things and hold fast that which is good.

2 A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself.

A fool may pretend to understanding, and to seek and intermeddle with the means of it, but, 1. He has no true delight in it; it is only to please his friends or save his credit; he does not love his book, nor his business, nor his Bible, nor his prayers; he would rather be playing the fool with his sports. Those who take no pleasure in learning or religion will make nothing to purpose of either. No progress is made in them if they are a task and a drudgery. 2. He has no good design in it, only that *his heart may discover itself*, that he may have something to make a show with, something wherewith to varnish his folly, that that may pass off the better, because he loves to hear himself talk.

3 When the wicked cometh, then cometh also contempt, and with ignominy reproach.

This may include a double sense:—1. That wicked people are scornful people, and put contempt upon others. When the wicked comes into any company, comes into the schools of wisdom or into the assemblies for

religious worship, *then comes contempt* of God, of his people and ministers, and of every thing that is said and done. You can expect no other from those that are profane than that they will be scoffers; they will be an *ignominy* and *reproach*; they will flout and jeer every thing that is serious and grave. But let not wise and good men regard it, for the proverb of the ancients says, such *wickedness proceeds from the wicked*. 2. That wicked people are shameful people, and bring *contempt* upon themselves, for God has said that those *who despise him shall be lightly esteemed*. As soon as ever sin entered shame followed it, and sinners make themselves despicable. Nor do they only draw contempt upon themselves, but they bring *ignominy* and *reproach* upon their families, their friends, their ministers, and all that are in any way related to them. Those therefore who would secure their honour must retain their virtue.

4 The words of a man's mouth *are as deep waters, and the wellspring of wisdom as a flowing brook*.

The similitudes here seem to be elegantly transposed. 1. *The well-spring of wisdom is as deep waters*. An intelligent knowing man has in him a good treasure of useful things, which furnishes him with something to say upon all occasions that is pertinent and profitable. This is as *deep waters*, which make no noise, but never run dry. 2. *The words of such a man's mouth are as a flowing brook*. What he sees cause to speak flows naturally from him and with a great deal of ease, and freedom, and natural fluency; it is clean and fresh, it is cleansing and refreshing; from his *deep waters* there flows what there is occasion for, to water those about him, as the brooks do the low grounds.

5 *It is not good to accept the person of the wicked, to overthrow the righteous in judgment*.

This justly condemns those who, being employed in the administration of justice, pervert judgment, 1. By conniving at men's crimes, and protecting and countenancing them in oppression and violence, because of their dignity, or wealth, or some personal kindness they have for them. Whatever excuses men may make for it, certainly *it is not good* thus to *accept the person of the wicked*; it is an offence to God, an affront to justice, a wrong to mankind, and a real service done to the kingdom of sin and Satan. The merits of the cause must be regarded, not the person. 2. By giving a cause against justice and equity, because the person is poor and low in the world, or not of the same party or persuasion, or a stranger of another country. This is *overthrowing the righteous in judgment*, who ought to be supported, and whom God will make to stand.

6 A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes.

7 A fool's mouth *is* his destruction and his lips *are* the snare of his soul.

Solomon has often shown what mischief bad men do to others with their ungoverned tongues; here he shows what mischief they do to themselves. 1. They embroil themselves in quarrels: *A fool's lips*, without any cause or call, *enter into contention*, by advancing foolish notions which others stir themselves obliged to oppose, and so a quarrel is begun, or by giving provoking language, which will be resented, and satisfaction demanded, or by setting men at defiance, and bidding them *do if they dare*. Proud and passionate men, and drunkards, are fools whose lips *enter into contention*. A wise man may, against his will, be drawn into a quarrel, but he is a fool that of choice enters into it when he might avoid it, and he will repent it when it is too late. 2. They expose themselves to correction: *The fool's mouth* does in effect, *call for strokes*; he has said that which deserves to be punished with strokes and is still saying that which needs to be checked, and restrained with strokes, as Ananias unjustly commanded that Paul should be *smitten on the mouth*. 3. They involve themselves in ruin: *A fool's mouth*, which has been, or would have been, the destruction of others, proves at length *his own destruction*, perhaps from men. Shimei's mouth was his own destruction, and Adonijah's, who spoke against his own head. And when a fool, by his foolish speaking, has run himself into a preminure, and thinks to bring himself off by justifying or excusing what he has said, his defence proves his offence, and his lips are still the snare of his soul, entangling him yet more and more. However, when men by their evil words shall be condemned at God's bar their mouths will be their destruction, and it will be such an aggravation of their ruin as will not admit one drop of water, one drop of comfort, to *cool their tongue*, which is their snare and will be their tormentor.

8 The words of a talebearer *are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly*.

Tale-bearers are those who secretly carry stories from house to house, which perhaps have some truth in them, but are secrets not fit to be told, or are basely misrepresented, and false colours put upon them, and are all told with design to blast men's reputation, to break their friendship, to make mischief between relations and neighbours, and set them at variance. Now the words of such are here said to be, 1. *Like as when men are wounded* (so the margin reads it); they pretend to be very much affected with the miscarriages of such and such, and to be in pain for them, and pretend that it is with the greatest grief and reluctance imaginable that they speak of

them. They look as if they themselves were wounded by it, whereas really they rejoice in iniquity, are fond of the story, and tell it with pride and pleasure. Thus their words seem; but they go down as poison into the innermost parts of the belly, the pill being thus gilded, thus sugared. 2. As wounds (so the text reads it), as deep wounds, deadly wounds, wounds in the innermost parts of the belly; the *venter medius vel infimus*—the middle or lower belly, the *thorax* or the *abdomen*, in either of which wounds are mortal. The words of the tale-bearer wound him of whom they are spoken, his credit and interest, and him to whom they are spoken, his love and charity. They occasion sin to him, which is a wound to the conscience. Perhaps he seems to slight them, but they wound insensibly, by alienating his affections from one he ought to love.

9 He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster.

Note, 1. Prodigality is very bad husbandry. Those are not only justly branded as fools among men, but will give an uncomfortable account to God of the talents they are entrusted with, who are wasters of their estates, who live above what they have, spend and give more than they can afford, and so, in effect, throw away what they have, and suffer it to run to waste. 2. Idleness is no better. He that is remiss in his work, whose hands hang down (so the word signifies), that stands, as we say, with his thumbs in his mouth, that neglects his business, does it not at all, or as if he did it not, he is own brother to him that is a prodigal, that is, he is as much a fool and in as sure and ready a way to poverty; one scatters what he has, the other lets it run through his fingers. The observation is too true in the affairs of religion; he that is trifling and careless in praying and hearing is brother to him that does not pray or hear at all; and omissions of duty and in duty are as fatal to the soul as commissions of sin.

10 The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.

Here is, 1. God's sufficiency for the saints: His name is a strong tower for them, in which they may take rest when they are weary and take sanctuary when they are pursued, where they may be lifted up above their enemies and fortified against them. There is enough in God, and in the discoveries which he has made of himself to us, to make us easy at all times. The wealth laid up in this tower is enough to enrich them, to be a continual feast and a continuing treasure to them. The strength of this tower is enough to protect them; the name of the Lord is all that whereby he has made himself known as God, and our God, not only his titles and attributes, but his covenant and all the promises of it;

these make up a tower, a strong tower, impenetrable, impregnable, for all God's people.

2. The saints' security in God. It is a strong tower to those who know how to make use of it as such. The righteous, by faith and prayer, devotion towards God and dependence on him, run into it, as their city of refuge. Having made sure their interest in God's name, they take the comfort and benefit of it; they go out of themselves, retire from the world, live above, dwell in God and God in them, and so they are safe, they think themselves so, and they shall find themselves so.

11 The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as a high wall in his own conceit.

Having described the firm and faithful defence of the righteous man (v. 10), Solomon here shows what is the false and deceitful defence of the rich man, that has his portion and treasure in the things of this world, and sets his heart upon them. His wealth is as much his confidence, and he expects as much from it, as a godly man from his God. See, 1. How he supports himself. He makes his wealth his city, where he dwells, where he rules, with a great deal of self-complacency, as if he had a whole city under his command. It is his strong city, in which he intrenches himself, and then sets danger at defiance, as if nothing could hurt him. His scales are his pride; his wealth is his wall in which he encloses himself, and he thinks it a high wall, which cannot be scaled or got over, Job xxxi. 24; Rev. xviii. 7. 2. How herein he cheats himself. It is a strong city, and a high wall, but it is so only in his own conceit; it will not prove to be really so, but like the house built on the sand, which will fail the builder when he most needs it.

12 Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility.

Note, 1. Pride is the presage of ruin, and ruin will at last be the punishment of pride; for before destruction men are commonly so infatuated by the just judgment of God that they are more haughty than ever, that their ruin may be the sorer and the more surprising. Or, if that do not always hold, yet after the heart has been lifted up with pride, a fall comes, ch. xvi. 18. 2. Humility is the presage of honour and prepares men for it, and honour shall at length be the reward of humility, as he had said before, ch. xv. 33. That has need to be often said which men are so loth to believe.

13 He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.

See here how men often expose themselves by that very thing by which they hope to gain applause. 1. Some take a pride in being quick. They answer a matter before they hear it, hear it out, nay, as soon as they but

hear of it. They think it is their honour to take up a cause suddenly; and, when they have heard one side, they think the matter so plain that they need not trouble themselves to hear the other; they are already apprized of it, and masters of all the merits of the cause. Whereas, though a ready wit is an agreeable thing to play with, it is solid judgment and sound wisdom that do business. 2. Those that take a pride in being quick commonly fall under the just reproach of being impertinent. It is folly for a man to go about to speak to a thing which he does not understand, or to pass sentence upon a matter which he is not truly and fully informed of, and has not patience to make a strict enquiry into; and, if it be folly, it is and will be shame.

14 The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?

Note, 1. Outward grievances are tolerable as long as the mind enjoys itself and is at ease. Many infirmities, many calamities, we are liable to in this world, in body, name, and estate, which a man may bear, and bear up under, if he have but good conduct and courage, and be able to act with reason and resolution, especially if he have a good conscience, and the testimony of that be for him; and, if the spirit of a man will sustain the infirmity, much more will the spirit of a Christian, or rather the Spirit of God witnessing and working with our spirits in a day of trouble. 2. The grievances of the spirit are of all others most heavy, and hardly to be borne; these make sore the shoulders which should sustain the other infirmities. If the spirit be wounded by the disturbance of the reason, dejection under the trouble, whatever it is, and despair of relief, if the spirit be wounded by the amazing apprehensions of God's wrath for sin, and the fearful expectations of judgment and fiery indignation, *who can bear this?* Wounded spirits cannot help themselves, nor do others know how to help them. It is therefore wisdom to keep conscience void of offence.

15 The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge.

Note, 1. Those that are prudent will seek knowledge, and apply their ear and heart to the pursuit of it, their ear to attend to the means of knowledge and their heart to mix faith with what they hear and make a good improvement of it. Those that are prudent do not think they have prudence enough, but still see they have need of more; and the more prudent a man is the more inquisitive will he be after knowledge, the knowledge of God and his duty, and the way to heaven, for that is the best knowledge. 2. Those that prudently seek knowledge shall certainly get knowledge, for God never said to such, *Seek*

in vain, but, *Seek and you shall find*. If the ear seeks it, the heart gets it, and keeps it, and is enriched by it. We must get knowledge, not only into our heads, but into our hearts, get the savour and relish of it, apply what we know to ourselves and experience the power and influence of it.

16 A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men.

Of what great force gifts (that is, bribes) are he had intimated before, *ch. xvii. 8, 23*. Here he shows the power of gifts, that is, presents made even by inferiors to those that are above them and have much more than they have. A good present will go far, 1. Towards a man's liberty: *A man's gift*, if he be in prison, may procure his enlargement; there are courtiers, who, if they use their interest even for oppressed innocence, expect to receive a gratuity for it. Or, if a mean man know not how to get access to a great man, he may do it by a fee to his servants or a present to himself; those will make room for him. 2. Towards his preferment. It will bring him to sit among *great men*, in honour and power. See how corrupt the world is when men's gifts will do that for them which their merits will not do, though ever so great; nay, will gain that for them which they are unworthy of and unfit for; and no wonder that those take bribes in their offices who gave bribes for them. *Vendere jura potest, emerat ille prius—He that bought law can sell it.*

17 He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him.

This shows that one tale is good till another is told. 1. He that speaks first will be sure to tell a straight story, and relate that only which makes for him, and put the best colour he can upon it, so that his cause shall appear good, whether it really be so or no. 2. The plaintiff having done his evidence, it is fit that the defendant should be heard, should have leave to confront the witnesses and cross-examine them, and show the falsehood and fallacy of what has been alleged, which perhaps may make the matter appear quite otherwise than it did. We must therefore remember that we have two ears, to hear both sides before we give judgment.

18 The lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty.

Note, 1. Contentions commonly happen among the mighty, that are jealous for their honour and right and stand upon the punctilios of both, that are confident of their being able to make their part good and therefore will hardly condescend to the necessary terms of an accommodation; whereas those that are poor are forced to be peaceable, and sit down losers. 2. Even the contentions of the mighty may be ended by lot if they cannot otherwise be compromised, and

sometimes better so than by arguments which are endless, or concessions which they are loth to stoop to, whereas it is no disparagement to a man to acquiesce in the determination of the lot when once it is referred to that. To prevent quarrels Canaan was divided by lot; and, if lusus lots had not provided this way of appeal to Providence, perhaps it might be very well used now for the deciding of many controversies, both to the honour of God and the satisfaction of the parties, provided it were done with prayer and due solemnity, this and some other scriptures seeming to direct to it, especially Acts i. 26. If the law be a lottery (as some have called it), it were as well that a lottery were the law.

19 A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle.

Note, 1. Great care must be taken to prevent quarrels among relations, and those that are under special obligation to each other, not only because they are most unnatural and unbecoming, but because between such things are commonly taken most unkindly, and resentments are apt to be carried too far. Wisdom and grace would indeed make it most easy to us to forgive our relations and friends if they offend us, but corruption makes it most difficult to forgive them; let us therefore take heed of disobliging a brother, or one that has been as a brother; ingratitude is very provoking. 2. Great pains must be taken to compromise matters in variance between relations, with all speed, because it is a work of so much difficulty, and consequently the more honourable if it be done. Esau was a brother offended, and seemed harder to be won than a strong city, yet by a work of God upon his heart, in answer to Jacob's prayer, he was won.

20 A man's belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth; and with the increase of his lips shall he be filled.

Note, 1. Our comfort depends very much upon the testimony of our own consciences, for us or against us. The belly is here put for the conscience, as ch. xx. 27. Now it is of great consequence to us whether that be satisfied, and what that is filled with, for, accordingly, will our satisfaction be and our inward peace. 2. The testimony of our consciences will be for us, or against us, according as we have or have not governed our tongues well. According as the fruit of the mouth is good or bad, unto iniquity or unto righteousness, so the character of the man is, and consequently the testimony of his conscience concerning him. "We ought to take as great care about the words we speak as we do about the fruit of our trees or the increase of the earth, which we are to eat; for, according as they are wholesome or unwhole-

some, so will the pleasure or the pain be wherewith we shall be filled." So bishop Patrick.

21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

Note, 1. A man may do a great deal of good, or a great deal of hurt, both to others and to himself, according to the use he makes of his tongue. Many a one has been his own death by a foul tongue, or the death of others by a false tongue; and, on the contrary, many a one has saved his own life, or procured the comfort of it, by a prudent gentle tongue, and saved the lives of others by a seasonable testimony or intercession for them. And, if by our words we must be justified or condemned, death and life are, no doubt, in the power of the tongue. Tongues were Æsop's best meat, and his worst. 2. Men's words will be judged of by the affections with which they speak; he that not only speaks aright (which a bad man may do to save his credit or please his company), but loves to speak so, speaks well of choice, and with delight, to him it will be life; and he that not only speaks amiss (which a good man may do through inadvertency), but loves to speak so (Ps. lii. 4), to him it will be death. As men love it they shall eat the fruit of it.

22 Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.

Note, 1. A good wife is a great blessing to a man. He that finds a wife (that is, a wife indeed; a bad wife does not deserve to be called by a name of so much honour), that finds a help meet for him (that is a wife in the original acceptance of the word), that sought such a one with care and prayer and has found what he sought, he has found a good thing, a jewel of great value, a rare jewel; he has found that which will not only contribute more than any thing to his comfort in this life, but will forward him in the way to heaven. 2. God is to be acknowledged in it with thankfulness; it is a token of his favour, and a happy pledge of further favours; it is a sign that God delights in a man to do him good and has mercy in store for him; for this, therefore, God must be sought unto.

23 The poor useth entreaties; but the rich answereth roughly.

Note, 1. Poverty, though many inconveniences to the body attend it, has often a good effect upon the spirit, for it makes men humble and submissive, and mortifies their pride. It teaches them to use entreaties. When necessity forces men to beg it tells them they must not prescribe or demand, but take what is given them and be thankful. At the throne of God's grace we are all poor, and must use entreaties, not answer, but make application, must sue *sub formâ pauperis*—as a pauper. 2. A prosperous condition though

it has many advantages, has often this mischief attending it, that it makes men proud, haughty, and imperious: *The rich answers the entreaties of the poor roughly*, as Nabal answered David's messengers with railing. It is a very foolish humour of some rich men, especially those who have risen from little, that they think their riches will warrant them to give hard words, and, even where they do not design any rough dealing, that it becomes them to answer roughly, whereas gentlemen ought to be gentle, Jam. iii. 17.

24 A man that hath friends must show himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

Solomon here recommends friendship to us, and shows, 1. What we must do that we may contract and cultivate friendship; we must *show ourselves friendly*. Would we have friends and keep them, we must not only not affront them, or quarrel with them, but we must love them, and make it appear that we do so by all expressions that are endearing, by being free with them, pleasing to them, visiting them and bidding them welcome, and especially by doing all the good offices we can and serving them in every thing that lies in our power; that is *showing ourselves friendly*.

Si vis amari, ama—

If you wish to gain affection, bestow it. SEN.

Ut amaris, amabilis esto—

The way to be beloved is to be lovely. OVID.

2. That it is worth while to do so, for we may promise ourselves a great deal of comfort in a true friend. A brother indeed is born for adversity, as he had said, ch. xvii. 17. In our troubles we expect comfort and relief from our relations, but sometimes *there is a friend*, that is nothing akin to us, the bonds of whose esteem and love prove stronger than those of nature, and therefore he *sticks closer than a brother*, and, when it comes to the trial, will do more for us than a brother will. Christ is a friend to all believers that *sticks closer than a brother*; to him therefore let them show themselves friendly.

CHAP. XIX.

BBETTER is the poor that walketh in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool.

Here see, 1. What will be the credit and comfort of a poor man, and make him more excellent than his neighbour, though his poverty may expose him to contempt and may dispirit him. Let him be honest and *walk in integrity*, let him keep a good conscience and make it appear that he does so, let him always speak and act with sincerity when he is under the greatest temptations to dissemble and break his word, and then let him value himself upon that, for all wise and good men will value him. He is better, has a better character, is in a better condition, is better be-

loved, and lives to better purpose, than many a one that looks great and makes a figure. 2. What will be the shame of a rich man, notwithstanding all his pomp. If he have a shallow head and an evil tongue, if he is *perverse in his lips and is a fool*, if he is a wicked man and gets what he has by fraud and oppression, he is *a fool*, and an honest poor man is to be preferred far before him.

2 Also, that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good; and he that hasteth with his feet sinneth.

Two things are here declared to be of bad consequence.—1. Ignorance: *To be without the knowledge of the soul is not good*, so some read it. Know we not our own selves, our own hearts? *A soul without knowledge is not good*; it is a great privilege that we have souls, but, if these souls have not knowledge, what the better are we? If man has not understanding, he is as the beasts, Ps. xlix. 20. An ignorant soul cannot be a good soul. That the soul be without knowledge is not safe, nor pleasant; what good can the soul do, or what is it good for, if it be without knowledge? 2. Rashness. *He that hasteth with his feet* (that does things inconsiderately and with precipitation, and will not take time to ponder the path of his feet) *sins*; he cannot but often miss the mark and take many a false step, which those prevent that consider their ways. As good not know as not consider.

3 The foolishness of man perverteth his way: and his heart fretteth against the Lord.

We have here two instances of men's folly:—1. That they bring themselves into straits and troubles, and run themselves a-ground, and embarrass themselves: *The foolishness of man perverts his way*. Men meet with crosses and disappointments in their affairs, and things do not succeed as they expected and wished, and it is owing to themselves and their own folly; it is their own iniquity that corrects them. 2. That when they have done so they lay the blame upon God, and their hearts fret against him, as if he had done them wrong, whereas really they wrong themselves. In fretting, we are enemies to our own peace, and become self-tormentors; in *fretting against the Lord* we affront him, his justice, goodness, and sovereignty; and it is very absurd to take occasion from the trouble which we pull upon our own heads by our wilfulness, or neglect, to quarrel with him, when we ought to blame ourselves, for it is our own doing. See Isa. l. 1.

4 Wealth maketh many friends; but the poor is separated from his neighbour.

Here, 1. We may see how strong men's love of money is, that they will love any man, how undeserving soever he be otherwise, if

he has but a deal of money and is free with it, so that they may hope to be the better for it. Wealth enables a man to send many presents, make many entertainments, and do many good offices, and so gains him many friends, who pretend to love him, for they flatter him and make their court to him, but really love what he has, or rather love themselves, hoping to get by him. 2. We may see how weak men's love of one another is. He who, while he prospered, was beloved and respected, if he fall into poverty is *separated from his neighbour*, is not owned nor looked upon, not visited nor regarded, is bidden to keep his distance and told he is troublesome. Even one that has been his neighbour and acquaintance will turn his face from him and pass by on the other side. Because men's consciences tell them they ought to relieve and succour such, they are willing to have this excuse, that they did not see them.

5 A false witness shall not be unpunished, and *he that speaketh lies shall not escape*.

Here we have, 1. The sins threatened—bearing *false witness* in judgment and *speaking lies* in common conversation. Men could not arrive at such a pitch of impiety as to bear false witness (where to the guilt of a lie is added that of perjury and injury) if they had not advanced to it by allowing themselves to speak untruths in jest and banter, or under pretence of doing good. Thus men *teach their tongues to speak lies*, Jer. ix. 5. Those that will take a liberty to tell lies in discourse are in a fair way to be guilty of the greater wickedness of false-witness-bearing, whenever they are tempted to it, though they seemed to detest it. Those that can swallow a false word debase their consciences, so that a false oath will not choke them. 2. The threatening itself: *They shall not go unpunished; they shall not escape*. This intimates that that which emboldens them in the sin is the hope of impunity, it being a sin which commonly escapes punishment from men, though the law is strict, Deut. xix. 18, 19. But it *shall not escape* the righteous judgment of God, who is jealous, and will not suffer his name to be profaned; we know where all liars will have their everlasting portion.

6 Many will entreat the favour of the prince: and every man *is a friend to him that giveth gifts*. 7 All the brethren of the poor do hate him: how much more do his friends go far from him? he *pursueth them with words, yet they are wanting to him*.

These two verses are a comment upon v. 4, and show, 1. How those that are rich and great are courted and caressed, and have suitors and servants in abundance. The

prince that has power in his hand, and preferments at his disposal, has his gate and his ante-chamber thronged with petitioners, that are ready to adore him for what they can get. *Many will entreat his favour*, and think themselves happy in it. Even great men are humble suppliants to the prince. How earnest then should we be for the favour of God, which is far beyond that of any earthly prince. But, it should seem, liberality will go further than majesty itself to gain respect, for there are many that court the prince, but *every man is a friend to him that gives gifts*; not only those that have received, or do expect, gifts from him, will, as friends, be ready to serve him, but others also will, as friends, give him their good word. Prodigals, who are foolishly free of what they have, will have many hangers-on who will cry them up as long as it lasts, but will leave them when it is done. Those that are prudently generous make an interest by it which may stand them in good stead; those that are accounted benefactors exercise an authority which may give them an opportunity of doing good, Luke xxii. 25. 2. How those that are poor and low are slighted and despised. It should not be so; we must honour all men, even under their greatest abasements. Men may, if they please, court the prince, and the princely, but they may not trample upon the poor and look at them with disdain. Yet so it often is: *All the brethren of the poor do hate him*; even his own relations are shy of him, because he is needy and craving, and expects something from them, and because they look upon him as a blemish to their family; and then no marvel if others of his friends, that were nothing akin to him, *go far from him*, to get out of his way. *He pursues them with words*, hoping to prevail with them by his importunity to be kind to him, but all in vain; they have nothing for him. *They pursue him with words* (so some understand it), to excuse themselves from giving him any thing; they tell him that he is idle and impertinent, that he has brought himself into poverty, and therefore ought not to be relieved; as Nabal said to David's messengers: "*There are many servants now a days that run away from their masters*; and how do I know but that David may be one of them?" Let poor people therefore make God their friend, pursue him with their prayers, and he will not be wanting to them.

8 He that getteth wisdom loveth his own soul: he that keepeth understanding shall find good.

Those are here encouraged, 1. That take pains to *get wisdom*, to get knowledge, and grace, and acquaintance with God; those that do so show that they *love their own souls*, and will be found to have done themselves the greatest kindness imaginable. No man ever *hated his own flesh*, but loves that, yet many are wanting in love to their own souls,

for only those love their souls, and consequently love themselves, aright, that *get wisdom*, true wisdom. 2. That take care to keep it when they have got it; it is health and wealth, and honour, and all, to the soul, and therefore he that *keeps understanding*, as he shows that he *loves his own soul*, so he shall certainly *find good*, all good. He that retains the good lessons he has learnt, and orders his conversation according to them, shall find the benefit and comfort of it in his own soul and shall be happy here and for ever.

9 A false witness shall not be unpunished, and *he that speaketh lies shall perish*.

Here is, 1. A repetition of what was said before (v. 5), for we have need to be again and again warned of the danger of the sin of lying and false-witness-bearing, since nothing is of more fatal consequence. 2. An addition to it in one word; there it was said, *He that speaks lies shall not escape*, and intimated that he shall be punished. Here it is said, His punishment shall be such as will be his destruction: *he shall perish*; the lies he forged against others will be his own ruin. It is a damning destroying sin.

10 Delight is not seemly for a fool; much less for a servant to have rule over princes.

Note, 1. Pleasure and liberty ill become a fool: *Delight is not seemly for* such a one. A man that has not wisdom and grace has no right nor title to true joy, and therefore it is unseemly. It ill becomes those that do not delight in God to delight in any thing else. They know not how to use any thing, nor how to manage themselves, and therefore they do but expose themselves. It becomes ungracious fools to be afflicted, and mourn, and weep, not to laugh and be merry; rebukes are more proper for them than delights. Delight is seemly for a man of business, to refresh him when he is fatigued, but not for a fool, that lives an idle life and abuses his recreations. *The prosperity of fools discovers their folly and destroys them*. 2. Power and honour ill become a man of a servile spirit. Nothing is more unseemly than for a servant to have rule over princes; it is absurd in itself, and very preposterous, for none are so insolent and intolerable as a beggar on horseback, a servant when he reigns, *ch. xxx. 22*. It is very unseemly for one that is a servant to sin and his lusts to rule over and oppress those that are God's freemen and made kings and priests to him.

11 The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and *it is his glory to pass over a transgression*.

A wise man will observe these two rules about his anger: 1. Not to be over-hasty in his resentments: *Discretion teaches us to defer our anger*, to defer the admission of it till we have thoroughly considered all the merits of

the provocation, seen them in a true light and weighed them in a just balance; and then to defer the prosecution of it till there be no danger of running into any indecencies. Plato said to his servant, "I would beat thee, but that I am angry." Give it time, and it will cool. 2. Not to be over-critical in his resentments. Whereas it is commonly looked upon as a piece of ingenuity to apprehend an affront quickly, it is here made a man's glory to pass over a transgression, to appear as if he did not see it (*Ps. xxxviii. 13*), or, if he sees fit to take notice of it, yet to forgive it and meditate no revenge.

12 The king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion; but his favour is as dew upon the grass.

This is to the same purport with what we had *ch. xvi. 14, 15*, and the design of it is, 1. To make kings wise and considerate in dispensing their frowns and smiles. They are not like those of common persons; their frowns are very terrible and their smiles very comfortable, and therefore it concerns them to be very careful that they never frighten a good man from doing well with their frowns, nor ever give countenance to a wicked man in doing ill with their smiles, for then they abuse their influence, *Rom. xiii. 3*. 2. To make subjects faithful and dutiful to their princes. Let them be restrained from all disloyalty by the consideration of the dreadful consequence of having the government against them; and let them be encouraged in all good services to the public by the hopes of the favour of their prince. Christ is a King whose wrath against his enemies will be as the roaring of a lion (*Rev. x. 3*) and his favour to his own people as the refreshing dew, *Ps. lxxii. 6*.

13 A foolish son is the calamity of his father: and the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping.

It is an instance of the vanity of the world that we are liable to the greatest grief in those things wherein we promise ourselves the greatest comfort. It is as it proves. What greater temporal comfort can a man have than a good wife and good children? Yet, 1. *A foolish son is a great affliction*, and may make a man wish a thousand times he had been written childless. A son that will apply himself to no study or business, that will take no advice, that lives a lewd, loose, rakish life, and spends what he has extravagantly, games it away and wastes it in the excess of riot, or that is proud, foppish, and conceited, such a one is the grief of his father, because he is the disgrace, and is likely to be the ruin, of his family. He hates all his labour, when he sees to whom he must leave the fruit of it. 2. A cross peevish wife is as great an affliction: Her contentions are continual; every day, and every hour in the day, she finds some occasion to make herself and those about her

uneasy. Those that are accustomed to chide never want something or other to chide at; but it is a continual dropping, that is, a continual vexation, as it is to have a house so much out of repair that it rains in and a man cannot lie dry in it. That man has an uncomfortable life, and has need of a great deal of wisdom and grace to enable him to bear his affliction and do his duty, who has a sot for his son and a scold for his wife.

14 House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the Lord.

Note, 1. A discreet and virtuous wife is a choice gift of God's providence to a man—a wife that is prudent, in opposition to one that is contentious, v. 13. For, though a wife that is continually finding fault may think it is her wit and wisdom to be so, it is really her folly; a prudent wife is meek and quiet, and makes the best of every thing. If a man has such a wife, let him not ascribe it to the wisdom of his own choice or his own management (for the wisest have been deceived both in and by a woman), but let him ascribe it to the goodness of God, who made him a help meet for him, and perhaps by some hits and turns of providence that seemed casual brought her to him. Every creature is what he makes it. Happy marriages, we are sure, are made in heaven; Abraham's servant prayed in the belief of this, Gen. xxiv. 12. 2. It is a more valuable gift than house and riches, contri- butes more to the comfort and credit of a man's life and the welfare of his family, is a greater token of God's favour, and about which the divine providence is in a more especial manner conversant. A good estate may be the inheritance of fathers, which, by the common direction of Providence, comes in course to a man; but no man has a good wife by descent or entail. Parents that are worldly, in disposing of their children, look no further than to match them to house and riches, but, if withal it be to a prudent wife, let God have the glory.

15 Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger.

See here the evil of a sluggish slothful disposition. 1. It stupifies men, and makes them senseless, and mindless of their own affairs, as if they were cast into a deep sleep, dreaming much, but doing nothing. Slothful people doze away their time, bury their talents, live a useless life, and are the unprofitable burdens of the earth; for any service they do when they are awake they might as well be always asleep. Even their souls are idle and lulled asleep, their rational powers chilled and frozen. 2. It impoverishes men and brings them to want. Those that will not labour cannot expect to eat, but must suffer hunger: An idle soul, one that is idle in the affairs of his soul, that takes no care or

pains to work out his salvation, shall perish for want of that which is necessary to the life and happiness of the soul.

16 He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his own soul; but he that despiseth his ways shall die.

Here is, 1. The happiness of those that walk circumspectly. Those that make conscience of keeping the commandment in every thing, that live by rule, as becomes servants and patients, keep their own souls; they secure their present peace and future bliss, and provide every way well for themselves. If we keep God's word, God's word will keep us from every thing really hurtful. 2. The misery of those that live at large and never mind what they do: Those that despise their ways shall die, shall perish eternally; they are in the high road to ruin. With respect to those that are careless about the end of their ways, and never consider whither they are going, and about the rule of their ways, that will walk in the way of their hearts and after the course of the world (Eccl. xi. 9), that never consider what they have done nor what they are concerned to do, but walk at all adventures (Lev. xxvi. 21), right or wrong, it is all one to them—what can come of this but the greatest mischief?

17 He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.

Here is, I. The duty of charity described. It includes two things:—1. Compassion, which is the inward principle of charity in the heart; it is to have pity on the poor. Those that have not a penny for the poor, yet may have pity for them, a charitable concern and sympathy; and, if a man give all his goods to feed the poor and have not this charity in his heart, it is nothing, 1 Cor. xiii. 3. We must draw out our souls to the hungry, Isa. lviii. 10. 2. Bounty and liberality. We must not only pity the poor, but give, according to their necessity and our ability, Jam. ii. 15, 16. That which he has given. Margin, His deed. It is charity to do for the poor, as well as to give; and thus, if they have their limbs and senses, they may be charitable to one another.

II. The encouragement of charity. 1. A very kind construction shall be put upon it. What is given to the poor, or done for them, God will place it to account as lent to him, lent upon interest (so the word signifies); he takes it kindly, as if it were done to himself, and he would have us to take the comfort of it and to be as well pleased as ever any usurer was when he had let out a sum of money into good hands. 2. A very rich recompence shall be made for it: He will pay him again, in temporal, spiritual, and eternal blessings. Almsgiving is the surest and safest way of thriving.

18 Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.

Parents are here cautioned against a foolish indulgence of their children that are untoward and viciously inclined, and that discover such an ill temper of mind as is not likely to be cured but by severity. 1. Do not say that it is all in good time to correct them; no, as soon as ever there appears a corrupt disposition in them check it immediately, before it gets head, and takes root, and is hardened into a habit: *Chasten thy son while there is hope*, for perhaps, if he be let alone awhile, he will be past hope, and a much greater chastening will not do that which now a less would effect. It is easiest plucking up weeds as soon as they spring up, and the bullock that is designed for the yoke should be betimes accustomed to it. 2. Do not say that it is a pity to correct them, and that, because they cry and beg to be forgiven, you cannot find in your heart to do it. If the point can be gained without correction, well and good; but if you find, as it often proves, that your forgiving them once, upon a dissembled repentance and promise of amendment, does but embolden them to offend again, especially if it be a thing that is in itself sinful (as lying, swearing, ribaldry, stealing, or the like), in such a case put on resolution, *and let not thy soul spare for his crying*. It is better that he should cry under thy rod than under the sword of the magistrate, or, which is more fearful, that of divine vengeance.

19 A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment: for if thou deliver him, yet thou must do it again.

1. As we read this, it intimates, in short, that angry men never want woe. Those that are of strong, or rather headstrong, passions, commonly bring themselves and their families into trouble by vexatious suits and quarrels and the provocations they give; they are still smarting, in one instance or other, for their ungoverned heats; and, if their friends deliver them out of one trouble, they will quickly involve themselves in another, and they *must do it again*, all which troubles to themselves and others would be prevented if they would mortify their passions and get the rule of their own spirits. 2. It may as well be read, *He that is of great wrath* (meaning the child that is to be corrected and is impatient of rebuke, cries and makes a noise, even that wrath of his against the rod of correction) *deserves to be punished; for, if thou deliver him* for the sake of that, thou wilt be forced to punish him so much the more the next time. A stomachful high-spirited child must be subdued betimes, or it will be the worse for it.

20 Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end.

Note, 1. It is well with those that are wise in their latter end, wise for their latter end, for their future state, wise for another world, for they are found wise when their latter end comes: wise virgins, wise builders, wise stewards, that are wise at length, and *understand the things that belong to their peace, before the be hidden from their eyes*. A carnal worldling at his end shall be a fool (Jer. xvii. 1) but godliness will prove wisdom at last. Those that would be wise in their latter end must hear counsel and receive instruction, in their beginnings, must be willing to be taught and ruled, willing to be advised and reprov'd when they are young. Those that would be stored in winter must gather in summer.

21 There are many devices in man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.

Here we have, 1. Men projecting. They keep their designs to themselves, but they cannot hide them from God; he knows the *man's devices that are in men's hearts*,—devices against his counsels (as those, Ps. ii. 1—3 Micah iv. 11),—devices without his counsel (no regard had to his providence, as those Jam. iv. 13, this and the other they will do and not take God along with them),—devices unlike God's counsels; men are wavering in their devices, and often absurd and unjust; but God's counsels are wise and holy, steady and uniform. 2. God overruling. Various men have various designs, according as their inclination or interest leads them, but *the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand*, whatever becomes of the devices of men. His counsel often breaks men's measures and baffles their devices; but their devices cannot in the least alter his counsel, nor disturb the proceeding of it, nor put him upon new counsels, Isa. xiv. 24; xlv. 11. What a check does this give to politic designing men, who think they can outwit all mankind, that there is a God in heaven that laughs at them! Ps. ii. 4. What comfort does this speak to all God's people, that all God's purposes, which we are sure are right and good, shall be accomplished in due time!

22 The desire of a man is his kindness: and a poor man is better than a liar.

Note, 1. The honour of doing good is what we may laudably be ambitious of. It cannot but be the desire of a man, if he have any spark of virtue in him, to be kind; one would not covet an estate for any thing so much as thereby to be put into a capacity of relieving the poor and obliging our friends. 2. It is far better to have a heart to do good and want ability for it than have ability for it and want a heart to it: *The desire of a man to be kind, and charitable, and generous, is his kindness*, and shall be so construed; both God and man will accept his good-will, according to what he has, and will not expect

more. *A poor man, who wishes you well, but can promise you nothing, because he has nothing to be kind with, is better than a liar, than a rich man who makes you believe he will do mighty things, but, when it comes to the setting to, will do nothing.* The character of the men of low degree, that they are *vanity*, from whom nothing is expected, is better than that of men of high degree, that they are a *lie*, they deceive those whose expectations they raised.

23 The fear of the LORD *tendeth to life* and he that *hath it* shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil.

See what those get by it that live in the fear of God, and always make conscience of their duty to him. 1. Safety: They *shall not be visited with evil*; they may be visited with sickness or other afflictions, but there shall be no evil in them, nothing to hurt them, because nothing to separate them *from the love of God*, or to hurt the soul. 2. Satisfaction: They *shall abide satisfied*; they shall have those comforts which are satisfying, and shall have a constant contentment and complacency in them. It is a satisfaction which will abide, whereas all the satisfactions of sense are transient and soon gone. *Satur pernoctabit, non cubabit inccenatus—He shall not go supperless to bed*; he shall have that which will make him easy and be an entertainment to him in his silent and solitary hours, Ps. xvi. 6, 7. 3. True and complete happiness. Serious godliness has a direct tendency to *life*, to all good, to eternal life; it is the sure and ready way to it; there is something in the nature of it fitting men for heaven and so leading them to it.

24 A slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again.

A sluggard is here exposed as a fool, for, 1. All his care is to save himself from labour and cold. See his posture: He *hides his hand in his bosom*, pretends he is lame and cannot work; his hands are cold, and he must warm them in his bosom; and, when they are warm there, he must keep them so. He hugs himself in his own ease and is resolved against labour and hardship. Let those work that love it; for his part he thinks there is no such fine life as sitting still and doing nothing. 2. He will not be at the pains to feed himself, an elegant hyperbole; as we say, A man is so lazy that he would not shake fire off him, so here, He cannot find in his heart to take his hand out of his bosom, no, not to put meat into his own mouth. If the law be so that those that will not labour must not eat, he will rather starve than stir. Thus his sin is his punishment, and therefore is egregious folly.

25 Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware: and reprove one that

hath understanding, and he will understand knowledge.

Note, 1. The punishment of scorners will be a means of good to others. When men are so hardened in wickedness that they will not themselves be wrought upon by the severe methods that are used to reclaim and reform them, yet such methods must be used for the sake of others, that *they may hear and fear*, Deut. xix. 20. If the scorner will not be recovered from his sin, the disease being inveterate, yet *the simple will beware* of venturing upon the sin which exposes men thus. If it cure not the infected, it may prevent the spreading of the infection. 2. The reproof of wise men will be a means of good to themselves. They need not be smitten; a word to the wise is enough. Do but *reprove one that has understanding* and he will so far understand himself and his own interest that he will *understand knowledge* by it, and not miss it again through ignorance and inadvertency when once he has been told of it; so kindly does he take reproof and so wisely improve it.

26 He that wasteth his father, and chaseth away his mother, is a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach.

Here is, 1. The sin of a prodigal son. Besides the wrong he does to himself, he is injurious to his good parents, and basely ungrateful to those that were the instruments of his being and have taken so much care and pains about him, which is a great aggravation of his sin and renders it exceedingly sinful in the eyes of God and man: *He wastes his father*, wastes his estate which he should have to support him in his old age, wastes his spirits, and breaks his heart, and brings his gray head with sorrow to the grave. *He chases away his mother*, alienates her affections from him, which cannot be done without a great deal of regret and uneasiness to her; he makes her weary of the house, with his rudeness and insolence, and glad to retire for a little quietness; and, when he has spent all, he turns her out of doors. 2. The shame of a prodigal son. It is a shame to himself that he should be so brutish and unnatural. He makes himself odious to all mankind. It is a shame to his parents and family, who are reflected upon, though, perhaps, without just cause, for teaching him no better, or being in some way wanting to him.

27 Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge.

This is a good caution to those who have had a good education to take heed of hearkening to those who, under pretence of instructing them, draw them off from those good principles under the influence of which they were trained up. Observe, 1. There is that which seems designed for the instruc-

tion, but really tends to the destruction of young men. The factors for vice will undertake to teach them free thoughts and a fashionable conversation, how to palliate the sins they have a mind to and stop the mouth of their own consciences, how to get clear of the restraints of their education and to set up for wits and beaux. This is the instruction which causes to err from the forms of sound words, which should be held fast in faith and love. 2. It is the wisdom of young men to turn a deaf ear to such instructions, as the adder does to the charms that are designed to ensnare her. "Dread hearing such talk as tends to instil loose principles into the mind; and, if thou art linked in with such, break off from them; thou hast heard enough, or too much, and therefore hear no more of the evil communication which corrupts good manners."

28 An ungodly witness scorneth judgment: and the mouth of the wicked devoureth iniquity.

Here is a description of the worst of sinners, whose hearts are fully set in them to do evil. 1. They set that at defiance which would deter and detain them from sin: *An ungodly witness* is one that bears false witness against his neighbour, and will forswear himself to do another a mischief, in which there is not only great injustice, but great impiety; this is one of the worst of men. Or *an ungodly witness* is one that profanely and atheistically witnesses against religion and godliness, whose instructions seduce from the words of knowledge (v. 27); such a one scorns judgment, laughs at the terrors of the Lord, mocks at that fear, Job xv. 26. Tell him of law and equity, that the scriptures and an oath are sacred things, and not to be jested with, that there will come a reckoning day; he laughs at it all, and scorns to heed it. 2. They are greedy, and glad of that which gives them an opportunity to sin: *The mouth of the wicked eagerly devours iniquity, drinks it in like water*, Job xv. 16.

29 Judgments are prepared for scorners, and stripes for the back of fools.

Note, 1. Scorners are fools. Those that ridicule things sacred and serious do but make themselves ridiculous. *Their folly shall be manifest unto all men*. 2. Those that scorn judgments cannot escape them, v. 28. The unbelief of man shall not make God's threatenings of no effect; those that devour iniquity swallow the hook with the bait. The civil magistrate has judgments prepared for scorners, for otherwise he would bear the sword in vain; but if he be remiss, and connive at sin, yet God's judgments slumber not; they are prepared, Matt. xxv. 41.

CHAP. XX.

WINE is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.

Here is, 1. The mischief of drunkenness. *Wine is a mocker; strong drink is raging*. It is so to the sinner himself; it mocks him, makes a fool of him, promises him that satisfaction which it can never give him. It smiles upon him at first, but at the last it bites. In reflection upon it, it rages in his conscience. It is raging in the body, puts the humor into a ferment. *When the wine is in the man, he is out*, and then the man, according as his natural temper is, either mocks like a fool or rages like a madman. Drunkenness, which pretends to be a sociable thing, renders men unfit for society, for it makes them abusive with their tongues and outrageous in their passions, ch. xliii. 29. 2. The folly of drunkards is easily inferred thence. He that is deceived thereby, that suffers himself to be drawn into this sin when he is so plainly warned of the consequences of it, is not wise; he shows that he has no right sense or consideration of things; and not only so, but he renders himself incapable of getting wisdom, for it is a sin that infatuates and besots men and takes away their heart. A drunkard is a fool, and a fool he is likely to be.

2 The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: whoso provoketh him to anger sinneth against his own soul.

See here, 1. How formidable kings are, and what a terror they strike upon those that are angry with them. Their fear, with which (especially when they are absolute and their will is a law) they keep their subjects in awe, is as the roaring of a lion, which is very dreadful to the creatures he preys upon; and makes them tremble so that they cannot escape from him. Those princes that rule by wisdom and love rule like God himself, and bear his image; but those that rule merely by terror, and with a high hand, do but rule like a lion in the forest, with a brutal power. *Oderint, dum metuant—Let them hate, provided they fear*. 2. How unwise therefore those are that quarrel with them, that are angry at them, and provoke them to anger. They sin against their own lives. Much more do those do so that provoke the King of kings to anger. *Nemo me impune lacesset—No one shall provoke me with impunity*.

3 It is an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling.

This is designed to rectify men's mistake concerning strife. 1. Men think it is their wisdom to engage in quarrels; whereas it is the greatest folly that can be. He thinks himself a wise man that is quick in resenting affronts, that stands upon every nicety of honour and right, and will not abate an acre of either, that prescribes, and imposes, and gives law, to every body; but he that thus meddles is a fool, and creates a great deal of needless vexation to himself. 2. Men think when they are engaged in quarrels, that

would be a shame to them to go back and let fall the weapon; whereas really it is an honour for a man to cease from strife, an honour to withdraw an action, to drop a controversy, to forgive an injury, and to be friends with those that we have fallen out with. It is the honour of a man, a wise man, a man of spirit, to show the command he has of himself by *ceasing from strife*, yielding, and stooping, and receding from his just demands, for peace-sake, as Abraham, the better man, Gen. xiii. 8.

4 The sluggard will not plough by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing.

See here the evil of slothfulness and the love of ease. 1. It keeps men from the most necessary business, from ploughing and sowing when the season is: *The sluggard* has ground to occupy, and has ability for it; he can plough, but he *will not*; some excuse or other he has to shift it off, but the true reason is that it is *cold* weather. Though ploughing time is not in the depth of winter, it is in the borders of winter, when he thinks it too cold for him to be abroad. Those are scandalously sluggish who, in the way of their business, cannot find in their hearts to undergo so little toil as that of ploughing and so little hardship as that of a cold blast. Thus careless are many in the affairs of their souls; a trifling difficulty will frighten them from the most important duty; but good soldiers must endure hardness. 2. Thereby it deprives them of the most necessary supports: Those that *will not plough* in seed-time cannot expect to reap in harvest; and therefore they must beg their bread with astonishment when the diligent are bringing home their sheaves with joy. He that will not submit to the labour of ploughing must submit to the shame of begging. *They shall beg in harvest, and yet have nothing*; no, not then when there is greatest plenty. Though it may be charity to relieve sluggards, yet a man may, in justice, not relieve them; they deserve to be left to starve. Those that would not provide oil in their vessels begged when the bridegroom came, and were denied.

5 Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out.

A man's wisdom is here said to be of use to him for the pumping of other people, and diving into them. 1. To get the knowledge of them. Though men's counsels and designs are ever so carefully concealed by them, so that they are as *deep water* which one cannot fathom, yet there are those who by sly insinuations, and questions that seem foreign, will get out of them both what they have done and what they intend to do. Those therefore who would keep counsel must not only put on resolution, but stand upon their guard. 2. To get knowledge by them. Some are

very able and fit to give counsel, have an excellent faculty of cleaving a hair, hitting the joint of a difficulty, and advising pertinently, but they are modest, and reserved, and not communicative; they have a great deal in them, but it is loth to come out. In such a case a *man of understanding will draw it out*, as wine out of a vessel. We lose the benefit we might have by the conversation of wise men for want of the art of being inquisitive.

6 Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?

Note, 1. It is easy to find those that will pretend to be kind and liberal. Many a man will call himself a man of mercy, will boast what good he has done and what good he designs to do, or, at least, what an affection he has to well-doing. Most men will talk a great deal of their charity, generosity, hospitality, and piety, will sound a trumpet to themselves, as the Pharisees, and what little goodness they have will proclaim it and make a mighty matter of it. 2. But it is hard to find those that really are kind and liberal, that have done and will do more than either they speak of or care to hear spoken of, that will be true friends in a strait; such a one as one may trust to is like a black swan.

7 The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him.

It is here observed to the honour of a good man, 1. That he does well for himself. He has a certain rule, which with an even steady hand he governs himself by: *He walks in his integrity*; he keeps a good conscience, and he has the comfort of it, for *it is his rejoicing*. He is not liable to those uneasinesses, either in contriving what he shall do or reflecting on what he has done, which those are liable to that walk in deceit. 2. That he does well for his family: *His children are blessed after him*, and fare the better for his sake. God has mercy in store for the seed of the faithful.

8 A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes.

Here is, 1. The character of a good governor: He is a *king* that deserves to be called so who *sits in the throne*, not as a throne of honour, to take his ease, and take state upon him, and oblige men to keep their distance, but as a *throne of judgment*, that he may do justice, give redress to the injured and punish the injurious, who makes his business his delight and loves no pleasure comparably to it, who does not devolve the whole care and trouble upon others, but takes cognizance of affairs himself and sees with his own eyes as much as may be. 1 Kings x. 9. 2. The happy effect of a good government. The presence of the prince goes far towards the putting of wickedness out of

countenance; if he inspect his affairs himself, those that are employed under him will be kept in awe and restrained from doing wrong. If great men be good men, and will use their power as they may and ought, what good may they do and what evil may they prevent

9 Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?

This question is not only a challenge to any man in the world to prove himself sinless, whatever he pretends, but a lamentation of the corruption of mankind, even that which remains in the best. Alas! *Who can say, "I am sinless?"* Observe, 1. Who the persons are that are excluded from these pretensions—all, one as well as another. Here, in this imperfect state, no person whatsoever can pretend to be without sin. Adam could say so in innocence, and saints can say so in heaven, but none in this life. Those that think themselves as good as they should be cannot, nay, and those that are really good will not, dare not, say this. 2. What the pretension is that is excluded. We cannot say, *We have made our hearts clean.* Though we can say, through grace, "We are cleaner than we have been," yet we cannot say, "We are clean and pure from all remainders of sin." Or, though we are clean from the gross acts of sin, yet we cannot say, "Our hearts are clean." Or, though we are washed and cleansed, yet we cannot say, "We ourselves made our own hearts clean;" it was the work of the Spirit. Or, though we are pure from the sins of many others, yet we cannot say, "We are pure from our sin, the sin that easily besets us, the body of death which Paul complained of," Rom. vii. 24.

10 Divers weights, and divers measures, both of them are alike abomination to the LORD.

See here, 1. The various arts of deceiving that men have, all which evils the love of money is the root of. In paying and receiving money, which was then commonly done by the scale, they had *divers weights*, an under-weight for what they paid and an over-weight for what they received; in delivering out and taking in goods they had *divers measures*, a scanty measure to sell by and a large measure to buy by. This was doing wrong with plot and contrivance, and under colour of doing right. Under these is included all manner of fraud and deceit in commerce and trade. 2. The displeasure of God against them. Whether they be about the money or the goods, in the buyer or in the seller, they are all *alike an abomination to the Lord*. He will not prosper the trade that is thus driven, nor bless what is thus got. He hates those that thus break the common faith by which justice is maintained, and will be the avenger of all such.

11 Even a child is known by his do-

ings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.

The tree is known by its fruits, a man by his doings, even a young tree by its first fruits, a child by his childish things, whether his work be clean only, appearing good (the word is used ch. xvi. 2), or whether it be right, that is, really good. This intimates, 1. That children will discover themselves. One may soon see what their temper is, and what way their inclination leads them, according as their constitution is. Children have not learned the art of dissembling and concealing their bent as grown people have. 2. That parents should observe their children, that they may discover their disposition and genius, and both manage and dispose of them accordingly, drive the nail that will go and draw out that which goes amiss. *Wisdom is herein profitable to direct.*

12 The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the LORD hath made even both of them.

Note, 1. God is the God of nature, and all the powers and faculties of nature are derived from him and depend upon him, and therefore are to be employed for him. It was he that formed the eye and planted the ear (Ps. xciv. 9), and the structure of both is admirable; and it is he that preserves to us the use of both; to his providence we owe it that our eyes are seeing eyes and our ears hearing ears. Hearing and seeing are the learning senses, and we must particularly own God's goodness in them. 2. God is the God of grace. It is he that gives the ear that hears God's voice, the eye that sees his beauty, for it is he that opens the understanding.

13 Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread.

Note, 1. Those that indulge themselves in their ease may expect to want necessities which should have been gotten by honest labour. "Therefore, though thou must sleep (nature requires it), yet love not sleep, as those do that hate business. Love not sleep for its own sake, but only as it fits for further work. Love not much sleep, but rather grudge the time that is spent in it, and wish thou couldst live without it, that thou mightest always be employed in some good exercise. We must allow it to our bodies as men allow it to their servants, because they cannot help it and otherwise they shall have no good of them. Those that love sleep are likely to come to poverty, not only because they lose the time they spend in excess of sleep, but because they contract a listless careless disposition, and are still half asleep, never well awake. 2. Those that stir up themselves to their business may expect to have conveniences: "Open thy eyes, awake and shake off sleep, see how far in the day it is, how

thy work wants thee, and how busy others are about thee! And, when thou art awake, look up, look to thy advantages, and do not let slip thy opportunities; apply thy mind closely to thy business and be in care about it. It is the easy condition of a great advantage: *Open thy eyes and thou shalt be satisfied with bread*; if thou dost not grow rich, yet thou shalt have enough, and that is as good as a feast."

14 *It is naught, it is naught*, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth.

See here, 1. What arts men use to get a good bargain and to buy cheap. They not only cheapen carelessly, as if they had no need, no mind for the commodity, when perhaps they cannot go without it (there may be prudence in that), but they vilify and run down that which yet they know to be of value; they cry, "*It is naught, it is naught*;" it has this and the other fault, or perhaps may have; it is not good of the sort; and it is too dear; we can have better and cheaper elsewhere, or have bought better and cheaper." This is the common way of dealing; and after all, it may be, they know the contrary of what they affirm; but the buyer, who may think he has no other way of being even with the seller, does as extravagantly commend his goods and justify the price he sets on them, and so there is a fault on both sides; whereas the bargain would be made every way as well if both buyer and seller would be modest and speak as they think. 2. What pride and pleasure men take in a good bargain when they have got it, though therein they contradict themselves, and own they dissembled when they were driving the bargain. When the buyer has beaten down the seller, who was content to lower his price rather than lose a customer (as many poor tradesmen are forced to do—small profit is better than none), then he goes his way, and boasts what excellent goods he has got at his own price, and takes it as an affront and a reflection upon his judgment if any body disparages his bargain. Perhaps he knew the worth of the goods better than the seller himself did and knows how to get a great deal by them. See how apt men are to be pleased with their gettings and proud of their ricks; whereas a fraud and a lie are what a man ought to be ashamed of, though he have gained ever so much by them.

15 There is gold, and a multitude of rubies: but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel.

The *lips of knowledge* (a good understanding to guide the lips and a good elocution to diffuse the knowledge) are to be preferred far before gold, and pearl, and rubies; for, . They are more rare in themselves, more scarce and hard to be got. *There is gold* in every man's pocket that has no grace in

his heart. In Solomon's time there was plenty of gold (1 Kings x. 21) and *abundance of rubies*; every body wore them; they were to be bought in every town. But wisdom is a rare thing, a precious jewel; few have it so as to do good with it, nor is it to be purchased of the merchants. 2. They are more enriching to us and more adorning. They make us rich towards God, rich in good works, 1 Tim. ii. 9, 10. Most people are fond of gold, and a ruby or two will not serve, they must have a multitude of them, a cabinet of jewels; but he that has the lips of knowledge despises these, because he knows and possesses better things.

16 Take his garment—that is surety for a stranger: and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.

Two sorts of persons are here spoken of that are ruining their own estates, and will be beggars shortly, and therefore are not to be trusted without good security:—1. Those that will be bound for any body that will ask them, that entangle themselves in rash suretyship to oblige their idle companions; they will break at last, nay, they cannot hold out long; these waste by wholesale. 2. Those that are in league with abandoned women, that treat them, and court them, and keep company with them. They will be beggars in a little time; never give them credit without a good pledge. Strange women have strange ways of impoverishing men to enrich themselves.

17 Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.

Note, 1. Sin may possibly be pleasant in the commission: *Bread of deceit*, wealth gotten by fraud, by lying and oppression, may be *sweet to a man*, and the more sweet for its being ill-gotten, such pleasure does the carnal mind take in the success of its wicked projects. All the pleasures and profits of sin are *bread of deceit*. They are stolen, for they are forbidden fruit; and they will deceive men, for they are not what they promise. For a time, however, they are *rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel*, and the sinner blesses himself in them. But, 2. It will be bitter in the reflection. Afterwards the sinner's *mouth shall be filled with gravel*. When his conscience is awakened, when he sees himself cheated, and becomes apprehensive of the wrath of God against him for his sin, how painful and uneasy then is the thought of it! The pleasures of sin are but for a season, and are succeeded with sorrows. Some nations have punished malefactors by mingling gravel with their bread.

18 *Every purpose is established by counsel*: and with good advice make war.

Note, 1. It is good in every thing to act with deliberation, and to consult with our-

selves at least, and, in matters of moment, with our friends too, before we determine, but especially to ask counsel of God, and beg direction from him, and observe the guidance of his eye. This is the way to have both our minds and our purposes established, and to succeed well in our affairs; whereas what is done hastily and with precipitation is repented of at leisure. Take time, and you will have done the sooner. *Deliberandum est div, quod statuendum est semel*—*A final decision should be preceded by mature deliberation.* 2. It is especially our wisdom to be cautious in making war. Consider, and take advice, whether the war should be begun or no, whether it be just, whether it be prudent, whether we be a match for the enemy, and able to carry it on when it is too late to retreat (Luke xiv. 31); and, when it is begun, consider how and by what arts it may be prosecuted, for management is as necessary as courage. Going to law is a kind of going to war, and therefore must be done with good advice, Prov. xxv. 8. The rule among the Romans was *nec sequi bellum, nec fugere*—*neither to urge war nor yet to shun it.*

19 He that goeth about as a tale-bearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.

Two sorts of people are dangerous to be conversed with:—1. Tale-bearers, though they are commonly flatterers, and by fair speeches insinuate themselves into men's acquaintance. Those are unprincipled people that go about carrying stories, that make mischief among neighbours and relations, that sow in the minds of people jealousies of their governors, of their ministers, and of one another, that reveal secrets which they are entrusted with or which by unfair means they come to the knowledge of, or, under pretence of guessing at men's thoughts and intentions, tell that of them which is really false. "Be not familiar with such; do not give them the hearing when they tell their tales and reveal secrets, for you may be sure that they will betray your secrets too and tell tales of you." 2. Flatterers, for they are commonly tale-bearers. If a man fawn upon you, compliment and commend you, suspect him to have some design upon you, and stand upon your guard; he would pick that out of you which will serve him to make a story of to somebody else to your prejudice; therefore *meddle not with him that flatters with his lips.* Those too dearly love, and too dearly buy, their own praise, that will put confidence in a man and trust him with a secret or business because he flatters them.

20 Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.

Here is, 1. An undutiful child become very wicked by degrees. He began with despis-

ing his father and mother, slighting their instructions, disobeying their commands, and raging at their rebukes, but at length he arrives at such a pitch of impudence and impiety as to curse them, to give them scurrilous and opprobrious language, and to wish mischief to those who were the instruments of his being and have taken so much care and pains about him, and this in defiance of God and his law, which has made this a capital crime (Exod. xxi. 17, Matt. xv. 4), and a violation of all the bonds of duty, nature, affection, and gratitude. 2. An undutiful child become very miserable at last: *His lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness*; and his honour shall be laid in the dust, and he shall for ever lose his reputation. Let him never expect any peace or comfort in his own mind, no, nor to prosper in this world. His days shall be shortened, and the lamp of his life extinguished, according to the reverse of the promise in the fifth commandment. His family shall be cut off and his posterity be a curse to him. And it will be his eternal ruin; the lamp of his happiness shall be put out in the blackness of darkness (so the word is), even that which is for ever, Jude 13, Matt. xxii. 13.

21 An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed.

Note, 1. It is possible that an estate may be suddenly raised. There are those who will be rich, by right or wrong, who make no conscience of what they say or do if they can but get money by it, who, when it is in their power, will cheat their own father, and who sordidly spare and hoard up what they get, grudging themselves and their families food convenient and thinking all lost but what they buy land with or put out to interest. By such ways as these a man may grow rich, may grow very rich, in a little time, at his first setting out. 2. An estate that is suddenly raised is often as suddenly ruined. I was raised hastily, but, not being raised honestly, it proves soon ripe and soon rotten. *The end thereof shall not be blessed of God*, and, if he do not bless it, it can neither be comfortable nor of any continuance; so that he who got it at the end will be a fool. He had better have taken time and built firmly.

22 Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee.

Those that live in this world must expect to have injuries done them, affronts given them, and trouble wrongfully created them, for we dwell among briars. Now here we are told what to do when we have wrong done us. 1. We must not avenge ourselves, no, nor so much as think of revenge, or design it. "Say not thou, no, not in thy heart, *I will recompense evil for evil.* Do not please thyself with the thought that some time or

either thou shalt have an opportunity of being quits with him. Do not wish revenge, or nope for it, much less resolve upon it, no, not when the injury is fresh and the resentment of it most deep. Never say that thou wilt do a thing which thou canst not in faith pray to God to assist thee in, and *that* thou canst not do in meditating revenge." 2. We must refer ourselves to God, and leave it to him to plead our cause, to maintain our right, and reckon with those that do us wrong in such a way and manner as he thinks fit and in his own due time: "*Wait on the Lord*, attend his pleasure, acquiesce in his will, and he does not say that he will punish him that has injured thee (instead of desiring that thou must forgive him and pray for him), but *he will save thee*, and that is enough. He will protect thee, so that thy passing by one injury shall not (as is commonly feared) expose thee to another; nay, he will recompense good to thee, to balance thy trouble and encourage thy patience," as David hoped, when Shimei cursed him, 2 Sam. xvi. 12.

23 Divers weights *are* an abomination unto the LORD; and a false balance *is* not good.

This is to the same purport with what was said v. 10. 1. It is here repeated, because it is a sin that God doubly hates (as lying, which is of the same nature with this sin, is mentioned twice among the seven things that God hates, ch. vi. 17, 19), and because it was probably a sin very much practised at that time in Israel, and therefore made light of as if there were no harm in it, under pretence that, being commonly used, there was no trading without it. 2. It is here added, *A false balance is not good*, to intimate that it is not only abominable to God, but unprofitable to the sinner himself; there is really no good to be got by it, no, not a good bargain, for a bargain made by fraud will prove a losing bargain in the end.

24 Man's goings *are* of the LORD; how can a man then understand his own way?

We are here taught that in all our affairs, 1. We have a necessary and constant dependence upon God. All our natural actions depend upon his providence, all our spiritual actions upon his grace. The best man is no better than God makes him; and every creature is that to us which it is the will of God that it should be. Our enterprises succeed, not as we desire and design, but as God directs and disposes. The goings even of a strong man (so the word signifies) *are of the Lord*, for his strength is weakness without God, nor is the battle always to the strong. 2. We have no foresight of future events, and therefore know not how to forecast for them: *How can a man understand his own way?* How can he tell what will befall him, since God's counsels concerning him are secret, and therefore how can he of himself

contrive what to do without divine direction. We so little understand our own way that we know not what is good for ourselves, and therefore we must make a virtue of necessity, and commit our way unto the Lord, in whose hand it is, follow the guidance and submit to the disposal of Providence.

25 *It is a snare to the man who devoureth that which is holy*, and after vows to make enquiry.

Two things by which God is greatly affronted, men are here said to be ensnared by, and entangled not only in guilt, but in trouble and ruin at length:—1. Sacrilege, men's alienating holy things and converting them to their own use, which is here called *devouring* them. What is devoted in any way to the service and honour of God, for the support of religion and divine worship or the relief of the poor, ought to be conscientiously preserved to the purposes designed; and those that directly or indirectly embezzle it, or defeat the purpose for which it was given, will have a great deal to answer for. *Will a man rob God in tithes and offerings?* Mal. iii. 8. Those that hurry over religious offices (their praying and preaching) and huddle them up in haste, as being impatient to get done, may be said to *devour* that which is holy. 2. Covenant-breaking. *It is a snare to a man*, after he has made *vows* to God, to enquire how he may evade them or get them dispensed with, and to contrive excuses for the violating of them. If the matter of them was doubtful, and the expressions were ambiguous, that was his fault; he should have made them with more caution and consideration, for it will involve his conscience (if it be tender) in great perplexities, if he be to enquire concerning them afterwards (Eccl. v. 6); for, when we have opened our mouth to the Lord, it is too late to think of going back, Acts v. 4.

26 A wise king scattereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them.

See here, 1. What is the business of magistrates. They are to be a terror to evil-doers. They must *scatter the wicked*, who are linked in confederacies to assist and embolden one another in doing mischief; and there is no doing this but by *bringing the wheel over them*, that is, putting the laws in execution against them, crushing their power and quashing their projects. Severity must sometimes be used to rid the country of those that are openly vicious and mischievous, debauched and debauching. 2. What is the qualification of magistrates, which is necessary in order to this. They have need to be both pious and prudent, for it is the wise king, who is both religious and discreet, that is likely to effect the suppression of vice and reformation of manners.

27 The spirit of man *is* the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.

We have here the dignity of the soul, the great soul of man, that light which lighteth every man. 1. It is a divine light; it is the *candle of the Lord*, a candle of his lighting, or it is *the inspiration of the Almighty that gives us understanding*. He forms the spirit of man within him. It is after the image of God that man is created in knowledge. Conscience, that noble faculty, is God's deputy in the soul; it is a candle not only lighted by him, but lighted for him. The Father of spirits is therefore called the *Father of lights*. 2. It is a discovering light. By the help of reason we come to know men, to judge of their characters, and dive into their designs; by the help of conscience we come to know ourselves. The spirit of a man has a self-consciousness (1 Cor. ii. 11); it searches into the dispositions and affections of the soul, praises what is good, condemns what is otherwise, and judges of the thoughts and intents of the heart. This is the office, this the power, of conscience, which we are therefore concerned to get rightly informed and to keep void of offence.

28 Mercy and truth preserve the king: and his throne is upholden by mercy.

Here we have, 1. The virtues of a good king. Those are *mercy and truth*, especially mercy, for that is mentioned twice here. He must be strictly faithful to his word, must be sincere, and abhor all dissimulation, must religiously discharge all the trusts reposed in him, must support and countenance truth. He must likewise rule with clemency, and by all acts of compassion gain the affections of his people. *Mercy and truth* are the glories of God's throne, and kings are called *gods*. 2. The advantages he gains thereby. These virtues will preserve his person and support his government, will make him easy and safe, beloved by his own people and feared by his enemies, if it be possible that he should have any.

29 The glory of young men is their strength: and the beauty of old men is the gray head.

This shows that both young and old have their advantages, and therefore must each of them be, according to their capacities, serviceable to the public, and neither of them despise nor envy the other. 1. Let not old people despise the young, for they are strong and fit for action, able to go through business, and break through difficulties, which the aged and weak cannot grapple with. The *glory of young men is their strength*, provided they use it well (in the service of God and their country, not of their lusts), and that they be not proud of it nor trust to it. 2. Let not young people despise the old, for they are grave, and fit for counsel, and, though they have not the strength that young men have, yet they have more wisdom and

experience. *Juniores ad labores, seniores ad honores—Labour is for the young, honour for the aged*. God has put honour upon the old man; for his *gray head* is his beauty. See Dan. vii. 9.

30 The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil: so do stripes the inward parts of the belly.

Note, 1. Many need severe rebukes. Some children are so obstinate that their parents can do no good with them without sharp correction; some criminals must feel the rigour of the law and public justice; gentle methods will not work upon them; they must be beaten black and blue. And the wise God sees that his own children sometimes need very sharp afflictions. 2. Severe rebukes sometimes do a great deal of good, as corrections contribute to the cure of a wound, eating out the proud flesh. The rod drives out even that foolishness which was bound up in the heart, and cleanses away the evil there. 3. Frequently those that most need severe rebukes can worst bear them. Such is the corruption of nature that men are as loth to be rebuked sharply for their sins as to be beaten till their bones ache. *Correction is grievous to him that forsakes the way*, and yet it is good for him, Heb. xii. 11.

CHAP. XXI.

THE king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water he turneth it whithersoever he will.

Note, 1. Even the *hearts* of men are in God's hand, and not only their *goings*, as he had said, ch. xx. 24. God can change men's minds, can, by a powerful insensible operation upon their spirits, turn them from that which they seemed most intent upon, and incline them to that which they seemed most averse to, as the husbandman, by canals and gutters, turns the water through his grounds as he pleases, which does not alter the nature of the water, nor put any force upon any more than God's providence does upon the native freedom of man's will, but directs the course of it to serve his own purpose. 2. Even kings' hearts are so, notwithstanding their powers and prerogatives, as much as the hearts of common persons. The *hearts of kings are unsearchable* to us, much more unmanageable by us; as they have their *arcana imperii—state secrets*, so they have the prerogatives of their crown; but the great God has them not only under his eye, but in his hand. Kings are what he makes them. Those that are most absolute are under God's government; he *puts things into their hearts*. Rev. xvii. 17; Ezra vii. 27.

2 Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts.

Note, 1. We are all apt to be partial in judging of ourselves and our own actions, and to think too favourably of our own cha-

acter, as if there were nothing amiss in it: *Every way of a man, even his by-way, is right in his own eyes.* The proud heart is very ingenious in putting a fair face upon a foul matter, and in making that appear right to itself which is far from being so, to stop the mouth of conscience. 2. We are sure that the judgment of God concerning us is according to truth. Whatever our judgment concerning ourselves, *the Lord ponders the heart.* God looks at the heart, and judges of men according to that, of their actions according to their principles and intentions; and his judgment of that is as exact as ours of that which we ponder most, and more so; he weighs it in an unerring balance, *ch. vi. 2.*

3 To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.

Here, 1. It is implied that many deceive themselves with a conceit that, if they offer sacrifice, that will excuse them from doing justice, and procure them a dispensation for their unrighteousness; and this makes their way seem right, *v. 2. We have fasted, Isa. viii. 3. I have peace-offerings with me, Prov. ii. 14.* 2. It is plainly declared that living a good life (doing justly and loving mercy) is more pleasing to God than the most pompous and expensive instances of devotion. Sacrifices were of divine institution, and were acceptable to God if they were offered in faith and with repentance, otherwise not, *Is. i. 11, 12.* But even then moral duties were preferred before them (*1 Sam. xv. 22*), which intimates that their excellency was not innate nor the obligation to them perpetual, *Mic. vi. 8.* Much of religion lies in doing judgment and justice from a principle of duty to God, contempt of the world, and love to our neighbour; and this is more pleasing to God than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices, *Mark iii. 33.*

4 A high look, and a proud heart, and the ploughing of the wicked, is sin.

This may be taken as showing us, 1. The marks of a wicked man. He that has a *high look and a proud heart*, that carries himself insolently and scornfully towards both God and man, and that is always ploughing and plotting, designing and devising some mischief or other, is indeed a wicked man. *The sight of the wicked is sin.* Sin is the pride, the ambition, the glory and joy, and the business of wicked men. 2. The miseries of a wicked man. His raised expectations, his high designs, and most elaborate contrivances and projects, are sin to him; he contracts guilt in them and so prepares trouble for himself. The very business of all wicked men, as well as their pleasure, is nothing but sin; so Bishop Patrick. They do all to serve their lusts, and have no regard to the glory of God in it, and therefore *their ploughing is*

sin, and no marvel when their sacrificing is so, *ch. xv. 8.*

5 The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness; but of every one that is hasty only to want.

Here is, 1. The way to be rich. If we would live plentifully and comfortably in the world, we must be diligent in our business, and not shrink from the toil and trouble of it, but prosecute it closely, improving all advantages and opportunities for it, and doing what we do with all our might; yet we must not be hasty in it, nor hurry ourselves and others with it, but keep doing fair and softly, which, we say, goes far in a day. With diligence there must be contrivance. *The thoughts of the diligent* are as necessary as the hand of the diligent. Forecast is as good as work. Seest thou a man thus prudent and diligent? He will have enough to live on. 2. The way to be poor. Those that are hasty, that are rash and inconsiderate in their affairs, and will not take time to think, that are greedy of gain, by right or wrong, and make haste to be rich by unjust practices or unwise projects, are in the ready road to poverty. Their thoughts and contrivances, by which they hope to raise themselves, will ruin them.

6 The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death.

This shows the folly of those that hope to enrich themselves by dishonest practices, by oppressing and over-reaching those with whom they deal, by false-witness-bearing, or by fraudulent contracts, of those that make no scruple of lying when there is any thing to be got by it. They may perhaps heap up treasures by these means, that which they make their treasure; but, 1. They will not meet with the satisfaction they expect. It is a *vanity tossed to and fro*; it will be disappointment and vexation of spirit to them; they will not have the comfort of it, nor can they put any confidence in it, but will be perpetually uneasy. It will be *tossed to and fro* by their own consciences, and by the censures of men; let them expect to be in a constant hurry. 2. They will meet with the destruction they do not expect. While they are seeking wealth by such unlawful practices they are really seeking death; they lay themselves open to the envy and ill-will of men by the treasures they get, and to the wrath and curse of God by the lying tongue wherewith they get them, which he will make to fall upon themselves and sink them to hell.

7 The robbery of the wicked shall destroy them; because they refuse to do judgment.

See here, 1. The nature of injustice. Getting money by lying (*v. 6*) is no better than downright robbery. Cheating is stealing; you might as well pick a man's pocket as impose upon him by a lie in making a bar-

gain, which he had no fence against but by not believing you; and it will be no excuse from the guilt of robbery to say that he might choose whether he would believe you, for that is a debt we should owe to all men. 2. The cause of injustice. Men *refuse to do judgment*; they will not render to all their due, but withhold it, and omissions make way for commissions; they come at length to robbery itself. Those that refuse to do justice will choose to do wrong. 3. The effect of injustice; it will return upon the sinner's own head. The robbery of the wicked will *terrify them* (so some); their consciences will be filled with horror and amazement, will cut them, will *saw them asunder* (so others); it will *destroy them* here and for ever, therefore he had said (v. 6), *They seek death*.

8 The way of man is froward and strange: but *as for the pure, his work is right*.

This shows that as men are so is their way. 1. Evil men have evil ways. If the man be *froward*, his way also is *strange*; and this is the way of most men, such is the general corruption of mankind. *They have all gone aside* (Ps. xiv. 2, 3); all flesh have perverted their way. But the froward man, the man of deceit, that acts by craft and trick in all he does, his way is strange, contrary to all the rules of honour and honesty. It is strange, for you know not where to find him nor when you have him; it is strange, for it is alienated from all good and estranges men from God and his favour. It is what he beholds afar off, and so do all honest men. 2. Men that are pure are proved to be such by their work, for it is *right*, it is just and regular; and they are accepted of God and approved of men. The way of mankind in their apostasy is froward and strange; but as for the pure, those that by the grace of God are recovered out of that state, of which there is here and there one, *their work is right*, as Noah's was in the old world, Gen. vii. 1.

9 *It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house.*

See here, 1. What a great affliction it is to a man to have a brawling scolding woman for his wife, who upon every occasion, and often upon no occasion, breaks out into a passion, and chides either him or those about her, is fretful to herself and furious to her children and servants, and, in both, vexatious to her husband. If a man has a wide house, spacious and pompous, this will embitter the comfort of it to him—a *house of society* (so the word is), in which a man may be sociable, and entertain his friends; this will make both him and his house unsociable, and unfit for the enjoyments of true friendship. It makes a man ashamed of his choice and his management, and disturbs his company. 2. What many a man is forced to do

under such an affliction. He cannot keep his authority. He finds it to no purpose contradict the most unreasonable passion, for it is unruly and rages so much the more, and his wisdom and grace will not suffer him to render railing for railing, nor his conjugal affection to use any severity, and therefore he finds it his best way to retire into a *corner of the house-top*, and sit alone there, out of the hearing of her clamour; and if he employ himself well there, as he may do, it is the wisest course he can take. Better do than quit the house, and go into bad company, for diversion, as many, who, like Adam, make their wife's sin the excuse of their own.

10 The soul of the wicked desireth evil: his neighbour findeth no favour in his eyes.

See here the character of a very wicked man. 1. The strong inclination he has to mischief. *His very soul desires evil*, desires that evil may be done and that he may have the pleasure, not only of seeing it, but of having a hand in it. The root of wickedness lies in the soul; the desire that men have to do evil, that is the lust which conceives and brings forth sin. 2. The strong aversion he has to do good: *His neighbour*, his friend, his nearest relation, *finds no favour in his eyes*, cannot gain from him the least kindness, though he be in the greatest need of. And, when he is in the pursuit of the evil, his heart is so much upon it, he will spare no man that stands in his way; his next neighbour shall be used no better than a stranger than an enemy.

11 When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise: and when the wise is instructed, he receiveth knowledge.

This we had before (ch. xix. 25), and shows that there are two ways by which the simple may be made wise:—1. By the punishments that are inflicted on those that are incorrigibly wicked. Let the law be executed upon a scorner, and even he that is simple will be awakened and alarmed by it, and will discern, more than he did, the evil of sin, and will take warning by it and take heed. 2. By the instructions that are given to those that are wise and willing to be taught: *When the wise is instructed* by the preaching of the word he (not only the wise himself, but the simple that stands by) *receiveth knowledge*. It is no injustice at all to take a good lesson to ourselves which was designed for another.

12 The righteous man wisely considereth the house of the wicked: but God overthroweth the wicked for their wickedness.

1. As we read this verse, it shows the reason why good men, when they come to understand things aright, will not envy the prosperity of evil-doers. When they see the

house of the wicked, how full it is perhaps of all the good things of this life, they are tempted to envy; but when they *wisely consider* it, when they look upon it with an eye of faith, when they see *God overthrowing the wicked for their wickedness*, that there is a curse upon their habitation which will certainly be the ruin of it ere long, they see more reason to despise them, or pity them, than to fear or envy them. 2. Some give another sense of it: *The righteous man* (the judge or magistrate, that is entrusted with the execution of justice, and the preservation of public peace) *examines the house of the wicked*, searches it for arms or for stolen goods, makes a diligent enquiry concerning his family and the characters of those about him, that he may by his power *overthrow the wicked for their wickedness* and prevent their doing any further mischief, that he may fire the nests where the birds of prey are harpoured or the unclean birds.

13 *Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.*

Here we have the description and doom of an uncharitable man. 1. His description: *He stops his ears at the cry of the poor*, at the cry of their wants and miseries (he resolves to take no cognizance of them), at the cry of their requests and supplications—he resolves he will not so much as give them the hearing, turns them away from his door, and forbids them to come near him, or, if he cannot avoid hearing them, he will not heed them, nor be moved by their complaints, nor be prevailed with by their importunities; he *shuts up the bowels of his compassion*, and that is equivalent to the stopping of his ears, Acts vii. 57. 2. His doom. He shall himself be reduced to straits, which will make him cry, and then *he shall not be heard*. Men will not hear him, but reward him as he has rewarded others. God will not hear him; for he that *showed no mercy shall have judgment without mercy* (Jam. ii. 13), and he that on earth denied a crumb of bread in hell was denied a drop of water. God will be deaf to the prayers of those who are deaf to the cries of the poor, which, if they be not heard by us, will be heard against us, Exod. xxii. 23.

14 *A gift in secret pacifieth anger: and a reward in the bosom strong wrath.*

Here is, 1. The power that is commonly found to be in gifts. Nothing is more violent than *anger*. O the force of *strong wrath*! and yet a handsome present, prudently managed, will turn away some men's wrath when it seemed implacable, and disarm the keenest and most passionate resentments. Covetousness is commonly a master-sin and is the command of other lusts. *Pecunie rediunt omnia*—*Money commands all things*. As Jacob pacified Esau and Abigail David.

2. The policy that is commonly used in giving and receiving bribes. It must be a *gift in secret and a reward in the bosom*, for he that takes it would not be thought to covet it, nor known to receive it, nor would he willingly be beholden to him whom he has been offended with; but, if it be done privately, all is well. No man should be too open in giving any gift, nor boast of the presents he sends; but, if it be a bribe to pervert justice, that is so scandalous that those who are fond of it are ashamed of it.

15 *It is joy to the just to do judgment: but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity.*

Note, 1. It is a pleasure and satisfaction to good men both to see justice administered by the government they live under, right taking place and iniquity suppressed, and also to practise it themselves, according as their sphere is. They not only do justice, but do it with pleasure, not only for fear of shame, but for love of virtue. 2. It is a terror to wicked men to see the laws put in execution against vice and profaneness. It is destruction to them; as it is also a vexation to them to be forced, either for the support of their credit or for fear of punishment, to do judgment themselves. Or, if we take it as we read it, the meaning is, There is true pleasure in the practice of religion, but certain destruction at the end of all vicious courses.

16 *The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead.*

Here is, 1. The sinner upon his ramble. He *wanders out of the way of understanding*, and when once he has left that good way he wanders endlessly. The way of religion is *the way of understanding*; those that are not truly pious are not truly intelligent; those that *wander out of this way* break the hedge which God has set, and follow the conduct of the world and the flesh; and they go astray like lost sheep. 2. The sinner at his rest, or rather his ruin: *He shall remain (quiescet—he shall rest, but not in peace—in peace) in the congregation of the giants*, the sinners of the old world, that were swept away by the deluge; to that destruction the damnation of sinners is compared, as sometimes to the destruction of Sodom, when they are said to have their portion in fire and brimstone. Or *in the congregation of the damned*, that are under the power of the second death. There is a vast congregation of damned sinners, bound in bundles for the fire, and in that those shall remain, remain for ever, who are shut out from the congregation of the righteous. He that forsakes the way to heaven, if he return not to it, will certainly sink into the depths of hell.

17 *He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich.*

Here is an argument against a voluptuous luxurious life, taken from the ruin it brings upon men's temporal interests. Here is, 1. The description of an epicure: *He loves pleasure.* God allows us to use the delights of sense soberly and temperately, *wine to make glad the heart and put vigour into the spirits, and oil to make the face to shine and beautify the countenance*; but he that loves these, that sets his heart upon them, covets them earnestly, is solicitous to have all the delights of sense wound up to the height of pleasure-ableness, is impatient of every thing that crosses him in his pleasures, relishes these as the best pleasures, and has his mouth by them put out of taste for spiritual delights, he is an epicure, 2 Tim. iii. 4. 2. The punishment of an epicure in this world: *He shall be a poor man*; for the lusts of sensuality are not maintained but at a great expense, and there are instances of those who want necessities, and live upon alms, who once could not live without dainties and varieties. Many a beau becomes a beggar.

18 The wicked *shall be* a ransom for the righteous, and the transgressor for the upright.

This intimates, 1. What should be done by the justice of men. *The wicked*, that are the troublers of a land, ought to be punished, for the preventing and turning away of those national judgments which otherwise will be inflicted and in which even the righteous are many times involved. Thus when Achan was stoned he was *a ransom for the camp of righteous Israel*; and the seven sons of Saul, when they were hanged, were *a ransom for the kingdom of righteous David*. 2. What is often done by the providence of God: *The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked comes in his stead*, and so seems as if he were *a ransom for him*, ch. xi. 8. God will rather leave many wicked people to be cut off than abandon his own people. *I will give men for thee*, Isa. xliii. 3, 4.

19 *It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman.*

Note, 1. Unbridled passions embitter and spoil the comfort of all relations. A peevish angry wife makes her husband's life uneasy, to whom she should be a comfort and a meet help. Those cannot dwell in peace and happiness that cannot dwell in peace and love. Even those that are one flesh, if they be not withal one spirit, have no joy of their union. 2. It is better to have no company than bad company. The wife of thy covenant is thy companion, and yet, if she be peevish and provoking, *it is better to dwell in a solitary wilderness*, exposed to wind and weather, than in company with her. A man may better enjoy God and himself in a wilderness than among quarrelsome relations and neighbours. See v. 9.

20 *There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up.*

Note, 1. Those that are wise will increase what they have and live plentifully; their wisdom will teach them to proportion their expenses to their income and to lay up for hereafter; so that *there is a treasure of things to be desired*, and as much as needs be desired, a good stock of all things convenient laid up in season, and particularly of oil, one of the staple commodities of Canaan, Deut. viii. 8. This is *in the habitation, or cottage, of the wise*; and it is better to have an old-fashioned house, and have it well furnished than a fine modern one, with sorry house-keeping. God blesses the endeavours of the wise and then their houses are replenished. 2. Those that are foolish will mispend what they have upon their lusts, and so bring the stock they had to nothing. Those manage wretchedly that are in haste to spend what they have, but not in care which way to get more. Foolish children spend what their wise parents had laid up. *One sinner destroys much good*, as the prodigal son.

21 He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness, and honour.

See here, 1. What it is to make religion our business; it is to *follow after righteousness and mercy*, not to content ourselves with easy performances, but to do our duty with the utmost care and pains, as those that are pressing forward and in fear of coming short. We must both do justly and love mercy, and must proceed and persevere therein; and, though we cannot attain to perfection, yet it will be a comfort to us if we aim at it and follow after it. 2. What will be the advantage of doing so: Those that do *follow after righteousness shall find righteousness*; God will give them grace to do good, and they shall have the pleasure and comfort of doing it; those that make conscience of being just to others shall be justly dealt with by others and others shall be kind to them. The Jews *followed after righteousness*, and did not find it, because they sought amiss, Rom. ix. 31. Otherwise, *Seek and you shall find*, and with it shall find both *life and honour*, everlasting life and honour, the *crown of righteousness*.

22 A wise man scaleth the city of the mighty, and casteth down the strength of the confidence thereof.

Note, 1. Those that have power are apt to promise themselves great things from their power. *The city of the mighty* thinks itself impregnable, and therefore its strength is *the confidence thereof*, what it boasts of and trusts in, bidding defiance to danger. 2. Those that have wisdom, though they are so modest as not to promise much, often perform great things, even against those that are so confident of their strength, by their wisdom

Good conduct will go far even against great force; and a stratagem, well managed, may effectually *scale the city of the mighty and cast down the strength* it had such a confidence in. *A wise man will gain upon the affections of people and conquer them by strength of reason, which is a more noble conquest than that obtained by strength of arms.* Those that understand their interest will willingly submit themselves to a wise and good man, and the strongest walls shall not hold out against him.

23 Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.

Note. 1. It is our great concern to keep our souls from straits, from being entangled in snares and perplexities, and disquieted with troubles, that we may preserve the possession and enjoyment of ourselves and that our souls may be in frame for the service of God. 2. Those that would keep their souls must keep a watch before the door of their lips, must *keep the mouth* by temperance, that no forbidden fruit go into it, no stolen waters, that nothing be eaten or drunk to excess; they must *keep the tongue* also, that no forbidden word go out of the door of the lips, no corrupt communication. By a constant watchfulness over our words we shall prevent abundance of mischiefs which an ungoverned tongue runs men into. Keep thy heart, and that will keep thy tongue from sin; keep thy tongue, and that will keep thy heart from trouble.

24 Proud and haughty scorner is his name, who dealeth in proud wrath.

See here the mischief of pride and haughtiness. 1. It exposes men to sin; it makes them passionate, and kindles in them the fire of *proud wrath*. They are continually dealing in it, as if it were their trade to be angry, and they had nothing so much to do as to barter passions and exchange bitter words. Most of the wrath that inflames the spirits and societies of men is *proud wrath*. Men cannot bear the least slight, nor in any thing to be crossed or contradicted, but they are out of humour, nay, in a heat, immediately. It likewise makes them scornful when they are angry, very abusive with their tongues, insolent towards those above them and imperious towards all about them. *Only by pride comes all this.* 2. It exposes men to shame. They get a bad name by it, and every one calls them *proud and haughty scorners*, and therefore nobody cares for having any thing to do with them. If men would but consult their reputation a little and the credit of their profession, which suffers with it, they would not indulge their pride and passion as they do.

25 The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour. 26 He coveteth greedily all the day

long; but the righteous giveth and spareth not.

Here we have, 1. The miseries of the slothful, whose *hands refuse to labour* in an honest calling, by which they might get an honest livelihood. They are as fit for labour as other men, and business offers itself, to which they might lay their hands and apply their minds, but they will not; herein they fondly think they do well for themselves, see *ch. xxvi. 16. Soul, take thy ease.* But really they are enemies to themselves; for, besides that their slothfulness starves them, depriving them of their necessary supports, their desires at the same time stab them. Though their hands refuse to labour, their hearts cease not to covet riches, and pleasures, and honours, which yet cannot be obtained without labour. Their desires are impetuous and insatiable; they *covet greedily all the day long*, and cry, *Give, give;* they expect every body should do for them, though they will do nothing for themselves, much less for any body else. Now these *desires kill them*; they are a perpetual vexation to them, fret them to death, and perhaps put them upon such dangerous courses for the satisfying of their craving lusts as hasten them to an untimely end. Many that must have money with which to make provision for the flesh, and would not be at the pains to get it honestly, have turned highwaymen, and that has killed them. Those that are slothful in the affairs of their souls, and yet have desires towards that which would be the happiness of their souls, those *desires kill them*, will aggravate their condemnation and be witnesses against them that they were convinced of the worth of spiritual blessings, but refused to be at the pains that were necessary to the obtaining of them. 2. The honours of the honest and diligent. The righteous and industrious have their desires satisfied, and enjoy not only that satisfaction, but the further satisfaction of doing good to others. The slothful are always craving and gaping to receive, *but the righteous* are always full and contriving to give; and *it is more blessed to give than to receive.* They *give and spare not*, give liberally and upbraid not; they *give a portion to seven and also to eight*, and do not spare for fear of wanting.

27 The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?

Sacrifices were of divine institution; and when they were offered in faith, and with repentance and reformation, God was greatly honoured by them and well-pleased in them. But they were often not only unacceptable, but an *abomination*, to God, and he declared so, which was an indication both that they were not required for their own sakes and that there were better things, and more effectual, in reserve, when sacrifice and offering should be done away. They were an *abomination*, 1. When they were brought by

wicked men, who did not, according to the true intent and meaning of sacrificing, repent of their sins, mortify their lusts, and amend their lives. Cain brought his offering. Even wicked men may be found in the external performances of religious worship. Many can freely give God their beasts, their lips, their knees, who would not give him their hearts; the Pharisees gave alms. But when the person is an *abomination*, as every wicked man is to God, the performance cannot but be so; *even when he brings it diligently*; so some read the latter part of the verse. Though their offerings are continually before God (Ps. l. 8), yet they are an *abomination* to him.

2. *Much more when they were brought with wicked minds*, when their sacrifices were made, not only consistent with, but serviceable to, their wickedness, as Absalom's vow, Jezebel's fast, and the Pharisees' long prayers. When men make a show of devotion, that they may the more easily and effectually compass some covetous or malicious design, when holiness is pretended, but some wickedness intended, then especially the performance is an *abomination*, Isa. lxvi. 5.

28 A false witness shall perish: but the man that heareth speaketh constantly.

Here is, 1. The doom of a *false witness*. He who, for favour to one side or malice to the other, gives in a false evidence, or makes an affidavit of that which he knows to be false, or at least does not know to be true, if it be discovered, his reputation will be ruined. A man may tell a lie perhaps in his haste; but he that gives in a false testimony does it with deliberation and solemnity, and it cannot but be a presumptuous sin, and a forfeiture of man's credit. But, though it should not be discovered, he himself shall be ruined; the vengeance he imprecated upon himself, when he took the false oath, will come upon him.

2. The praise of him that is conscientious: He who *hears* (that is, obeys) the command of God, which is to *speakevery man truth with his neighbour*, he who testifies nothing but what he has heard and knows to be true, *speaks constantly* (that is, consistently with himself); he is always in the same story; he *speaks in finem—to the end*; people will give credit to him and hear him out; he speaks unto victory; he carries the cause, which the *false witness* shall lose; he shall speak to eternity. What is true is true eternally. *The lip of truth is established for ever.*

29 A wicked man hardeneth his face: but *as for* the upright, he directeth his way.

Here is, 1. The presumption and impudence of a wicked man: He *hardens his face*—brazeneth it, that he may not blush—steels it, that he may not tremble when he commits the greatest crimes; he bids defiance to the terrors of the law and the checks of his own conscience, the reproofs of the word and the

rebukes of Providence; he will have his way and nothing shall hinder him, Isa. lvii. 17.

2. The caution and circumspection of a good man: *As for the upright, he does not say, What would I do? What have I a mind to? and that I will have; but, What should I do? What does God require of me? What is duty? What is prudence? What is for edification? And so he does not force his way, but directs his way by a safe and certain rule.*

30 *There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the Lord.*

31 The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but *safety is of the Lord.*

The designing busy part of mankind are here directed, in all their counsels and undertakings, to have their eye to God, and to believe, 1. That there can be no success against God, and therefore they must never act in opposition to him, in contempt of his commands, or in contradiction to his counsels. Though they think they have *wisdom*, and *understanding*, and *counsel*, the best politics and politicians, on their side, yet, if it be *against the Lord*, it cannot prosper long; it shall not prevail at last. He that sits in heaven laughs at men's projects against him and his anointed, and will carry his point in spite of them, Ps. ii. 1—6. Those that fight against God are preparing shame and ruin for themselves; whoever *make war with the Lamb*, he will certainly *overcome them*, Rev. xvii. 14. 2. That there can be no success without God, and therefore they must never act but in dependence on him. Be the cause ever so good, and the patrons of it ever so strong, and wise, and faithful, and the means of carrying it on, and gaining the point, ever so probable, still they must acknowledge God and take him along with them. Means indeed are to be used; *the horse must be prepared against the day of battle*, and the foot too; they must be armed and disciplined. In Solomon's time even Israel's kings used horses in war, though they were forbidden to multiply them. But, after all, *safety and salvation are of the Lord*; he can save without armies, but armies cannot save without him; and therefore he must be sought to and trusted in for success, and when success is obtained he must have all the glory. When we are preparing for the day of battle our great concern must be to make God our friend and secure his favour.

CHAP. XXII.

A *GOOD* name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.

Here are two things which are more valuable and which we should covet more than great riches.—1. To be well spoken of: *A name* (that is, a good name, a name for good things with God and good people) is rather

to be chosen than great riches; that is, we should be more careful to do that by which we may get and keep a good name than that by which we may raise and increase a great estate. Great riches bring great cares with them, expose men to danger, and add no real value to a man. A fool and a knave may have great riches, but a good name makes a man easy and safe, supposes a man wise and honest, redounds to the glory of God, and gives a man a greater opportunity of doing good. By great riches we may relieve the bodily wants of others, but by a good name we may recommend religion to them. 2. To be well beloved, to have an interest in the esteem and affections of all about us; this is better than silver and gold. Christ had neither silver nor gold, but he grew in favour with God and man, Luke ii. 52. This should teach us to look with a holy contempt upon the wealth of this world, not to set our hearts upon that, but with all possible care to think of those things that are lovely and of good report, Phil. iv. 8.

2. The rich and poor meet together : the LORD is the maker of them all.

Note, 1. Among the children of men divine Providence has so ordered it that some are rich and others poor, and these are intermixed in societies: *The Lord is the Maker of both*, both the author of their being and the disposer of their lot. The greatest man in the world must acknowledge God to be his Maker, and is under the same obligations to be subject to him that the meanest is; and the poorest has the honour to be the work of God's hands as much as the greatest. *Have they not all one Father?* Mal. ii. 10; Job xxxi. 15. God makes some rich, that they may be charitable to the poor, and others poor, that they may be serviceable to the rich; and they have need one of another, 1 Cor. xii. 21. He makes some poor, to exercise their patience, and contentment, and dependence upon God, and others rich, to exercise their thankfulness and beneficence. Even the poor we have always with us; they shall never cease out of the land, nor the rich neither. 2. Notwithstanding the distance that is in many respects between rich and poor, yet in most things they meet together, especially before the Lord, who is the Maker of them all, and regards not the rich more than the poor, Job xxxiv. 19. Rich and poor meet together at the bar of God's justice, all guilty before God, concluded under sin, and shapen in iniquity, the rich as much as the poor; and they meet at the throne of God's grace; the poor are as welcome there as the rich. There is the same Christ, the same scripture, the same Spirit, the same covenant of promises, for them both. There is the same heaven for poor saints that there is for rich: Lazarus is in the bosom of Abraham. And there is the same hell for rich sinners that there is for poor. All stand upon the same

level before God, as they do also in the grave. *The small and great are there.*

3. A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on; and are punished.

See here, 1. The benefit of wisdom and consideration: *A prudent man*, by the help of his prudence, will foresee an evil, before it comes, and hide himself; he will be aware when he is entering into a temptation and will put on his armour and stand on his guard. When the clouds are gathering for a storm he takes the warning, and flies to the name of the Lord as his strong tower. Noah foresaw the deluge, Joseph the years of famine, and provided accordingly. 2. The mischief of rashness and inconsideration. *The simple*, who believe every word that flatters them, will believe none that warns them, and so they pass on and are punished. They venture upon sin, though they are told what will be in the end thereof; they throw themselves into trouble, notwithstanding the fair warning given them, and they repent their presumption when it is too late. See an instance of both these, Exod. ix. 20, 21. Nothing is so fatal to precious souls as this, they will not take warning.

4 By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, and honour, and life.

See here, 1. Wherein religion does very much consist—in humility and the fear of the Lord; that is, walking humbly with God. We must so reverence God's majesty and authority as to submit with all humility to the commands of his word and the disposals of his providence. We must have such low thoughts of ourselves as to behave humbly towards God and man. Where the fear of God is there will be humility. 2. What is to be gotten by it—riches, and honour, and comfort, and long life, in this world, as far as God sees good, at least spiritual riches and honour in the favour of God, and the promises and privileges of the covenant of grace, and eternal life at last.

5 Thorns and snares are in the way of the froward: he that doth keep his soul shall be far from them.

Note, 1. The way of sin is vexatious and dangerous: *In the way of the froward*, that crooked way, which is contrary to the will and word of God, thorns and snares are found, thorns of grief for past sins and snares entangling them in further sin. He that makes no conscience of what he says and does will find himself hampered by that imaginary liberty, and tormented by his pleasures. Froward people, who are soon angry, expose themselves to trouble at every step. Every thing will fret and vex him that will fret and vex at every thing. 2. The way of duty is safe and easy: *He that keeps his soul*, that watches carefully over his own heart and

ways, is *far from* those thorns and snares, for his way is both plain and pleasant

6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

Here is, 1. A great duty enjoined, particularly to those that are the parents and instructors of children, in order to the propagating of wisdom, that it may not die with them: *Train up children* in that age of vanity, to keep them from the sins and snares of it, in that learning age, to prepare them for what they are designed for. *Catechise* them; initiate them; keep them under discipline. *Train* them as soldiers, who are taught to handle their arms, keep rank, and observe the word of command. *Train* them up, not in the way they would go (the bias of their corrupt hearts would draw them aside), but in the way they should go, the way in which, if you love them, you would have them go. *Train up a child according as he is capable* (so some take it), with a gentle hand, as nurses feed children, little and often, Deut. vi. 7. 2. A good reason for it, taken from the great advantage of this care and pains with children: When they *grow up*, when they *grow old*, it is to be hoped, they *will not depart from it*. Good impressions made upon them then will abide upon them all their days. Ordinarily the vessel retains the savour with which it was first seasoned. Many indeed have departed from the good way in which they were trained up; Solomon himself did so. But early training may be a means of their recovering themselves, as it is supposed Solomon did. At least the parents will have the comfort of having done their duty and used the means

7 The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.

He had said (v. 2), *Rich and poor meet together*; but here he finds, here he shows, that, as to the things of this life, there is a great difference; for, 1. Those that have little will be in subjection to those that have much, because they have dependence upon them, they have received, and expect to receive, support from them: *The rich rule over the poor*, and too often more than becomes them, with pride and rigour, unlike to God, who, though he be great, yet despises not any. It is part of the affliction of the poor that they must expect to be trampled upon, and part of their duty to be serviceable, as far as they can, to those that are kind to them, and study to be grateful. 2. Those that are but going behind find themselves to lie much at themercy of those that are before hand: *The borrower is servant to the lender*, is obliged to him, and must sometimes beg, *Have patience with me*. Therefore it is part of Israel's promised happiness that they should lend and not borrow, Deut. xxviii. 12. And it should be our endeavour to keep as much as may be out of debt. Some sell their liberty to gratify their luxury.

8 He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity: and the rod of his anger shall fail.

Note, 1. Ill-gotten gains will not prosper: *He that sows iniquity*, that does an unjust thing in hopes to get by it, *shall reap vanity*: what he gets will never do him any good nor give him any satisfaction. He will meet with nothing but disappointment. Those that create trouble to others do but prepare trouble for themselves. Men shall reap as they sow. 2. Abused power will not last. If the rod of authority turn into a *rod of anger*, if men rule by passion instead of prudence, and, instead of the public welfare, aim at nothing so much as the gratifying of their own resentments, it *shall fail* and be broken, and their power shall not bear them out in their exorbitances, Isa. x. 24, 25.

9 He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor.

Here is, 1. The description of a charitable man; he has a *bountiful eye*, opposed to the evil eye (ch. xxiii. 6) and the same with the *single eye* (Matt. vi. 22),—an eye that seeks out objects of charity, besides those that offer themselves,—an eye that, upon the sight of one in want and misery, affects the heart with compassion,—an eye that with the alms gives a pleasant look, which makes the alms doubly acceptable. He has also a liberal hand: *He gives of his bread* to those that need—his bread, the bread appointed for his own eating. He will rather abridge himself than see the poor perish for want; yet he does not give all his bread, but of his bread; the poor shall have their share with his own family. 2. The blessedness of such a man. The loins of the poor will bless him, all about him will speak well of him, and God himself will bless him, in answer to many a good prayer put up for him, and he *shall be blessed*.

10 Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease.

See here, 1. What the scorner does. It is implied that he sows discord and makes mischief wherever he comes. Much of the *strife and contention* which disturb the peace of all societies is owing to the *evil interpreter* (as some read it), that construes every thing into the worst, to those that despise and deride every one that comes in their way and take a pride in bantering and abusing all mankind. 2. What is to be done with the scorner that will not be reclaimed: *Cast him out* of your society, as Ishmael, when he mocked Isaac, was thrust out of Abraham's family. Those that would secure the peace must exclude the scorner.

11 He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend.

Here is, 1. The qualification of an accomplished, a complete gentleman, that is fit to be employed in public business. He must be an honest man, a man that *loves pureness of heart* and hates all impurity, not only pure from all fleshly lusts, but from all deceit and dissimulation, from all selfishness and sinister designs, that takes care to approve himself a man of sincerity, is just and fair from principle, and delights in nothing more than in keeping his own conscience clean and void of offence. He must also be able to speak with a good grace, not to daub and flatter, but to deliver his sentiments decently and ingeniously, in language as clean and smooth as his spirit. 2. The preferment such a man stands fair for: *The king*, if he be wise and good, and understand his own and his people's interest, *will be his friend*, will make him of his cabinet-council, as there was one in David's court, and another in Solomon's, that was called the *king's friend*; or, in any business that he has, the king will befriend him. Some understand it of the King of kings. A man in whose spirit there is no guile, and whose speech is always with grace, God will be his friend, Messiah, the Prince, will be his friend. *This honour have all the saints.*

12 The eyes of the LORD preserve knowledge, and he overthroweth the words of the transgressor.

Here is, 1. The special care God takes to preserve knowledge, that is, to keep up religion in the world by keeping up among men the knowledge of himself and of good and evil, notwithstanding the corruption of mankind, and the artifices of Satan to blind men's minds and keep them in ignorance. It is a wonderful instance of the power and goodness of the eyes of the Lord, that is, his watchful providence. He preserves men of knowledge, wise and good men (2 Chron. xvi. 9), particularly faithful witnesses, who speak what they know; God protects such, and prospers their counsels. He does by his grace preserve knowledge in such, secures his own work and interest in them. See Prov. ii. 7, 8. 2. The just vengeance God takes on those that speak and act against knowledge, against their own knowledge and against the interests of knowledge and religion in the world: *He overthroweth the words of the transgressor, and preserves knowledge* in spite of him. He defeats all the counsels and designs of false and treacherous men, and turns them to their own confusion.

13 The slothful man saith, *There is a lion without*, I shall be slain in the streets.

Note, 1. Those that have no love for their business will never want excuses to shake it off. Multitudes are ruined, both for soul and body, by their slothfulness, and yet still they have something or other to say for themselves, so ingenious are men in putting a

cheat upon their own souls. And who, I pray, will be the gainer at last, when the pretences will be all rejected as vain and frivolous? 2. Many frighten themselves from real duties by imaginary difficulties: *The slothful man* has work to do without in the fields, but he fancies there is a lion there, nay, he pretends he dares not go along the streets for fear somebody or other should meet him and kill him. He does not himself think so; he only says so to those that call him up. He talks of a lion without, but considers not his real danger from the devil, that roaring lion, which is in bed with him, and from his own slothfulness, which kills him.

14 The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the LORD shall fall therein.

This is designed to warn all young men against the lusts of uncleanness. As they regard the welfare of their souls, let them take heed of *strange women*, lewd women, whom they ought to be strange to, of the mouth of *strange women*, of the kisses of their lips (ch. vii. 13), of the words of their lips, their charms and enticements. Dread them; have nothing to do with them; for, 1. Those who abandon themselves to that sin give proof that they are abandoned of God: it is a deep pit, which those fall into that are abhorred of the Lord, who leaves them to themselves to enter into that temptation, and takes off the bridle of his restraining grace, to punish them for other sins. Value not thyself upon thy being in favour with such women, when it proclaims thee under the wrath of God. 2. It is seldom that they recover themselves, for it is a deep pit; it will be hard getting out of it, it so besots the mind and debauches the conscience, by pleasing the flesh.

15 Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

We have here two very sad considerations:—1. That corruption is woven into our nature. Sin is foolishness; it is contrary both to our right reason and to our true interest. It is in the heart; there is an inward inclination to sin, to speak and act foolishly. It is in the heart of children; they bring it into the world with them; it is what they were shapen and conceived in. It is not only found there, but it is bound there; it is annexed to the heart (so some); vicious dispositions cleave closely to the soul, are bound to it as the cion to the stock into which it is grafted, which quite alters the property. There is a knot tied between the soul and sin, a true lover's knot; they two become one flesh. It is true of ourselves, it is true of our children, whom we have begotten in our own likeness. O God! thou knowest this foolishness. 2. That correction is necessary to the cure of it. It will not be got out by fair means and gentle methods; there must be strictness and severity,

and that which will cause grief. Children need to be corrected, and kept under discipline, by their parents; and we all need to be corrected by our heavenly Father (Heb. xii. 6, 7), and under the correction we must stroke down folly and kiss the rod.

16 He that oppresseth the poor to increase his *riches*, and he that giveth to the rich, *shall surely come to want*.

This shows what evil courses rich men sometimes take, by which, in the end, they will impoverish themselves and provoke God, notwithstanding their abundance, to bring them to want; they *oppress the poor and give to the rich*. 1. They will not in charity relieve the poor, but withhold from them, that by saving that which is really the best, but which they think the most needless part of their expenses, they may *increase their riches*; but they will make presents to the rich, and give them great entertainments, either in pride and vain-glory, that they may look great, or in policy, that they may receive it again with advantage. Such *shall surely come to want*. Many have been beggared by a foolish generosity, but never any by a prudent charity. Christ bids us invite the poor, Luke xiv. 12, 13. 2. They not only will not relieve the poor, but they *oppress* them, rob the spital, extort from their poor tenants and neighbours, invade the rights of those who have not wherewithal to defend themselves, and then *give bribes to the rich*, to protect and countenance them in it. But it is all in vain; they *shall come to want*. Those that rob God, and so make him their enemy, cannot secure themselves by *giving to the rich*, to make them their friends.

17 Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge. 18 For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee; they shall withal be fitted in thy lips. 19 That thy trust may be in the LORD, I have made known to thee this day, even to thee. 20 Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge, 21 That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?

Solomon here changes his style and manner of speaking. Hitherto, for the most part, since the beginning of *ch. x.*, he had laid down doctrinal truths, and but now and then dropped a word of exhortation, leaving us to make the application as we went along; but here, to the end of *ch. xxiv.*, he directs his speech to his son, his pupil, his reader, his hearer, speaking as to a particular person. Hitherto, for the most part, his sense was comprised in one verse, but here usually it is

drawn out further. See how Wisdom tries variety of methods with us, lest we should be cloyed with any one. To awaken attention and to assist our application the method of direct address is here adopted. Ministers must not think it enough to preach before their hearers, but must preach to them, nor enough to preach to them all in general, but should address themselves to particular persons, as here: *Do thou do so and so*. Here is,

I. An earnest exhortation to get wisdom and grace, by attending to the words of the wise men, both written and preached, the words of the prophets and priests, and particularly to that knowledge which Solomon in this book gives men of good and evil, sin and duty, rewards and punishments. To these words, to this knowledge, the ear must be bowed down in humility and serious attention and the heart applied by faith, and love, and close consideration. The ear will not serve without the heart.

II. Arguments to enforce this exhortation. Consider,

1. The worth and weight of the things themselves which Solomon in this book gives us the knowledge of. They are not trivial things, for amusement and diversion, not jocular proverbs, to be repeated in sport and in order to pass away time. No; they are excellent things, which concern the glory of God, the holiness and happiness of our souls, the welfare of mankind and all communities; they are princely things (so the word is), fit for kings to speak and senates to hear; they are things that concern counsels and knowledge, that is, wise counsels, relating to the most important concerns; things which will not only make us knowing ourselves, but enable us to advise others.

2. The clearness of the discovery of these things and the directing of them to us in particular. "They are made known, publicly known, that all may read,—plainly known, that he that runs may read,—made known this day more fully than ever before, in the day of light and knowledge,—made known in this thy day. But it is only a little while that this light is with thee; perhaps the things that are this day made known to thee, if thou improve not the day of thy visitation, may, before to-morrow, be hidden from thy eyes. They are written, for the greater certainty, and that they may be received and the more safely transmitted pure and entire to posterity. But that which the emphasis is here most laid upon is that they are made known to thee, even to thee, and written to thee, as if it were a letter directed to thee by name. It is suited to thee and to thy case; thou mayest in this glass see thy own face; it is intended for thee, to be a rule to thee, and by it thou must be judged." We cannot say of these things, "They are good things, but they are nothing to us;" no, they are of the greatest concern imaginable to us.

3. The agreeableness of these things to us, in respect both of comfort and credit. (1.) If we hide them in our hearts, they will be very pleasing and yield us an abundant satisfaction (v. 18): "*It is a pleasant thing, and will be thy constant entertainment, if thou keep them within thee; if thou digest them, and be actuated and governed by them, and delivered into them as into a mould.*"

The form of godliness, when that is rested on, is but a force put upon a man, and he does but do penance in that white clothing; those only that submit to the power of godliness, and make heart-work of it, find the pleasure of it, *ch. ii. 10.* (2.) If we make use of them in our discourse, they will be very becoming, and gain us a good reputation. *They shall be fitted in thy lips.* "Speak of these things, and thou speakest like thyself, and as is fit for thee to speak considering thy character; thou wilt also have pleasure in speaking of these things as well as in thinking of them."

4. The advantage designed us by them. The excellent things which God has written to us are not like the commands which the master gives his servant, which are all intended for the benefit of the master, but like those which the master gives his scholar, which are all intended for the benefit of the scholar. These things must be kept by us, for they are written to us, (1.) That we may have a confidence in him and communion with him.

That thy trust may be in the Lord, v. 19. We cannot trust in God except in the way of duty; we are therefore taught our duty, that we may have reason to trust in God. Nay, this is itself one great duty we are to learn, and a duty that is the foundation of all practical religion, to live a life of delight in God and dependence on him. (2.) That we may have a satisfaction in our own judgment:

That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; that thou mayest know what is truth, mayest plainly distinguish between it and falsehood, and mayest know upon what grounds thou receivest and believest the truths of God. Note, [1.] It is a desirable thing to know, not only the words of truth, but the certainty of them, that our faith may be intelligent and rational, and may grow up to a full assurance. [2.] The way to know the certainty of the words of truth is to make conscience of our duty; for, *if any man do his will, he shall know for certain that the doctrine is of God, John vii. 17.* (3.) That we may be useful and serviceable to others for their instruction: "*That thou mayest give a good account of the words of truth to those that send to thee to consult thee as an oracle,*"

or (as the margin reads it) "*to those that send thee, that employ thee as an agent or ambassador in any business.*" Knowledge is given us to do good with, that others may light their candle at our lamp, and that we may in our place serve our generation according to the will of God; and those who make conscience of keeping God's commandments

will be best able to give a reason of the hope that is in them.

22 Rob not the poor, because he is poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate: 23 For the LORD will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them.

After this solemn preface, one would have expected something new and surprising; but no; here is a plain and common, but very needful caution against the barbarous and inhuman practice of oppressing poor people. Observe,

I. The sin itself, and that is *robbing the poor* and making them poorer, taking from those that have but little to lose and so leaving them nothing. It is bad to rob any man, but most absurd to rob the poor, whom we should relieve,—to squeeze those with our power whom we should water with our bounty,—to oppress the afflicted, and so to add affliction to them,—to give judgment against them, and so to patronise those that do rob them, which is as bad as if we robbed them ourselves. Rich men will not suffer themselves to be wronged; poor men cannot help themselves, and therefore we ought to be the more careful not to wrong them.

II. The aggravations of the sin. 1. If their inability, by reason of their poverty, to right themselves, embolden us to rob them, it is so much the worse; this is *robbing the poor because he is poor*; this is not only a base and cowardly thing, to take advantage against a man because he is helpless, but it is unnatural, and proves men worse than beasts. 2. Or, if it be done under colour of law and justice, that is *oppressing the afflicted in the gate*, where they ought to be protected from wrong and to have justice done them against those that oppress them.

III. The danger that attends this sin. He that robs and oppresses the poor does it at his peril; for, 1. The oppressed will find God their powerful patron. *He will plead their cause*, and not suffer them to be run down and trampled upon. If men will not appear for them, God will. 2. The oppressors will find him a just avenger. *He will make reprisals upon them, will spoil the souls of those that spoil them*; he will repay them in spiritual judgments, in curses to their souls. He that robs the poor will be found in the end a murderer of himself.

24 Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: 25 Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.

Here is, 1. A good caution against being intimate with a passionate man. It is the law of friendship that we accommodate ourselves to our friends and be ready to serve them, and therefore we ought to be wise and wary in the choice of a friend, that we come not under that sacred tie to any one whom it

would be our folly to accommodate ourselves to. Though we must be civil to all, yet we must be careful whom we lay in our bosoms and contract a familiarity with. And, among others, a man who is easily provoked, touchy, and apt to resent affronts, who, when he is in a passion, cares not what he says or does, but grows outrageous, such a one is not fit to be made a friend or companion, for he will be ever and anon angry with us and that will be our trouble, and he will expect that we should, like him, be angry with others, and that will be our sin. 2. Good cause given for this caution: *Lest thou learn his way.* Those we go with we are apt to grow like. Our corrupt hearts have so much tinder in them that it is dangerous conversing with those that throw about the sparks of their passion. We shall thereby *get a snare to our souls*, for a disposition to anger is a great snare to any man, and an occasion of much sin. He does not say, "Lest thou have ill language given thee or get a broken head," but, which is much worse, "Lest thou imitate him, to humour him, and so contract an ill habit."

26 Be not thou *one* of them that strike hands, or of them that are sureties for debts. 27 If thou hast nothing to pay, why should he take away thy bed from under thee?

We have here, as often before, a caution against suretiship, as a thing both imprudent and unjust. 1. We must not associate ourselves, nor contract an intimacy, with men of broken fortunes, and reputations, who need and will urge their friends to be bound for them, that they may cheat their neighbours to feed their lusts, and by keeping up a little longer may do the more damage at last to those that give them credit. Have nothing to do with such; be not thou among them. 2. We must not cheat people of their money, by *striking hands* ourselves, or *becoming surety for others*, when we have not to pay. If a man by the divine providence is disabled to pay his debts, he ought to be pitied and helped; but he that takes up money or goods himself, or is bound for another, when he knows that he has not wherewithal to pay, or that what he has is so settled that the creditors cannot come at it, does in effect pick his neighbour's pocket, and though, in all cases, compassion is to be used, yet he may thank himself if the law have its course and his *bed be taken from under him*, which might not be taken for a pledge to secure a debt, Exod. xxii. 26, 27. For, if a man appeared to be so poor that he had nothing else to give for security, he ought to be relieved, and it was honestly done to own it; but, for the recovery of a debt, it seems it might be taken by the *summum jus*—the strict operation of law. 3. We must not ruin our own estates and families. Every man ought to be just to himself and to his wife and children

those are not so who live above what they have, who by the mismanagement of their own affairs, or by encumbering themselves with the debts of others, waste what they have and bring themselves to poverty. We may *take joyfully the spoiling of our goods*; it be for the testimony of a good conscience but, if it be for our own rashness and folly we cannot but take it heavily.

28 Remove not the ancient land mark which thy fathers have set.

1. We are here taught not to invade another man's right, though we can find way of doing it ever so secretly and plausibly clandestinely and by fraud, without any open force. Let not property in general be entrenched upon, by robbing men of their liberties and privileges, or of any just ways of maintaining them. Let not the property of particular persons be encroached upon. The land-marks, or meer-stones, are standing witnesses to every man's right; let not those be removed quite away, for thence come wars, and fightings, and endless disputes; let them not be removed so as to take from thy neighbour's lot to thy own, for that is downright robbing him and entailing the fraud upon posterity. 2. We may infer hence that a deference is to be paid, in all civil matters to usages that have prevailed time out of mind and the settled constitutions of government, in which it becomes us to acquiesce, lest an attempt to change it, under pretence of changing it for the better, prove of dangerous consequence.

29 Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.

Here is, 1. A plain intimation what a hard thing it is to find a truly ingenious industrious man: "*Seest thou a man diligent in his business?*" Thou wilt not see many such, so epidemical are dulness and slothfulness." He is here commended who lays out himself to get business, though it be but in a very low and narrow sphere, and is not easy when he is out of business, who loves business, is quick and active in it, and goes through it, not only with constancy and resolution, but with dexterity and expedition, a man of despatch who knows how to bring a deal of business into a little compass. 2. A moral prognostication of the preferment of such a man, though now he *stands before mean men*, if employed by them and attends upon them yet he will rise, and is likely enough to *stand before kings*, as an ambassador to foreign kings or prime-minister of state to his own. *Seest thou a man diligent in the business of religion?* He is likely to excel in virtue, and shall stand before the King of kings.

CHAP. XXIII.

WHEN thou sittest to eat with thy ruler, consider diligently what is before thee: 2 And put a knife to

thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite. 3 Be not desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful meat.

The sin we are here warned against is luxury and sensuality, and the indulgence of the appetite in eating and drinking, a sin that most easily besets us. 1. We are here told when we enter into temptation, and are in most danger of falling into this sin: "*When thou sittest to eat with a ruler thou hast greatly before thee, varieties and dainties, such a table spread as thou hast seldom seen; thou art ready to think, as Haman did, of nothing but the honour hereby done thee* (Esth. v. 12), and the opportunity thou hast of pleasing thy palate, and forgettest that there is a snare laid for thee." Perhaps the temptation may be stronger, and more dangerous, to one that is not used to such entertainments, than to one that always sits down to a good table. 2. We are here directed to double our guard at such a time. We must, (1.) Apprehend ourselves to be in danger: *Consider diligently what is before thee*, what meat and drink are before thee, that thou mayest choose that which is safest for thee and which thou art least likely to eat and drink of to excess. Consider what company is before thee, the ruler himself, who, if he be wise and good, will take it as an affront for any of his guests to disorder themselves at his table." And, if when we sit to eat with a ruler, much more when we sit to eat with the ruler of rulers at the Lord's table, must we consider diligently what is before us, that we may not in any respect eat and drink unworthily, unbecomingly, lest that table become a snare. (2.) We must alarm ourselves to temperance and moderation: "*Put a knife to thy throat*, that is, restrain thyself, as it were with a sword hanging over thy head, from all excess. Let these words, *Take heed lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and that day come upon you unawares*—or those, *For all these things, God shall bring thee into judgment*—or those, *Drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God*, be a knife to the throat." The Latins call luxury *gula*—the throat. "Take up arms against that sin. Rather be so abstemious that thy craving appetite will begin to think thy throat cut than indulge thyself in voluptuousness." We must never feed ourselves without fear (Jude 2), but we must in a special manner fear when temptation is before us. (3.) We must reason ourselves into a holy contempt of the gratifications of sense: "*If thou be a man given to appetite*, thou must, by a present resolution, and an application of the terrors of the Lord, restrain thyself. When thou art in danger of falling into any excess put a knife to thy throat: that may serve for once. But that is not enough: lay the axe to the root; mortify that appetite which has such power over thee: *Be not desirous of dain-*

ties." Note, We ought to observe what is our own iniquity, and, if we find ourselves addicted to flesh-pleasing, we must not only stand upon our guard against temptations from without, but subdue the corruption within. Nature is desirous of food, and we are taught to pray for it, but it is lust that is desirous of dainties, and we cannot in faith pray for them, for frequently they are not food convenient for mind, body, or estate. They are deceitful meat, and therefore David, instead of praying for them, prays against them, Ps. cxli. 4. They are pleasant to the palate, but perhaps rise in the stomach, turn sour there, upbraid a man, and make him sick. They do not yield men the satisfaction they promised themselves from them; for those that are given to appetite, when they have that which is very dainty, are not pleased; they are soon weary of it; they must have something else more dainty. The more a luxurious appetite is humoured and indulged the more humoursome and troublesome it grows, and the more hard to please; dainties will surfeit, but never satisfy. But especially they are upon this account deceitful meat, that, while they please the body, they prejudice the soul, they overcharge the heart, and unfit it for the service of God, nay, they take away the heart, and alienate the mind from spiritual delights, and spoil its relish of them. Why then should we covet that which will certainly cheat us?

4 Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. 5 Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.

As some are given to appetite (v. 2) so others to covetousness, and those Solomon here takes to task. Men cheat themselves as much by setting their hearts on money (though it seems most substantial) as by setting them on dainties. Observe,

1. How he dissuades the covetous man from toiling and tormenting himself (v. 4). "Do not aim to be rich, to raise an estate and to make what thou hast in abundance more than it is." We must endeavour to live comfortably, and provide for our children and families, according as our rank and condition are, but we must not seek great things. Be not of those that will be rich, that desire it as their chief good and design it as their highest end, 1 Tim. vi. 9. Covetous men think it is their wisdom, imagining that if they be rich to such a degree they shall be completely happy. Cease from that wisdom, for it is a mistake; a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses, Luke xii. 15. 1. Those that aim at great things fill their hands with business more than they can grasp, so that their life is both a perfect drudgery and a perpetual

hurry; but be not thou such a fool; *labour not to be rich*. What thou hast, or doest, be master of it, and not a slave to it as those that *rise up early, sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness*, and all to be rich. Moderate labour, that we may have to give, is our wisdom and duty, Eph. iv. 28. Immoderate labour, that we may have to hoard, is our sin and folly. 2. They fill their heads with projects more than they understand, so that their life is a constant toss of care and fear; but do not thou thus vex thyself: *Cease from thy own wisdom*; go on quietly in the way of thy business, not contriving new ways and setting thy wits to work to find out new inventions. Acquiesce in God's wisdom, and cease from thy own, ch. iii. 5, 6.

II. How he dissuades the covetous man from cheating and deceiving himself by an inordinate love and pursuit of that which is vanity and vexation of spirit; for,

1. It is not substantial and satisfying: "*Wilt thou be such a fool as to set thy eyes, to cause thy eyes to fly with eagerness and violence, upon that which is not?*" Note, (1.) The things of this world are things that are not. They have a real existence in nature and are the real gifts of Providence, but in the kingdom of grace they are things that are not; they are not a happiness and portion for a soul, are not what they promise to be nor what we expect them to be; they are a show, a shadow, a sham upon the soul that trusts to them. They are not, for in a little while they will not be, they will not be ours; they perish in the using; the fashion of them passes away. (2.) It is therefore folly for us to set our eyes upon them, to admire them as the best things, to appropriate them to ourselves as our good things, and to aim at them as our mark at which all our actions are levelled, to fly upon them as the eagle upon her prey. "*Wilt thou do a thing so absurd in itself? What thou, a reasonable creature, wilt thou dote upon shadows? The eyes are put for rational and intellectual powers; wilt thou throw those away upon such undeserving objects? To set the hands and feet upon the world is well enough, but not the eyes, the eyes of the mind; those were made to contemplate better things. Wilt thou, my son, that professest religion, put such an affront upon God (towards whom thy eyes should ever be) and such an abuse upon thy soul?*"

2. It is not durable and abiding. Riches are very uncertain things; certainly they are so: *They make themselves wings, and fly away*. The more we cause our eyes to fly upon them the more likely they are to fly away from us. (1.) Riches will leave us. Those that hold them ever so fast cannot hold them long; either they must be taken from us or we must be taken from them. The goods are said to flow away as a stream (Job xx. 28), here to flee away as a bird. (2.) Perhaps they may leave us suddenly, when we have taken a great deal of pains for them and be-

gin to take a great deal of pride and pleasure in them. The covetous man sits latching upon his wealth, and brooding over it, till it is fledged, as the young ones under the hen and then it is gone. Or, as if a man should be fond of a flight of wild-fowl that light his field, and call them his own because they are upon his ground, whereas, if he offer come near them, they take wing immediately and are gone to another man's field. The wings they fly away upon are of their own making. They have in themselves the principles of their own corruption, their own moth and rust. They are wasting in their own nature, and like a handful of dust which, if it be grasped, slips through the fingers. Snow will last awhile, and look pretty, if it be left to lie on the ground when it fell, but, if gathered up and laid in the bosom, it is dissolved and gone immediately. (4.) They go irresistibly and irrecoverably, *an eagle towards heaven*, that flies strong (there is no stopping her), and flies out of sight and out of call (there is no bringing her back); thus do riches leave men, and leave them in grief and vexation if they are not their hearts upon them.

6 Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats: 7 For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee. 8 The morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up, and lose thy sweet words.

Those that are voluptuous and given to appetite (v. 2) are glad to be where there is good cheer stirring, and those that are covetous and saving, that they may spare home, will be glad to get a dinner at another man's table; and therefore both are here advised not to be forward to accept every man's invitation, but especially not to thrust themselves in uninvited. Observe 1. There are those that pretend to bid their friends welcome that are not hearty and sincere in it. They have a fair tongue, and know what they should say: *Eat and drink, saith he*, because it is expected that the matter of the feast should so compliment his guests; but they have an evil eye, and grudge their guests every bit they eat, especially if they eat freely. They would seem to be liberal in making the entertainment, and would have the credit of it, but they have a great love to their money, and so little love to their friends, that they cannot have the comfort of it, nor any enjoyment of themselves or their friends. The miser's feast is his penance. If a man be so very selfish, and sordid, and mean that he cannot find in his heart to bid his friends welcome to what he has, he ought not to add to the guilt of dissimulation by inviting them, but let him own himself to be what he is that *the vi-*

person may not be called liberal nor the church comfortable, Isa. xxxii. 5. 2. One can have no comfort in accepting the entertainments that are given grudgingly: "*But not thou the bread of such a man; let him keep it to himself. Do not sponge upon those that are bountiful, nor make thyself burdensome to any; but especially scorn to be beholden to those that are paltry and not sincere. Better have dinner of herbs, and true welcome, than twenty meats without it. Therefore,*" (1.) Judge of the man as his mind is. Thou likest to pay thy respect to him as a friend, but thou takest him to be, because he compliments thee, but *as he thinks in his heart so is he, not as he speaks with his tongue.*" We are that really, both to God and man, which are inwardly; and neither religion nor friendship is worth any thing further than as it is sincere. (2.) "Judge of the meat as the digestion is and as it agrees with thee. He despiseth thee eat freely, but, first or last, he will discover his sordid covetous humour, and *as he thinks in his heart so he will look, and will not give thee to understand that thou art not welcome, and then the morsel thou hast eaten thou shalt vomit up; the very thought of that will make thee even to vomit the meat thou hast eaten, and eat the words thou hast spoken in returning his compliments and giving him thanks for his civilities. Thou shalt lose thy sweet words, which he has given thee and thou hast given him.*"

9 Speak not in the ears of a fool: he will despise the wisdom of thy words.

We are here directed not to cast pearls before swine (Matt. vii. 6) and not to expose things sacred to the contempt and ridicule of profane scoffers. It is our duty to take fit occasions to speak of divine things; but, 1. There are some that will make a jest of every thing, though it be ever so prudently and pertinently spoken, that will not only despise a wise man's words, but despise even the wisdom of them, that in them which is most improbable for their own edification; they will particularly reproach that, as if it had an ill design upon them, which they must guard against. 2. Those that do so forfeit the benefit of good advice and instruction, and a wise man is not only allowed, but advised, not to speak in the ears of such fools; let them be foolish still, and let not precious breath be thrown away upon them. What a wise man says in his wisdom will not be heard, let him hold his peace, and try whether the wisdom of that will be regarded.

10 Remove not the old landmark: and enter not into the fields of the fatherless: 11 For their redeemer is mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee

Note, 1. The fatherless are taken under God's special protection; with him they not

only find mercy shown to them (Hos. xiv. 3) but justice done for them. He is their Redeemer, their Goël, their near kinsman, that will take their part and stand up for them with jealousy, as taking himself affronted in the injuries done to them. As their Redeemer he will plead their cause against those that do them any injury, and, one way or other, will not only defend their right, and recover it for them, but avenge the wrongs done to them. And he is mighty, almighty; his omnipotence is engaged and employed for their protection, and their proudest and most powerful oppressors will not only find themselves an unequal match for this, but will find that it is at their peril to contend with it. 2. Every man therefore must be careful not to injure them in any thing, or to invade their rights, either by a clandestine removal of the old land-marks or by a forcible entry into their fields. Being fatherless, they have none to redress their wrongs, and, being in their childhood, they do not so much as apprehend the wrong that is done them. Sense of honour, and much more the fear of God, would restrain men from offering any injury to children, especially fatherless children.

12 Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge. 13 Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. 14 Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell. 15 My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine. 16 Yea, my reins shall rejoice, when thy lips speak right things.

Here is, 1. A parent instructing his child. He is here brought in persuading him to give his mind to his book, and especially to the scriptures and his catechism, to attend to the words of knowledge, by which he might come to know his duty, and danger, and interest, and not to think it enough to give them the hearing, but to apply his heart to them, to delight in them, and bow his will to the authority of them. The heart is then applied to the instruction when the instruction is applied to the heart. 2. A parent correcting his child. A tender parent can scarcely find in his heart to do this; it goes much against the grain. But he finds it is necessary; it is his duty, and therefore he dares not withhold correction when there is occasion for it (*spare the rod and spoil the child*); he beats him with the rod, gives him a gentle correction, the stripes of the sons of men, not such as we give to beasts. Beat him with the rod and he shall not die. The rod will not kill him; nay, it will prevent his killing himself by those vicious courses which the rod will be necessary to restrain him from. For the

present it is *not joyous, but grievous*, both to the parent and to the child; but when it is given with wisdom, designed for good, accompanied with prayer, and blessed of God, it may prove a happy means of preventing his utter destruction and *delivering his soul from hell*. Our great care must be about our children's souls; we must not see them in danger of hell without using all possible means, with the utmost care and concern, to snatch them as brands out of everlasting burnings. Let the body smart, so that the spirit be *saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*. 3. A parent encouraging his child, telling him, (1.)

What was all he expected, nothing but what would be for his own good, that *his heart be wise* and that *his lips speak right things*, that he be under the government of good principles, and that by those principles he particularly maintain a good government of his tongue. It is to be hoped that those will do *right things* when they grow up who learn to *speak right things* when they are young, and dare not speak any bad words. (2.) What a comfort it would be to him if herein he answered his expectation: "*If thy heart bewise, my heart shall rejoice, shall rejoice in thee, even mine*, who have taken so much care and pains about thee, my heart, that has many a time ached for thee, for which thou shouldst study thus to make a grateful requital." Note, The wisdom of children will be the joy of their parents and teachers, who have no greater joy than to see them *walk in the truth*, 3 John 4. "Children, if you be wise and good, devout and conscientious, God will be pleased with you, and that will be our joy: we shall think our labour in instructing you well bestowed; it will be a comfortable answer for the many prayers we have put up for you; we shall be eased of a great deal of care, shall not need to be so strict and severe in watching over you, and shall consequently be the easier both to you and to ourselves. We shall rejoice in hope that you will be a credit and comfort to us, if we should live to be old, that you will bear up the name of Christ in your generation, that you will live comfortably in this world and happily in another."

17 Let not thine heart envy sinners: but *be thou* in the fear of the LORD all the day long. 18 For surely there is an end; and thine expectation shall not be cut off.

Here is, 1. A necessary caution against entertaining any favourable thoughts of prospering profaneness: "*Let not thy heart envy sinners*; do not grudge them either the liberty they take to sin or the success they have in sin; it will cost them dearly and they are to be pitied rather than envied. Their prosperity is their portion (Ps. xvii. 14), nay, it is their poison," Prov. i. 32. We must not harbour in our hearts any secret discontent at the providence of God, though it seem to smile upon them, nor wish ourselves in

their condition. "*Let not thy heart imitate sinners*" (so some read it); do not as they do walk not in the way with them; use not their methods they take to enrich themselves, though they thrive by them. 2. An excellent direction to maintain high thoughts of God in our minds at all times: *Be thou in the fear of the Lord every day and all the day long*. We must be in the fear of the Lord as in our employment, exercising ourselves in the adorings of God, in subjection to his precepts, submission to his providences, and a constant care to please him; we must be in it as in our element, taking a pleasure in contemplating God's glory and complying with his will. We must be *devoted to his fear* (Ps. cxix. 38) and governed by it as our commanding principle in all we say and do. All the days of our life we must constantly keep up an awe of God upon our spirits, must pay a deference to his authority, and have a dread of his wrath. We must be always so in his fear as never to be out of it. 3. A good reason for both of these (v. 18): *Surely there is an end, an end and expectation*, as Jer. xxix. 11. *There will be an end of the prosperity of the wicked*, therefore do not envy them (Ps. lxxiii. 17); there will be an end of thy afflictions, therefore be not weary of them, an end of thy services, thy work and warfare will be accomplished, *perfect love will shortly cast out fear*, and thy expectation of the reward not only will be *not cut off*, disappointed, but it will be infinitely overdone. The consideration of the end will help to reconcile us to all the difficulties and discouragements of the way.

19 Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way. 20 Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: 21 For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags. 22 Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old. 23 Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding. 24 The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him. 25 Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice. 26 My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways. 27 For whore is a deep ditch; and a strange woman is a narrow pit. 28 She lieth in wait as for a prey, and increaseth the transgressors among men.

Here is good advice for parents to give to their children; words are put into their

ouths, that they may train them up in the way they should go. Here we have,

I. An earnest call to young people to attend to the advice of their godly parents, not only to this that is here given, but to all other profitable instructions: "*Hear, my son, and be wise, v. 19.* This will be an evidence that thou art wise and a means to make thee wiser." Wisdom, as faith, comes by hearing. And again (v. 22): "*Hearken unto thy father who begot thee, and who therefore has an authority over thee and an affection for thee, and, thou mayest be sure, can have no other design than thy own good.*" We ought to *revere* to the fathers of our flesh, who begot us, and were the instruments of our being; much more ought we to obey and be in subjection to the *Father of our spirits*, who made us and is the author of our being. And once the mother also, from a sense of duty to God and from love to her child, gives him good instructions, let him not despise her, nor her advice, *when she is old.* When the mother was grown old we may suppose the children to be grown up; but let them not think themselves past being taught, even by her, but rather respect her the more for the multitude of her years and the wisdom which they teach. Scornful and insolent young men will make a jest, it may be, of the good advice of an aged mother, and think themselves not concerned to heed what an old woman says; but such will have a great deal to answer for another day, not only as having neglected and grieved a good mother, *ch. xxx. 17.*

II. An argument to enforce this call, taken from the great comfort which this will be to their parents, *v. 24, 25.* Note, 1. It is the duty of children to study how they may adden the hearts of their good parents, and do it yet more and more, so that they may *greatly rejoice* in them, even when the *evil days come and the years of which they say they have no pleasure in them* but this, to see their children do well, as *Barzillai* to see *Chimham* referred. 2. Children will be a joy to their parents if they be *righteous and wise.* Righteousness is true wisdom; those who do good do well for themselves. Those are completely such as they should be who are not only *wise* (that is, knowing and learned), but *righteous* (that is, honest and good), and not only *righteous* (that is, conscientious and well-meaning), but *wise* (that is, prudent and discreet) in the management of themselves. If such the children be, especially all the children, the father and mother will be glad, and think nothing too much that they have done, do, for them; they will please themselves in them, and give God thanks for them; particularly she that bore them with pain, and reared them with pains, will rejoice in them, and reckon herself well requited, and the more so more than forgotten, because a wise and good man is the product of it, who is a blessing to the world he was born into.

III. Some general precepts of wisdom and virtue.

1. *Guide thy heart in the way, v. 19.* It is the heart that must be taken care of and directed aright; the motions and affections of the soul must be towards right objects and under a steady guidance. If the heart be guided in the way, the steps will be guided and the conversation well ordered.

2. *Buy the truth and sell it not, v. 23.* Truth is that by which the heart must be guided and governed, for without truth there is no goodness; no regular practices without right principles. It is by the power of truth, known and believed, that we must be kept back from sin and constrained to duty. The understanding must be well-informed with wisdom and instruction, and therefore, (1.) We must buy it, that is, be willing to part with any thing for it. He does not say at what rate we must buy it, because we cannot buy it too dear, but must have it at any rate; whatever it costs us, we shall not repent the bargain. When we are at expense for the means of knowledge, and resolved not to starve so good a cause, then we *buy the truth.* Riches should be employed for the getting of knowledge, rather than knowledge for the getting of riches. When we are at pains in searching after truth, that we may come to the knowledge of it and may distinguish between it and error, then we buy it. *Dii laboribus omnia vendunt—Heaven concedes every thing to the laborious.* When we choose rather to suffer loss in our temporal interest than to deny or neglect the truth then we buy it; and it is a pearl of such great price that we must be willing to part with all to purchase it, must make shipwreck of estate, trade, preferment, rather than of faith and a good conscience. (2.) We must not sell it. Do not part with it for pleasures, honours, riches, any thing in this world. Do not neglect the study of it, nor throw off the profession of it, nor revolt from under the dominion of it, for the getting or saving of any secular interest whatsoever. *Hold fast the form of sound words,* and never let it go upon any terms.

3. *Give me thy heart, v. 26.* God, in this exhortation, speaks to us as unto children: "*Son, Daughter, Give me thy heart.*" The heart is that which the great God requires and calls for from every one of us; whatever we give, if we do not give him our hearts, it will not be accepted. We must set our love upon him. Our thoughts must converse much with him, and on him, as our highest end. *The intents of our hearts* must be fastened. We must make it our own act and deed to devote ourselves to the Lord, and we must be free and cheerful in it. We must not think to divide the heart between God and the world; he will have all or none. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.* To this call we must readily answer, "*My father, take my heart,* such as it is, and

make it such as it should be ; take possession of it, and set up thy throne in it."

4. *Let thy eyes observe my ways* ; have an eye to the rule of God's word, the conduct of his providence, and the good examples of his people. Our eyes must observe these, as he that writes observes his copy, that we may keep in the right paths and may proceed and persevere in them.

IV. Some particular cautions against those sins which are, of all sins, the most destructive to the seeds of wisdom and grace in the soul, which impoverish and ruin it. 1. Gluttony and drunkenness, v. 20, 21. The world is full of examples of this sin and temptations to it, which all young people are concerned to stand upon their guard against and keep at a distance from. *Be not a wine-bibber* ; we are allowed to drink a little wine (1 Tim. v. 23), but not much, not to make a trade of it, never to drink to excess. *Be not a riotous eater of flesh*, as the Israelites were, who lusted exceedingly after it, saying, *Who will give us flesh to eat ?* Whereas Paul, though he is free to eat flesh, yet resolves that *he will eat no flesh while the world stands rather than make his brother to offend* ; so indifferent is he to it, 1 Cor. viii. 13. *Be not an excessive eater of flesh*. Intemperance must be avoided in meat as well as drink. *Be not a luxurious eater of flesh*, not pleased with any thing but what is very nice and delicate, savoury dishes, and forced meat. Some take not only a pleasure, but a pride, in being curious about their diet, and, as they call it, eating well ; as if that were the ornament of a gentleman, which is really the shame of a Christian, making a God of the belly. "*Be not a wine-bibber, and be not a riotous eater* ; and therefore, *be not among wine-bibbers nor among riotous eaters* ; do not give them countenance, lest thou learn their ways and insensibly fall into those sins, or at least lose the dread and detestation of them. They covet to have thee among them ; for those that are debauched themselves are very desirous to debauch others ; therefore do not gratify them, lest thou endanger thyself." He fetches an argument against this sin from the expensiveness of it and its tendency to impoverish men : and if men will not be deterred from it by the ruin it brings on their secular interests, which lie nearest their hearts, no marvel that they are not frightened from it by what they are told out of the word of God of the mischief it does them in their spiritual and eternal concerns. *The drunkard and the glutton* hate to be reformed, though they are told they shall come to poverty, nay, though they are told they shall come to hell. Drunkenness is the cause of drowsiness ; it stupifies men, and makes them inattentive to business, and then all goes to wreck and ruin : thus men that have lived creditably come to be clothed with rags. 2. Whoredom. This is another sin which takes away the heart that should be given to God, Hos. iv. 11. He

shows the danger which attends that sin, 27, 28, (1.) It is a sin from which few recover themselves when once they are entangled in it. It is like a deep ditch and narrow pit, which it is almost impossible to get out of ; and therefore it is wisdom to keep far enough from the brink of it. Take heed of making any approaches towards this sin, because it is so hard to make a retreat from it, conscience, which should head the retreat, being debauched by it, and divine grace forfeited. (2.) It is a sin which bewitches men to their ruin : *The adulteress lies in wait as a robber*, pretending friendship, but designing the greatest mischief, to rob them of all that have that is valuable, to strip them both of their armour and of their ornaments. Even those who, being virtuously educated, endeavour to shun the adulteress, she will be in wait for, that she may assault them when they are off their guard and she has them at an advantage. Let none therefore be at any time secure. (3.) It is a sin that contributes more than any other to the spreading of vice and immorality in a kingdom : It increases the transgressors among men. One adulteress may be the ruin of many a precious soul and may help to debauch a whole town. It increases the treacherous or perfidious ones ; it not only occasions husbands to be false to their wives and servants to their masters, but many that have professed religion to throw off their profession and break their covenants with God. Houses of uncleanness are therefore such pest-houses as ought to be suppressed by those whose office it is to take care of the public welfare.

29 Who hath woe ? who hath sorrow ? who hath contentions ? who hath babbling ? who hath woundings without cause ? who hath redness of eyes ? 30 They that tarry long at the wine ; they that go to seek mixture of wine. 31 Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. 32 At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. 33 Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. 34 Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. 35 They have stricken me, *shalt thou say, and I was not sick ; they have beaten me, and I felt it not ; when shall I awake ? I will seek it yet again.*

Solomon here gives fair warning against the sin of drunkenness ; to confirm what he had said, v. 20.

I. He cautions all people to keep out of

he way of temptations to this sin (*v* 31): *look not thou upon the wine when it is red.* Red wine was in Canaan looked upon as the best wine; it is therefore called *the blood of the grape*. Critics judge of wine, among other indications, by the colour of it; some wine, they say, looks charmingly, looks so well that even says, "Come and drink me;" *it shows itself aright, goes down very smoothly,* or perhaps the roughness of it is grateful. It is said of generous strong-bodied wine that it even *causes the lips of those that are sleep to speak*, Cant. vii. 9. But *look not thou upon it*. 1. "Be not ruled by sense, but by reason and religion. Covet not that which pleases the eye, in hopes that it will please the taste; but let thy serious thoughts correct the errors of thy senses and convince thee that that which seems delightful is really hurtful, and resolve against it accordingly. Let not the heart walk after the eye, for it is a deceitful guide." 2. "Be not too wild with the charms of this or any other sin; look not, lest thou lust, lest thou take the forbidden fruit." Note, Those that would be kept from any sin must keep themselves on all the occasions and beginnings of it, and be afraid of coming within the reach of its allurements, lest they be overcome by them.

II. He shows the many pernicious consequences of the sin of drunkenness, for the enforcement of this caution. Take heed of the bait, for fear of the hook: *At the last it bites, v* 32. All sin will be bitterness in the end, and this sin particularly. *It bites like a serpent*, when the drunkard is made sick by its surfeit, thrown by it into a drowsy or some fatal disease, beggared and ruined in his estate, especially when his conscience is weakened and he cannot reflect upon it without horror and indignation at himself, but worst of all, at last, when the cup of drunkenness shall be turned into a cup of trembling, the cup of the Lord's wrath, the dregs which he must be for ever drinking, and all not have a drop of water to cool his flaming tongue. To take off the force of the temptation that there is in the pleasure of the sin, foresee the punishment of it, and that it will at last end in if repentance present not. *In its latter end it bites* (so the word is); think therefore what will be *in the end thereof*. But the inspired writer chooses to specify those pernicious consequences of this sin which are present and sensible.

1. It embroils men in quarrels, makes them quarrel with others, and say and do that which gives others occasion to quarrel with them, *v* 29. He asks, *Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow?* Who has not, in this world? Many have woe and sorrow, and cannot help it; but drunkards wilfully create woe and sorrow to themselves. Those that have contentions have *woe and sorrow*; and drunkards are the fools whose *lips enter into contention*. When the wit is in the wit is out and the passions are

up; and thence come drunken scuffles, and drunken frays, and drunken disputes over the cups; many a vexatious ruining law-suit has begun thus. There is *babbling*, quarrels in word and the exchanging of scurrilous language; yet it rests not there: you shall have *wounds without cause*, for causes are things which drunkards are in no capacity to judge of, and therefore they deal blows about without the least consideration why or wherefore, and must expect to be in like manner treated themselves. The wounds which men receive in defence of their country and its just rights are their honour; but *wounds without cause*, received in the service of their lusts, are marks of their infamy. Nay, drunkards wound themselves in a tender part, for they have *redness of eyes*, symptoms of an inward inflammation; their sight is weakened by it, and their looks are deformed. This comes, (1.) Of drinking long, *tarrying long at the wine*, and spending that time in drunken company which should be spent in useful business, or in sleep, which should fit for business, *v* 30. O the precious hours which thousands throw away thus, every one of which will be brought into the account at the great day! (2.) Of drinking that which is strong and intoxicating. *They go up and down to seek wine that will please them*: their great enquiry is, "Where is the best liquor?" *They seek mixed wine*, which is most palatable, but most heady, so willingly do they sacrifice their reason to please their palate!

2. It makes men impure and insolent, *v* 33. (1.) The eyes grow unruly and *behold strange women to lust after them*, and so let in adultery into the heart. *Est Venus in vinis*—*Wine is oil to the fire of lust*. *Thy eyes shall behold strange things* (so some read it): when men are drunk the house turns round with them, and every thing looks strange to them, so that then they cannot trust their own eyes. (2.) The tongue also grows unruly and talks extravagantly; by it the heart utters *perverse things*, things contrary to reason, religion, and common civility, which they would be ashamed to speak if they were sober. What ridiculous incoherent nonsense men will talk when they are drunk who at another time will speak admirably well and to the purpose!

3. It stupifies and besots men, *v* 34. When men are drunk they know not where they are nor what they say and do. (1.) Their heads are giddy, and when they lie down to sleep they are as if they were tossed by the rolling waves of the sea, or upon the top of a mast; hence they complain that their heads swim; their sleep is commonly unquiet and not refreshing, and their dreams are tumultuous. (2.) Their judgments are clouded, and they have no more steadiness and consistency than he that sleeps upon the top of a mast; they *drink and forget the law* (*ch* xxxi. 5): *they err through wine* (*Isa* xxviii. 7), and think as extravagantly as they talk. (3.)

They are heedless and fearless of danger, and senseless of the rebukes they are under either from God or man. They are in imminent danger of death, of damnation, lie as much exposed as if they slept *upon the top of a mast*, and yet are secure and sleep on. They fear no peril when the terrors of the Lord are laid before them; nay, they feel no pain when the judgments of God are actually upon them; they cry not when he binds them. Set a drunkard in the stocks, and he is not sensible of the punishment. "*They have stricken me, and I was not sick; I felt it not: it made no impression at all upon me.*" Drunkenness turns men into stocks and stones; they are scarcely to be reckoned animals; they are dead while they live.

4. Worst of all, the heart is hardened in the sin, and the sinner, notwithstanding all these present mischiefs that attend it, obstinately persists in it, and hates to be reformed: *When shall I awake?* Much ado he has to shake off the chains of his drunken sleep; he can hardly get clear of the fumes of the wine, though he strives with them, that (being thirsty in the morning) he may return to it again. So perfectly lost is he to all sense of virtue and honour, and so wretchedly is his conscience seared, that he is not ashamed to say, *I will seek it yet again. There is no hope; no, they have loved drunkards, and after them they will go*, Jer. ii. 25. This is *adding drunkenness to thirst, and following strong drink*; those that do so may read their doom Deut. xxix. 19, 20, their *woe* Isa. v. 11, and, if this be the end of the sin, with good reason were we directed to stop at the beginning of it: *Look not upon the wine when it is red.*

CHAP. XXIV.

BE not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them. 2 For their heart studieth destruction, and their lips talk of mischief.

Here, 1. The caution given is much the same with that which we had before (ch. xxiii. 17), not to envy sinners, not to think them happy, nor to wish ourselves in their condition, though they prosper ever so much in this world, and are ever so merry and ever so secure. "Let not such a thought ever come into thy mind, O that I could shake off the restraints of religion and conscience, and take as great a liberty to indulge the sensual appetite, as I see such and such do! No; *desire not to be with them*, to do as they do and fare as they fare, and to *cast in thy lot among them.*" 2. Here is another reason given for this caution: "*Be not envious against them*, not only because their end will be bad, but because their way is so, v. 2. Do not think with them, *for their heart studies destruction* to others, but it will prove destruction to themselves. Do not speak like them, *for their lips talk of their mischief.* All they say

has an ill tendency, to dishonour God, to proach religion, or wrong their neighbour; but it will be mischief to themselves at last. It is therefore thy wisdom to have nothing to do with them. Nor hast thou any reason to look upon them with envy, but with pity rather, or a just indignation at their wicked practices."

3 Through wisdom is a house builded; and by understanding it is established: 4 And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches. 5 A wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength. 6 For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy way, and in multitude of counsellors there is safety.

We are tempted to envy those that grow rich, and raise their estates and families, by such unjust courses as our consciences will not means suffer us to use. But, to set aside that temptation, Solomon here shows that man, with prudent management, may raise his estate and family by lawful and honest means, with a good conscience, and a good name, and the blessing of God upon his industry; and, if the other be raised a little sooner, yet these will last a great deal longer. 1. That which is here recommended to us, having the best influence upon our outward prosperity is *wisdom*, and *understanding*, and *knowledge*; that is, both piety towards God (for that is true wisdom) and prudence in the management of our outward affairs. We must govern ourselves in every thing by the rules of religion first and then of discretion. Some that are truly pious do not thrive in the world, for want of prudence; and some that are prudent enough, yet do not prosper, because they lean to their own understanding and do not acknowledge God in their ways; therefore both must go together, to complete a wise man. 2. That which is set before us as the advantage of true wisdom is that it will make men's outward affairs prosperous and successful. (1.) It will *build a house and establish it*, v. 3. Men may by unrighteous practices build their houses, but they cannot establish them, for the foundation is rotten (Hab. ii. 9, 10); where what is honestly got will wear like steel and be an inheritance to children's children. (2.) It will enrich a house and furnish it, v. 4. Those that manage their affairs with wisdom and equity, that are diligent in the use of lawful means for increasing what they have, that spare from luxury and spend in charity are in a fair way to have their shops, their warehouses, their chambers, filled with *precious and pleasant riches*—precious because got by honest labour, and the substance of a diligent man is precious—pleasant because enjoyed with holy cheerfulness. So

think this is to be understood chiefly of spiritual riches. *By knowledge the chambers of the soul are filled with the graces and comforts of the Spirit, those precious and pleasant riches; for the Spirit, by enlightening the understanding, performs all his other operations on the soul.* (3.) It will fortify a house and turn it into a castle: *Wisdom is better than weapons of war, offensive or defensive.* A wise man is in strength, is in a strong-hold, yea, a man of knowledge strengthens might, that is, increases it, v. 5. As we grow in knowledge we grow in all grace, 2 Pet. iii. 18. Those that increase in wisdom are strengthened with all might, Col. i. 9, 11. A wise man will compass that by his wisdom which a strong man cannot effect by force of arms. The spirit is strengthened both for the spiritual work and the spiritual warfare by true wisdom. (4.) It will govern a house and a kingdom too, and the affairs of both, v. 6. Wisdom will erect a college, or council of state. Wisdom will be of use, [1.] For the managing of the public quarrels, so as not to engage in them but for an honest cause and with some probability of success, and, when they are engaged in, to manage them well, and so as to make either an advantageous peace or an honourable retreat: *By wise counsel thou shalt make war*, which is a thing that may prove of ill consequence if not done by wise counsel. [2.] For the securing of the public peace: *In the multitude of counsellors there is safety*, for one may foresee the danger, and discern the advantages, which another cannot. In our spiritual conflicts we need wisdom, for our enemy is subtle.

7 Wisdom is too high for a fool: he openeth not his mouth in the gate. 8 He that deviseth to do evil shall be called a mischievous person. 9 The thought of foolishness is sin: and the scorner is an abomination to men.

Here is the description, 1. Of a weak man. *Wisdom is too high for him; he thinks it so, and therefore, despairing to attain it, he will take no pains in the pursuit of it, but sit down content without it. And really it is so; he has not capacity for it, and therefore the advantages he has for getting it are all in vain to him. It is no easy thing to get wisdom; those that have natural parts good enough, yet if they be foolish, that is, if they be slothful and will not take pains, if they be playful and trifling, and given to their pleasures, if they be viciously inclined, and keep bad company, it is too high for them; they are not likely to reach it. And, for want of it, they are unfit for the service of their country: They open not their mouth in the gate; they are not admitted into the council or magistracy, or, if they are, they are dumb statues, and stand for cyphers; they say nothing, because they have nothing*

to say, and they know that if they should offer any thing it would not be heeded, nay, it would be hissed at. Let young men take pains to get wisdom, that they may be qualified for public business, and do it with reputation. 2. Of a wicked man, who is not only despised as a fool is, but detested. Two sorts of wicked men are so:—(1.) Such as are secretly malicious. Though they speak courteously and conduct themselves plausibly, they devise to do evil, are contriving to do an ill turn to those they bear a grudge to, or have an envious eye at. He that does so shall be called a mischievous person, or a master of mischief, which perhaps was then a common name of reproach; he shall be branded as an inventor of evil things (Rom. i. 30), or, if any mischief be done, he shall be suspected as the author of it, or at least accessory to it. This devising evil is the thought of foolishness, v. 9. It is made light of, and turned off with a jest, as only a foolish thing, but really it is sin, it is exceedingly sinful; you cannot call it by a worse name than to call it sin. It is bad to do evil, but it is worse to devise it; for that has in it the subtlety and poison of the old serpent. But it may be taken more generally. We contract guilt, not only by the act of foolishness, but by the thought of it, though it go no further; the first risings of sin in the heart are sin, offensive to God, and must be repented of or we are undone. Not only malicious, unclean, proud thoughts, but even foolish thoughts, are sinful thoughts. If vain thoughts lodge in the heart, they defile it (Jer. iv. 14), which is a reason why we should keep our hearts with all diligence, and harbour no thoughts there which cannot give a good account of themselves, Gen. vi. 5. (2.) Such as are openly abusive: The scorner, who gives ill-language to every body, takes a pleasure in affronting people and reflecting upon them, is an abomination to men; none that have any sense of honour and virtue will care to keep company with him. The seat of the scornful is the pestilential chair (as the LXX. call it, Ps. i. 1), which no wise man will come near, for fear of taking the infection. Those that strive to make others odious do but make themselves so.

10 If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.

Note, 1. In the day of adversity we are apt to faint, to droop and be discouraged, to desist from our work, and to despair of relief. Our spirits sink, and then our hands hang down and our knees grow feeble, and we become unfit for anything. And often those that are most cheerful when they are well droop most, and are most dejected, when any thing ails them. 2. This is an evidence that our strength is small, and is a means of weakening it more. "It is a sign that thou art not a man of any resolution, any firmness of thought, any consideration, any faith (for that

is the strength of a soul), if thou canst not bear up under an afflictive change of thy condition." Some are so feeble that they can bear nothing; if a trouble does but *touch* them (Job iv. 5), nay, if it does but threaten them, they faint immediately and are ready to give up all for gone; and by this means they render themselves unfit to grapple with their trouble and unable to help themselves. *Be of good courage therefore, and God shall strengthen thy heart.*

11 If thou forbear to deliver *them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain*; 12 If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider *it*? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth *not* he know *it*? and shall *not* he render to *every* man according to his works?

Here is, 1. A great duty required of us, and that is to appear for the relief of oppressed innocence. If we see the lives or livelihoods of any in danger of being taken away unjustly, we ought to bestir ourselves all we can to save them, by disproving the false accusations on which they are condemned and seeking out proofs of their innocence. Though the persons be not such as we are under any particular obligation to, we must help them, out of a general zeal for justice. If any be set upon by force and violence, and it be in our power to rescue them, we ought to do it. Nay, if we see any through ignorance exposing themselves to danger, or fallen in distress, as travellers upon the road, ships at sea, or any the like, it is our duty, though it be with peril to ourselves, to hasten with help to them and not *forbear to deliver them*, not to be slack, or remiss, or indifferent, in such a case. 2. An answer to the excuse that is commonly made for the omission of this duty. Thou wilt say, "*Behold, we knew it not*"; we were not aware of the imminency of the danger the person was in; we could not be sure that he was innocent, nor did we know how to prove his innocence, nor which way to do any thing in favour of him, else we would have helped him." Now, (1.) It is easy to make such an excuse as this, sufficient to avoid the censures of men, for perhaps they cannot disprove us when we say, *We knew it not, or, We forgot*; and the temptation to tell a lie for the excusing of a fault is very strong when we know that it is impossible to be disproved, the truth lying wholly in our own breast, as when we say, *We thought so and so, and really designed it*, which no one is conscious of but ourselves. (2.) It is not so easy with such excuses to evade the judgment of God; and to the discovery of that we lie open and by the determination of that we must abide. Now, [1.] God *ponders the heart and keeps the soul*; he keeps an eye upon it, observes all the mo-

tions of it; its most secret thoughts and intents are all naked and open before him. It is his prerogative to do so, and that in which he glories. Jer. xvii. 10, *I the Lord search the heart.* He *keeps the soul*, holds it in life. This is a good reason why we should be tender of the lives of others, and do all we can to preserve them, because our lives have been precious in the sight of God and he has graciously kept them. [2.] He knows and considers whether the excuse we make be true or no, whether it was because we did not know it or whether the true reason was because we did not love our neighbour as we ought, but were selfish, and regardless both of God and man. Let this serve to silence all our frivolous pleas, by which we think to stop the mouth of conscience when it charges us with the omission of plain duty: *Does not he that ponders the heart consider it*? [3.] He will judge us accordingly. As his knowledge cannot be imposed upon, so his justice cannot be biassed, but he will render to *every man according to his works*, not only the commission of evil works, but the omission of good works.

13 My son, eat thou honey, because *it is good*; and the honeycomb, *which is sweet to thy taste*: 14 So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul when thou hast found *it*, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off.

We are here quickened to the study of wisdom by the consideration both of the pleasure and the profit of it: 1. It will be very pleasant. We *eat honey because it is sweet to the taste*, and upon that account we call it *good*, especially that which runs first from the *honey-comb*. Canaan was said to flow with milk and honey, and honey was the common food of the country (Luke xxiv. 41, 42), even for children, Isa. vii. 15. Thus should we feed upon wisdom, and relish the good instructions of it. Those that have tasted honey need no further proof that it is sweet, nor can they by any argument be convinced of the contrary; so those that have experienced the power of truth and godliness are abundantly satisfied of the pleasure of both; they have tasted the sweetness of them, and all the atheists in the world with their sophistry, and the profane with their banter, cannot alter their sentiments. 2. It will be very profitable. Honey may be *sweet to the taste* and yet not wholesome, but wisdom has a future recompence attending it as well as a present sweetness in it: "Thou art permitted to *eat honey*, and the agreeableness of it to thy taste invites thee to it; but thou hast much more reason to relish and digest the precepts of wisdom, for, *when thou hast found that, there shall be a reward*; thou shalt be paid for thy pleasure, while the servants of sin pay dearly for their pains. Wis-

does indeed set thee to work, but *there shall be a reward*; it does indeed raise great expectations in thee, but as thy labour, so thy hope, shall not be in vain; *thy expectation shall not be cut off* (ch. xxiii. 18), nay, it shall be infinitely outdone."

15 Lay not wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous; spoil not his resting place: 16 For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall to mischief.

This is spoken, not so much by way of counsel to wicked men (they will not receive instruction, ch. xxiii. 9), but rather in defence of them, for the encouragement of good people that are threatened by them. See here, 1. The designs of the wicked against the righteous, and the success they promise themselves in those designs. The plot is laid deeply: *They lay wait against the dwelling of the righteous*, thinking to charge some guilt upon it, or compass some design against it; they lie in wait at the door, to catch him when he stirs out, as David's persecutors, Ps. lix. title. The hope is raised high; they doubt not but to *spoil his dwelling-place* because he is weak and cannot support it, because his condition is low and distressed, and he is almost down already. All this is a fruit of the old enmity in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman. *The blood-thirsty hate the upright*. 2. The folly and frustration of these designs. (1.) The righteous man, whose ruin was expected, overcomes himself. *He falls seven times into trouble*, but, by the blessing of God upon his freedom and integrity, he *riseth again*, sees through his troubles and sees better times for them. *The just man falls*, sometimes *seven times* perhaps, into sin, sins of infirmity, through the surprise of temptation; but he *riseth again* by repentance, finds mercy through God, and regains his peace. (2.) *The wicked man*, who expected to see his ruin and help it forward, is undone. *He falls into mischief*; his sins and his troubles are his destruction.

17 Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth: 18 Lest the LORD be angry, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him.

Here, 1. The pleasure we are apt to take in the troubles of an enemy is forbidden us. They have done us an ill turn, or if we hear of an ill-will only because they stand in our way or in our way, when any damage comes to them (suppose they fall), or any danger oppose they stumble, our corrupt hearts are too apt to conceive a secret delight and satisfaction in it—*Aha! so would we have it*; *you are entangled*; *the wilderness has shut you in*—or, as Tyrus said concerning Jeru-

salem (Ezek. xxvi. 2), *I shall be replenished, now she is laid waste*. "Men hope in the ruin of their enemies or rivals to wreak their revenge or to find their account; but be not thou so inhuman; *rejoice not when the worst enemy thou hast falls*." There may be a holy joy in the destruction of God's enemies, as it tends to the glory of God and the welfare of the church (Ps. lvi. 10); but in the ruin of our enemies, as such, we must by no means rejoice; on the contrary, we must weep even with them when they weep (as David, Ps. xxxv. 13, 14), and that in sincerity, not so much as letting our hearts be secretly glad at their calamities. 2. The provocation which that pleasure gives to God is assigned as the reason of that prohibition: *The Lord will see it*, though it be hidden in the heart only, *and it will displease him*, as it will displease a prudent father to see one child triumph in the correction of another, which he ought to tremble at, and take warning by, not knowing how soon it may be his own case, he having so often deserved it. Solomon adds an argument *ad hominem*—addressed to the individual: "Thou canst not do a greater kindness to *thy enemy*, when he has fallen, than to rejoice in it; for then, to cross thee and vex thee, God will *turn his wrath from him*; for, as the *wrath of man works not the righteousness of God*, so the righteousness of God was never intended to gratify the wrath of man, and humour his foolish passions; rather than seem to do that he will adjourn the execution of his wrath: nay, it is implied that when he *turns his wrath from him* he will turn it against thee and the cup of trembling shall be put into thy hand."

19 Fret not thyself because of evil men, neither be thou envious at the wicked; 20 For there shall be no reward to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out.

Here, 1. He repeats the caution he had before given against envying the pleasures and successes of wicked men in their wicked ways. This he quotes from his father David, Ps. xxxvii. 1. We must not in any case fret ourselves, or make ourselves uneasy, whatever God does in his providence; how disagreeable soever it is to our sentiments, interests, and expectations, we must acquiesce in it. Even that which grieves us must not fret us; nor must our eye be evil against any because God is good. Are we more wise or just than he? If wicked people prosper, we must not therefore incline to do as they do. 2. He gives a reason for this caution, taken from the end of that way which wicked men walk in. Envy not their prosperity; for, (1.) There is no true happiness in it: *There shall be no reward to the evil man*; his prosperity only serves for his present subsistence; these are all the good things he must ever expect: there is none intended him in the world of retribution. *He has his reward*, Matt. vi. 2.

He shall have none. Those are not to be envied that have their portion in this life and must out-live it, Ps. xvii. 14. (2.) There is no continuance in it; their *candle* shines brightly, but it shall presently *be put out*, and a final period put to all their comforts, Job xxi. 17; Ps. xxxvii. 1, 2.

21 My son, fear thou the LORD and the king: *and* meddle not with them that are given to change: 22 For their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth the ruin of them both?

Note, 1. Religion and loyalty must go together. As men, it is our duty to honour our Creator, to worship and reverence him, and to be always in his fear; as members of a community, incorporated for mutual benefit, it is our duty to be faithful and dutiful to the government God has set over us, Rom. xiii. 1, 2. Those that are truly religious will be loyal, in conscience towards God; the godly in the land will be the *quiet in the land*; and those are not truly loyal, or will be so no longer than is for their interest, that are not religious. How should he be true to his prince that is false to his God? And, if they come in competition, it is an adjudged case, we must *obey God rather than men*. 2. Innovations in both are to be dreaded. Have nothing to do, he does not say, with those that *change*, for there may be cause to change for the better, but *those that are given to change*, that affect change for change-sake, out of a peevish discontent with that which is and a fondness for novelty, or a desire to fish in troubled waters. *Meddle not with those that are given to change* either in religion or in the civil government; *come not into their secret*; join not with them in their cabals, nor enter into the mystery of their iniquity. 3. Those that are of restless, factious, turbulent spirits, commonly pull mischief upon their own heads ere they are aware: *Their calamity shall rise suddenly*. Though they carry on their designs with the utmost secrecy, they will be discovered, and brought to condign punishment, when they little think of it. *Who knows* the time and manner of the ruin which both God and the king will bring on their contemners, *both* on them and those that meddle with them?

23 These *things* also *belong* to the wise. *It is* not good to have respect of persons in judgment. 24 He that saith unto the wicked, *Thou art* righteous; him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him: 25 But to them that rebuke *him* shall be delight, and a good blessing shall come upon them. 26 *Every man* shall kiss *his* lips that giveth a right answer.

Here are lessons for *wise* men, that is, judges and princes. As subjects must do

their duty, and be obedient to magistrat so magistrates must do their duty in administering justice to their subjects, both pleas of the crown and causes between party and party. These are lessons for them.

They must always weigh the merits of cause, and not be swayed by any regard one way or other, to the parties concerned. *It is not good* in itself, nor can it ever do *to have respect of persons in judgment*; the consequences of it cannot but be the perverting of justice and doing wrong under colour of law and equity. A good judge will know the truth, not know faces, so as to countenance a friend and help him out in a bad cause, or so much as omit any thing that can be said or done in favour of a righteous cause, when it is the cause of an enemy.

They must never connive at or encourage wicked people in their wicked practices. Magistrates in their places, and ministers theirs, are to deal faithfully with the wicked man, though he be a great man or a particular friend, to convict him of his wickedness, to show him what will be in the end thereof, to discover him to others, that they may avoid him. But if those whose office it is thus to show people their transgressions palliate them and connive at them, if they excuse the wicked man, much more if they protect him and associate with him (which is, in effect to say, *Thou art righteous*), they shall justly be looked upon as enemies to the public peace and welfare, which they ought to advance, and *the people shall curse them* and put out shame on them; and even those of other nations shall abhor them, as base betrayers of their trust. 3. They must discountenance and give check to all fraud, violence, injustice, and immorality; and, though thereby they may disoblige a particular person, they will recommend themselves to the favour of God and man. Let magistrates and ministers, and private persons too that are capable of doing it, *rebuke* the wicked, that they may bring them to repentance or put them to shame, and they shall have the comfort of their own bosoms: *To them shall be delight* when their consciences witness for them that they have been witnesses for God; and *a good blessing shall come upon them*, the blessing of God and good men; they shall be dear to religion's patrons and their country's patriots. See ch. xxviii. 23. 4. They must always give judgment according to equity (v. 26); they must *give a right answer*, that is, give their opinion and pass sentence according to the law and the true merits of the cause; and *every one shall kiss his lips* that does so, that shall love and honour him, and be subject to his orders, for there is a kiss of allegiance as well as of affection. He that in common conversation likewise speaks pertinently and with sincerity recommends himself to company and is beloved and respected by

27 Prepare thy work without, and

make it fit for thyself in the field ; and afterwards build thine house.

This is a rule of prudence in the management of household affairs ; for all good men could be good husbands, and manage with discretion, which would prevent a great deal of sin, and trouble, and disgrace to their provision. 1. We must prefer necessities before conveniences, and not lay that out for show which should be expended for the support of the family. We must be content with a mean cottage for a habitation, rather than want, or go in debt for, food convenient.

We must not think of building till we can afford it : " First apply thyself to *thy work without in the field* ; let thy ground be put to good order ; look after thy husbandry, and it is that by which thou must get ; and, when thou hast got well by that, then, and not till then, thou mayest think of rebuilding and beautifying *thy house*, for that is it upon which, and in which, thou wilt have occasion to spend." Many have ruined their estates and families by laying out money on that which brings nothing in, beginning to build when they were not able to finish. Some understand it as advice to young men not to marry (for by that the house is built) till they have set up in the world, and got wherewith to maintain a wife and children comfortably.

When we have any great design on foot, it is wisdom to take it before us, and make the necessary preparations, before we fall to work, that, when it is begun, it may not stand still for want of materials. Solomon observed this rule himself in building the house of God ; all was made ready *before it was brought to the ground*, 1 Kings vi. 7.

28 Be not a witness against thy neighbour without cause ; and deceive not with thy lips. 29 Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me : I will render to the man according to his work.

We are here forbidden to be in any thing injurious to our neighbour, particularly induced by the forms of law, either, 1. As a witness : " Never bear a testimony against any man *without cause*, unless what thou test thou knowest to be punctually true ; do thou hast a clear call to testify it. Never bear a false testimony against any one ;" for follows, " *Deceive not with thy lips* ; deceive not the judge and jury, deceive not those whom thou conversest with, into an ill opinion of thy neighbour. When thou speakest of thy neighbour do not only speak that which is true, but take heed lest, in the manner of speaking, thou insinuate any thing that is otherwise and so shouldst deceive by innuendoes or hyperboles." Or, 2. As a plaintiff or prosecutor. If there be occasion to bring action or information against thy neighbour, let it not be from a spirit of revenge. *Say not*, I am resolved I will be even with

him : *I will do so to him as he has done to me.*" Even a righteous cause becomes unrighteous when it is thus prosecuted with malice. *Say not*, I will render to the man according to his work, and make him pay dearly for it ; for it is God's prerogative to do so, and we must leave it to him, and not step into his throne, or take his work out of his hands. If we will needs be our own carvers, and judges in our own cause, we forfeit the benefit of an appeal to God's tribunal ; therefore we must not avenge ourselves, because he has said, *Vengeance is mine.*

30 I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding ; 31 And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. 32 Then I saw, and considered it well : I looked upon it, and received instruction. 33 Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep : 34 So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth ; and thy want as an armed man.

Here is, 1. The view which Solomon took of the field and vineyard of the slothful man. He did not go on purpose to see it, but, as he passed by, observing the fruitfulness of the ground, as it is very proper for travellers to do, and his subjects' management of their land, as it is very proper for magistrates to do, he cast his eye upon a field and a vineyard unlike all the rest ; for, though the soil was good, yet there was nothing growing in them but thorns and nettles, not here and there one, but they were all overrun with weeds ; and, if there had been any fruit, it would have been eaten up by the beasts, for there was no fence : *The stone-wall was broken down*. See the effects of that curse upon the ground (Gen. iii. 18), " *Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee*, and nothing else unless thou take pains with it." See what a blessing to the world the husbandman's calling is, and what a wilderness this earth, even Canaan itself, would be without it. *The king himself is served of the field*, but he would be ill served if God did not teach the husbandman discretion and diligence to clear the ground, plant it, sow it, and fence it. See what a great difference there is between some and others in the management even of their worldly affairs, and how little some consult their reputation, not caring though they proclaim their slothfulness, in the manifest effects of it, to all that pass by, shamed by their neighbour's diligence. 2. The reflections which he made upon it. He paused a little and considered it, looked again upon it, and received instruction. He did not break out into any passionate censures of the owner,

did not call him any ill names, but he endeavoured himself to get good by the observation and to be quickened by it to diligence. Note, Those that are to give instruction to others must receive instruction themselves, and instruction may be received, not only from what we read and hear, but from what we see, not only from what we see of the works of God, but from what we see of the manners of men, not only from men's good manners, but from their evil manners. Plutarch relates a saying of Cato Major, "That wise men profit more by fools than fools by wise men; for wise men will avoid the faults of fools, but fools will not imitate the virtues of wise men." Solomon reckoned that he received instruction by this sight, though it did not suggest to him any new notion or lesson, but only put him in mind of an observation he himself had formerly made, both of the ridiculous folly of the sluggard (who, when he has needful work to do, lies dozing in bed and cries, *Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, and still it will be a little more, till he has slept his eyes out, and, instead of being fitted by sleep for business, as wise men are, he is dulled, and stupified, and made good for nothing*) and of the certain misery that attends him: *his poverty comes as one that travels*; it is constantly coming nearer and nearer to him, and will be upon him speedily, and want seizes him as irresistibly as an armed man, a highwayman that will strip him of all he has. Now this is applicable, not only to our worldly business, to show what a scandalous thing slothfulness in that is, and how injurious to the family, but to the affairs of our souls. Note, (1.) Our souls are our fields and vineyards, which we are every one of us to take care of, to dress, and to keep. They are capable of being improved with good husbandry; that may be got out of them which will be fruit abounding to our account. We are charged with them, to occupy them till our Lord come; and a great deal of care and pains it is requisite that we should take about them. (2.) These fields and vineyards are often in a very bad state, not only no fruit brought forth, but all overgrown with thorns and nettles (scratching, stinging, inordinate lusts and passions, pride, covetousness, sensuality, malice, those are the thorns and nettles, the wild grapes, which the unsanctified heart produces), no guard kept against the enemy, but the stone-wall broken down, and all lies in common, all exposed. (3.) Where it is thus it is owing to the sinner's own slothfulness and folly. He is a sluggard, loves sleep, hates labour; and he is void of understanding, understands neither his business nor his interest; he is perfectly besotted. (4.) The issue of it will certainly be the ruin of the soul and all its welfare. It is everlasting want that thus comes upon it as an armed man. We know the place assigned to the wicked and slothful servant.

THESE are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out.

This verse is the title of this latter collection of Solomon's proverbs, for he *taught and set in order many proverbs*, that by this he might be still teaching the people knowledge, Eccl. xii. 9. Observe, 1. The proverbs were Solomon's, who was divinely inspired to deliver, for the use of the church, the wise and weighty sentences; we have many, but still there are more. Yet here Christ is greater than Solomon, for if we had all upon record that Christ said, and did that was instructive, the world could not contain the books that would be written, Job xxi. 25. 2. The publishers were Hezekiah's servants, who, it is likely, herein acted as his servants, being appointed by him to do the good service to the church, among other good offices that he did in the law and in the commandments, 2 Chron. xxxi. 21. Whether he employed the prophets in this work, Isaiah, Hosea, or Micah, who lived in his time, or some that were trained up in the schools of the prophets, or some of the priests and Levites, to whom we find him giving charge concerning divine things (2 Chron. xxix. 4), or (as the Jews think) his princes and ministers of state, who were more properly called his servants, is not certain; if the work was done by Eliakim, and Joah, at Shebna, it was no diminution to their character. They copied out these proverbs from the records of Solomon's reign, and published them as an appendix to the former edition of this book. It may be a piece of very good service to the church to publish other manuscripts that have lain hidden in obscurity perhaps a great while. Some think that he culled these out of the 3000 proverbs which Solomon spoke (1 Kings iv. 32), leaving out those that were physical, and that pertained to natural philosophy, and preserving such only as were divine and moral; and in this collection some observe that special regard was had to those observations which concerned kings and their administration.

2 It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter. 3 The heaven is for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings is unsearchable.

Here is, 1. An instance given of the honour of God: *It is his glory to conceal a matter*. He needs not search into any thing, for he perfectly knows every thing by a clear and certain view, and nothing can be hidden from him; and yet his own way is in the sea at his path in the great waters. There is an unfathomable depth in his counsels, Rom. xi. 33. It is but a little portion that is heard of his *Clouds and darkness are round about him*. We see what he does, but we know not

asons. Some refer it to the sins of men; is his glory to pardon sin, which is covering it, not remembering it, not mentioning it; his forbearance, which he exercises towards sinners, is likewise his honour, in which he seems to keep silence and take no notice of the matter. 2. A double instance of the honour of kings:—(1.) It is God's glory that he needs not *search into a matter*, because he knows it without search; but it is the honour of kings, with a close application of mind, and by all the methods of enquiry, to search out the matters that are sought before them, to take pains in examining offenders, that they may discover their signs and bring to light the hidden works of darkness, not to give judgment hastily or that they have weighed things, nor to leave it wholly to others to examine things, but to do with their own eyes. (2.) It is God's glory that he cannot himself be found out by searching, and some of that honour is derived upon kings, wise kings, that *search out matters*; their *hearts are unsearchable*, as the height of heaven or the depth of the earth, which we may guess at, but cannot measure. Princes have their *arcana imperii* or *state secrets*, designs which are kept private, and reasons of state, which private persons are not competent judges of, and therefore ought not to pry into. Wise princes, when they *search into a matter*, have reached which one would not think of, as Solomon, when he called for a sword to divide the living and with, designing thereby to discover the true mother.

4. Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer. 5. Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness.

This shows that the vigorous endeavour of a prince to suppress vice, and reform the manners of his people, is the most effectual way to support his government. Observe, What the duty of magistrates is: To *take away the wicked*, to use their power for the removal of evil works and evil workers, not only to banish those that are vicious and remove them from their presence, and forbid them to come into court, but so to frighten them and restrain them that they may not spread the infection of their wickedness among their subjects. This is called *taking away the dross from the silver*, which is done by the force of law. Wicked people are the dross of a nation, the scum of the country, and, as such, to be taken away. If men will not take them away, God will, Ps. cxix. 119. If the wicked be *taken away from before the king*, if he abandon them and show his detestation of their wicked courses, it will go far towards the disabling of them to do mischief. The reformation of the court will promote the re-

formation of the kingdom, Ps. ci. 3, 8. 2. What the advantage will be of their doing this duty. (1.) It will be the bettering of the subjects; they shall be made like silver refined, fit to be made *vessels of honour*. (2.) It will be the settling of the prince. *His throne shall be established in this righteousness*; for God will bless his government, the people will be pliable to it, and so it will become durable.

6. Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men: 7. For better it is that it be said unto thee, Come up hither; than that thou shouldst be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen.

Here we see, 1. That religion is so far from destroying good manners that it teaches us to behave ourselves lowly and reverently towards our superiors, to keep our distance, and give place to those to whom it belongs: "*Put not forth thyself rudely and carelessly in the king's presence, or in the presence of great men; do not compare with them*" (so some understand it); "*do not vie with them in apparel, furniture, gardens, house-keeping, or retinue, for that is an affront to them and will waste thy own estate.*" 2. That religion teaches us humility and self-denial, which is a better lesson than that of good manners: "*Deny thyself the place thou art entitled to; covet not to make a fair show, nor aim at preferment, nor thrust thyself into the company of those that are above thee; be content in a low sphere if that is it which God has allotted to thee.*" The reason he gives is because this is really the way to advancement, as our Saviour shows in a parable that seems to be borrowed from this, Luke xiv. 9. Not that we must therefore pretend modesty and humility, and make a stratagem of it, for the courting of honour, but *therefore* we must really be modest and humble, because God will put honour on such and so will men too. It is better, more for a man's satisfaction and reputation, to be advanced above his pretensions and expectations, than to be thrust down below them, *in the presence of the prince*, whom it was a great piece of honour to be admitted to the sight of and a great piece of presumption to look upon without leave.

8. Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof; when thy neighbour hath put thee to shame. 9. Debate thy cause with thy neighbour *himself*; and discover not a secret to another: 10. Lest he that heareth it put thee to shame and thine infamy turn not away.

I. Here is good counsel given about going to law.—1. "Be not hasty in bringing an

action, before thou hast thyself considered it, and consulted with thy friends about it: *Go not forth hastily to strive*; do not send for a writ in a passion, or upon the first appearance of right on thy side, but weigh the matter deliberately, because we are apt to be partial in our own cause; consider the certainty of the expenses and the uncertainty of the success, how much care and vexation it will be the occasion of, and, after all, the cause may go against thee; surely then thou shouldst not *go forth hastily to strive*." 2. "Bring not an action before thou hast tried to end the matter amicably (v. 9): *Debate thy cause with thy neighbour* privately, and perhaps you will understand one another better and see that there is no occasion to go to law." In public quarrels the war that must at length end might better have been prevented by a treaty of peace, and a great deal of blood and treasure spared. It is so in private quarrels: "Sue not thy neighbour as a *heathen man and a publican* until thou hast told him his fault between thee and him alone, and he has refused to refer the matter, or to come to an accommodation. Perhaps the matter in variance is a secret, not fit to be divulged to any, much less to be brought upon the stage before the country; and therefore end it privately, that it may not be discovered." *Reveal not the secret of another*, so come read it. "Do not, in revenge, to disgrace thy adversary, disclose that which should be kept private and which does not at all belong to the cause."

II. Two reasons he gives why we should be thus cautious in going to law:—1. "Because otherwise the cause will be in danger of going against thee, and thou wilt *not know what to do* when the defendant has justified himself in what thou didst charge upon him, and made it out that thy complaint was frivolous and vexatious and that thou hadst no just cause of action, and so *put thee to shame*, non-suit thee, and force thee to pay costs, all which might have been prevented by a little consideration." 2. "Because it will turn very much to thy reproach if thou fall under the character of being litigious. Not only the defendant himself (v. 8), but he that hears the cause tried will *put thee to shame*, will expose thee as a man of no principle, and *thy infamy will not turn away*; thou wilt never retrieve thy reputation."

11 A word fitly spoken *is like apples of gold in pictures of silver*. 12 As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, *so is a wise reprov-er upon an obedient ear*.

Solomon here shows how much it becomes a man, 1. To speak pertinently: *A word upon the wheels*, that runs well, is well-circumstanced, in proper time and place—instruction, advice, or comfort, given seasonably, and in apt expressions, adapted to the case of the person spoken to and agreeing with

the character of the person speaking—*is like golden balls resembling apples*, or like apples of a golden colour (golden rennets), perhaps gilded, as sometimes we have gilded laurels, and those embossed in pictures of silver; or rather brought to table in a silver work basket, or in a silver box of that which we call *philligree-work*, through which the golden apples might be seen. Doubtless it was some ornament of the table, then known. As that was very pleasing to the eye, so is a word *fitly spoken* to the ear. Especially to give a reproof with discretion and so as to make it acceptable. If it be well given, by a *wise reprov-er*, and well taken, an *obedient ear*, it is an *earring of gold*, an *ornament of fine gold*, very graceful and well becoming both the reprov-er and the reprov-ed; both will have their praise, the reprov-er for giving it so prudently and the reprov-ed for taking it so patiently and making a good use of it. Others will commend them both, and they will have satisfaction in each other; he who gave the reproof is pleased that it had the desired effect, and he to whom it was given has reason to be thankful for it as a kindness. *That is well given* we say, *that is well taken*; yet it does not always prove that that is well taken which is well given. It were to be wished that a *wise reprov-er* should always meet with an *obedient ear*, but often it is not so.

13 As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, *so is a faithful messenger to them that send him*: for he refresheth the soul of his masters.

See here, 1. What ought to be the care of a servant, the meanest that is sent on an errand and entrusted with any business, much more the greatest, the agent and ambassador of a prince; he ought to be *faithful to him that sends him*, and to see to it that he does not, by mistake or with design, falsify his trust, and that he be in nothing that lies in his power wanting to his master's interest. Those that act as factors, by commission ought to act as carefully as for themselves. 2. How much this will be the satisfaction of the master; it will *refresh his soul* as much as ever the *cold of snow* (which in hot countries they preserve by art all the year round) refreshed the labourers in the harvest, *tho' it bore the burden and heat of the day*. It is more important the affair was, and the more fear of its miscarrying, the more acceptable is the messenger, if he have managed it successfully and well. A faithful minister Christ's messenger, should be thus acceptable to us (Job xxxiii. 23); however, he will be a *sweet savour to God*, 2 Cor. ii. 15.

14 Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift *is like clouds and wind which pass away without rain*.

He may be said to boast of a false gift, who pretends to have received or given

which he never had, which he never gave, makes a noise of his great accomplishments and his good services, but it is all false; he pretends what he will give and what he will perform, but performs nothing, who raises people's expectations of the mighty things he will do in his country, for his friends, what noble services he will leave, but either he has not the power or the will to do what he says or he never signs it. Such a one is like the morning-dew, that passes away, and disappoints those who looked for rain from it to water the parched ground (Jude 12), *clouds without rain*.

15 By long forbearing is a prince persuaded, and a soft tongue breaketh the bone.

Two things are here recommended to us, dealing with others, as likely means to gain a point:—1. Patience, to bear a present trial without being put into a heat by it, and wait for a fit opportunity to offer our reasons and to give persons time to consider them. By this means even a *prince* may be persuaded to do a thing which he seemed veryaverse to, much more a common person. At which is justice and reason now will be another time, and therefore we need not urge them with violence now, but wait for a more convenient season. 2. Mildness, to speak without passion or provocation: *A soft tongue breaks the bone*; it mollifies the rough spirits and overcomes those that are most fierce, like lightning, which, they say, has sometimes broken the bone, and yet not pierced the flesh. Gideon with a soft tongue pacified the Ephraimites and Abigail turned away David's wrath. *Hard words*, we say, *break no bones*, and therefore we should bear them patiently; but, it seems, *soft words* do, and therefore we should, on all occasions, use them prudently.

16 Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it.

Here, 1. We are allowed a sober and moderate use of the delights of sense: "*Hast thou found honey?*" It is not forbidden fruit to eat, as it was to Jonathan; thou mayest eat of it with thanksgiving to God, who, having created things grateful to our senses, has given us leave to make use of them. *Eat as much as is sufficient*, and no more. *Enough is good as a feast*. 2. We are cautioned to take heed of excess. We must use all pleasures as we do honey, with a check upon our appetite, lest we take more than does us good and make ourselves sick with it. We are most in danger of surfeiting upon that which is most sweet, and therefore those that are sumptuously every day have need to check over themselves, lest their hearts be at all times overcharged. The pleasures of sense are sweetened by the excessive use of

them and become nauseous, as honey, which turns sour in the stomach; it is therefore our interest, as well as our duty, to use them with sobriety.

17 Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour's house; lest he be weary of thee, and so hate thee.

Here he mentions another pleasure which we must not take too much of, that of visiting our friends, the former for fear of surfeiting ourselves, this for fear of surfeiting our neighbour. 1. It is a piece of civility to visit our neighbours sometimes, to show our respect to them and concern for them, and to cultivate and improve mutual acquaintance and love, and that we may have both the satisfaction and advantage of their conversation. 2. It is wisdom, as well as good manners, not to be troublesome to our friends in our visiting them, not to visit too often, nor stay too long, nor contrive to come at meal-time, nor make ourselves busy in the affairs of their families; hereby we make ourselves cheap, mean, and burdensome. Thy neighbour, who is thus plagued and haunted with thy visits, will be weary of thee and hate thee, and that will be the destruction of friendship which should have been the improvement of it. *Post tres sape dies piscis vilescit et hospes—After the third day fish and company become distasteful*. Familiarity breeds contempt. *Nulli te facias nimis sodalem—Be not too intimate with any*. He that sponges upon his friend loses him. How much better a friend then is God than any other friend; for we need not withdraw our foot from his house, the throne of his grace (ch. viii. 34); the oftener we come to him the better and the more welcome.

18 A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow.

Here, 1. The sin condemned is bearing false witness against our neighbour, either in judgment or in common conversation, contrary to the law of the ninth commandment. 2. That which it is here condemned for is the mischievousness of it; it is in its power to ruin not only men's reputation, but their lives, estates, families, all that is dear to them. A false testimony is every thing that is dangerous; it is a maul (or club to knock a man's brains out with), a flail, which there is no fence against; it is a sword to wound near at hand and a sharp arrow to wound at a distance; we have therefore need to pray, *Deliver my soul, O Lord! from lying lips*, Ps cxx. 2.

19 Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint.

1. The confidence of an unfaithful man (so some read it) will be like a broken tooth; his policy, his power, his interest, all that which he trusted in to support him in his wicked-

ness, will fail him in time of trouble, Ps. lii. 7. 2. *Confidence in an unfaithful man* (so we read it), in a man whom we thought trusty and therefore depended on, but who proves otherwise; it proves not only unserviceable, but painful and vexatious, like a *broken tooth, or a foot out of joint*, which, when we put any stress upon it, not only fails us, but makes us feel from it, especially in time of trouble, when we most expect help from it; it is like a broken reed, Isa. xxxvi. 6. Confidence in a faithful God, in time of trouble, will not prove thus; on him we may rest and in him dwell at ease.

20 *As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to a heavy heart.*

1. The absurdity here censured is *singing songs to a heavy heart*. Those that are in great sorrow are to be comforted by sympathizing with them, condoling with them, and concurring in their lamentation. If we take that method, the *moving of our lips may assuage their grief* (Job xvi. 5); but we take a wrong course with them if we think to relieve them by being merry with them, and endeavouring to make them merry; for it adds to their grief to see their friends so little concerned for them; it puts them upon ripping up the causes of their grief, and aggravating them, and makes them harden themselves in sorrow against the assaults of mirth. 2. The absurdities this is compared to are, *taking away a garment from a man in cold weather*, which makes him colder, and *pouring vinegar upon nitre*, which, like water upon lime, puts it into a ferment; so improper, so incongruous, is it to sing pleasant songs to one that is of a sorrowful spirit. Some read it in a contrary sense: *As he that puts on a garment in cold weather warms the body, or as vinegar upon nitre dissolves it*, so he that *sings songs of comfort* to a person in sorrow refreshes him and dispels his grief.

21 *If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: 22 For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.*

By this it appears that, however the scribes and Pharisees had corrupted the law, not only the commandment of loving our brethren, but even that of loving our enemies, was not only a new, but also an old commandment; an Old-Testament commandment, though our Saviour has given it to us with the new enforcement of his own great example in loving us when we were enemies. Observe, 1. How we must express our love to our enemies by the real offices of kindness, even those that are expensive to ourselves and most acceptable to them: "If they be *hungry and thirsty*, instead of pleasing thyself with their distress and contriving how to cut off supplies from

them, relieve them, as Elisha did the Syrian that came to apprehend him," 2 King vi. 2. 2. What encouragement we have to do (1.) It will be a likely means to win upon them, and bring them over to be reconciled to us; we shall mollify them as the refining melts the metal in the crucible, not only by putting it over the fire, but by heaping coals of fire upon it. The way to turn an enemy into a friend is, to act towards him in a friendly manner. If it do not gain him, it will aggravate his sin and punishment, and heap the burning coals of God's wrath upon his head, as rejoicing in his calamity may be an occasion of God's turning his wrath from him, ch. xxiv. 17. (2.) However, we shall be no losers by our self-denial: "Whether I relent towards thee or no, *the Lord shall reward thee*; he shall forgive thee who shovest thyself to be of a forgiving spirit. He shall provide for thee when thou art in distress (though thou hast been evil and ungrateful), as thou dost for thy enemy; at least it shall be recompensed in the resurrection the just, when kindnesses done to our enemies shall be remembered as well as those shown to God's friends."

23 *The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue.*

Here see, 1. How we must discourage sin and witness against it, and particularly sin of slandering and backbiting; we must frown upon it, and, by giving it an angry countenance, endeavour to put it out of countenance. Slanders would not be so readily spoken as they are if they were not readily heard; but good manners would silence the slanderer if he saw that his tales displeased the company. We should show ourselves uneasy if we heard a dear friend, whom we value, evil-spoken of; the same dislike we should show of evil-speaking in general. If we cannot otherwise reprove, we may do so by our looks. 2. The good effect which this might probably have; who knows but it might silence and drive away a *backbiting tongue*. Sin, if it be countenanced, becomes daring; but, if it receive any check, it is so conscious of its own shame that it becomes cowardly and this sin in particular, for many abuses those they speak of only in hopes to carry favour with those they speak to.

24 *It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman and in a wide house.*

This is the same with what he had said, ch. xxi. 9. Observe, 1. How those are to be pitied that are unequally yoked, especially with such as are brawling and contentious whether husband or wife; for it is equal true of both. It is better to be alone than to be joined to one who, instead of being meet-help, is a great hindrance to the comfort of life. 2. How those may sometime

enjoy that live in solitude; as they want the comfort of society, so they are free from the vexation of it. And as there are cases which give occasion to say, "Blessed is the man that has not home," so there are which give occasion to say, "Blessed is the man who is never married, but who lies like a servant at a corner of the house-top."

25 As cold waters to a thirsty soul, is good news from a far country.

See here, 1. How natural it is to us to desire to hear good news from our friends, and concerning our affairs at a distance. It is sometimes with impatience that we expect hear from abroad; our souls thirst after

But we should check the inordinateness of that desire; if it be bad news, it will come soon, if good, it will be welcome at any time. 2. How acceptable such good news is when it does come, as refreshing as cold water to one that is thirsty. Solomon himself had much trading abroad, as well as correspondence by his ambassadors with foreign courts; and how pleasant it was to hear the good success of his negotiations abroad well knew by experience. Heaven is a country afar off; how refreshing is it to hear good news thence, both in the everlasting Gospel, which signifies glad tidings, and in the witness of the Spirit with our spirits that we are God's children.

26 A righteous man falling down before the wicked is as a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring.

It is here represented as a very lamentable thing, and a public grievance, and of ill consequence to many, like the troubling of a fountain and the corrupting of a spring, for a righteous man to fall down before the wicked, it is, 1. For the righteous to fall into sin in the sight of the wicked—for them to do any thing unbecoming their profession, which is done in Gath, and published in the streets of Bezek, and in which the daughters of the Philistines rejoice. For those that have been in reputation for wisdom and honour to fall from their excellency, this troubles the fountains by giving some, and corrupts the springs by infecting others and emboldening them to do likewise. 2. For the righteous to be oppressed, to be run down, and trampled upon, by the violence or subtlety of evil men, to be displaced and thrust into obscurity, this is the troubling of the fountains of justice and corrupting of the very springs of government, ch. xiii. 12, 28; xxix. 2. 3. For the righteous to be cowardly, to truckle to the wicked, to be afraid of opposing his wickedness and basely yield to him, this is a reflection upon religion, a discouragement to good men, and lengthens the hands of sinners in their sins, so is like a troubled fountain and a corrupt spring.

27 It is not good to eat much honey:

so for men to search their own glory is not glory.

I. Two things we must be graciously dead to:—1. To the pleasures of sense, for it is not good to eat much honey; though it pleases the taste, and, if eaten with moderation, is very wholesome, yet, if eaten to excess, it becomes nauseous, creates bile, and is the occasion of many diseases. It is true of all the delights of the children of men that they will surfeit, but never satisfy, and they are dangerous to those that allow themselves the liberal use of them. 2. To the praise of men. We must not be greedy of that any more than of pleasure, because, for men to search their own glory, to court applause and covet to make themselves popular, is not their glory, but their shame; every one will laugh at them for it; and the glory which is so courted is not glory when it is got, for it is really no true honour to a man.

II. Some give another sense of this verse: To eat much honey is not good, but to search into glorious and excellent things is a great commendation, it is true glory; we cannot therein offend by excess. Others thus: "As honey, though pleasant to the taste, if used immoderately, oppresses the stomach, so an over-curious search into things sublime and glorious, though pleasant to us, if we pry too far, will overwhelm our capacities with a greater glory and lustre than they can bear." Or thus: "You may be surfeited with eating too much honey, but the last of glory, of their glory, the glory of the blessed, is glory; it will be ever fresh, and never pall the appetite."

28 He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.

Here is, 1. The good character of a wise and virtuous man implied. He is one that has rule over his own spirit; he maintains the government of himself, and of his own appetites and passions, and does not suffer them to rebel against reason and conscience. He has the rule of his own thoughts, his desires, his inclinations, his resentments, and keeps them all in good order. 2. The bad case of a vicious man, who has not this rule over his own spirit, who, when temptations to excess in eating or drinking are before him, has no government of himself, when he is provoked breaks out into exorbitant passions, such as one is like a city that is broken down and without walls. All that is good goes out, and forsakes him; all that is evil breaks in upon him. He lies exposed to all the temptations of Satan and becomes an easy prey to that enemy; he is also liable to many troubles and vexations; it is likewise as much a reproach to him as it is to a city to have its walls ruined, Neh. i. 3

CHAP. XXVI.

AS snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honour is not seemly for a fool.

Note, 1. It is too common a thing for honour to be given to fools, who are utterly unworthy of it and unfit for it. Bad men, who have neither wit nor grace, are sometimes preferred by princes, and applauded and cried up by the people. *Folly is set in great dignity*, as Solomon observed, Eccl. x. 6. 2. It is very absurd and unbecoming when it is so. It is as incongruous as *snow in summer*, and as great a disorder in the commonwealth as that is in the course of nature and in the seasons of the year; nay, it is as injurious as *rain in harvest*, which hinders the labourers and spoils the fruits of the earth when they are ready to be gathered. When bad men are in power they commonly abuse their power, in discouraging virtue, and giving countenance to wickedness, for want of wisdom to discern it and grace to detest it.

2 As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless shall not come.

Here is, 1. The folly of passion. It makes men scatter *causeless curses*, wishing ill to others upon presumption that they are bad and have done ill, when either they mistake the person or misunderstand the fact, or they call evil good and good evil. Give honour to a fool, and he thunders out his anathemas against all that he is disgusted with, right or wrong. Great men, when wicked, think they have a privilege to keep those about them in awe, by cursing them, and swearing at them, which yet is an expression of the most impotent malice and shows their weakness as much as their wickedness. 2. The safety of innocency. He that is cursed without cause, whether by furious imprecations or solemn anathemas, the curse shall do him no more harm than the bird that flies over his head, than Goliath's curses did to David, 1 Sam. xvii. 43. It will fly away like the sparrow or the wild dove, which go nobody knows where, till they return to their proper place, as the curse will at length return upon the head of him that uttered it.

3 A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back.

Here, 1. Wicked men are compared to *the horse and the ass*, so brutish are they, so unreasonable, so unruly, and not to be governed but by force or fear, so low has sin sunk men, so much below themselves. Man indeed is *born like the wild ass's colt*, but as some by the grace of God are changed, and become rational, so others by custom in sin are hardened, and become more and more sottish, as *the horse and the mule*, Ps. xxxii. 9. 2. Direction is given to use them accordingly. Princes, instead of giving *honour to a fool* (v. 1), must put disgrace upon him—instead of putting power into his hand, must exercise power over him. A *horse* unbroken needs a *whip* for correction, and an *ass* a *bridle* for direction and to check him when he would turn out of the way; so a vicious man, who

will not be under the guidance and restraint of religion and reason, ought to be whipped and bridled, to be rebuked severely, and made to smart for what he has done amiss, and to be restrained from offending any more.

4 Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him. 5 Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his conceit.

See here the noble security of the scriptural style, which seems to contradict itself, really does not. Wise men have need to be directed how to deal with fools; and they have never more need of wisdom than when dealing with such, to know when to keep silence and when to speak, for there may be time for both. 1. In some cases a wise man will not set his wit to that of a fool so far as to *answer him according to his folly*. "If he boast of himself, do not answer him by boasting of thyself. If he rail and talk passionately, do not thou rail and talk passionately. If he tell one great lie, do not thou another to match it. If he calumniate his friends, do not thou calumniate his. If he banter, do not answer him in his own language, *lest thou be like him*, even thou, who knowest better things, who hast more sense and hast been better taught." 2. Yet, in other cases, a wise man will use his wisdom for the conviction of a fool, when, by taking notice of what he says, there may be hopes of doing good, or at least preventing further mischief either to himself or others. "If thou hast reason to think that thy silence will be deemed an evidence of the weakness of thy cause, of thy own weakness, in such a case *answer him*, and let it be an answer *ad hominem*—to the man, beat him at his own weapons, and that will be an answer *ad rem*—to the point or as good as one. If he offer any thing that looks like an argument, answer that, and set thy answer to his case. If he think, because thou dost not answer him, that what he says is unanswerable, then give him an answer, *lest he be wise in his own conceit* and boast of a victory." For (Luke vii. 35) Wisdom's children must justify her.

6 He that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool cutteth off the feet, and drinketh damage. 7 The legs of the lame are not equal: so is a parable the mouth of fools. 8 As he that bindeth a stone in a sling, so is it that giveth honour to a fool. 9 A thorn goeth up into the hand of the drunkard, so is a parable in the mouth of fools.

To recommend wisdom to us, and quicken us to the diligent use of all the means for the getting of wisdom, Solomon here shows that fools are fit for nothing; they

her sottish men, who will never think and sign at all, or vicious men, who will never ink and design well. 1. They are not fit to be entrusted with any business, not fit to go on an errand (v. 6): *He that does but send a message by the hand of a fool*, of a careless heedless person, one who is so full in his jests and so given to his pleasures that he cannot apply his mind to any thing that is serious, will find his message misunderstood, the one half of it forgotten, the rest awkwardly delivered, and so many blunders made about it that he might as well have cut off his legs, that is, never have sent him. Nay, he will drink damage; it will be very much to his prejudice to have employed such a one, who, instead of bringing him a good account of his affairs, will abuse him and put trick upon him; for, in Solomon's language, a knave and a fool are of the same significance. It will turn much to a man's disgrace to make use of the service of a fool, for people will be apt to judge of the master by his messenger. 2. They are not fit to have any honour put upon them. He had said (v. 1), *Honour is not seemly for a fool*; here he shows that it is lost and thrown away upon him, as a man should throw a precious stone, or a stone fit to be used in weighing, into a heap of common stones, where it would be buried and of no use; it is as absurd as if a man could dress up a stone in purple (so others); y, it is dangerous, it is like a stone bound in a sling, with which a man will be likely to hurt. To give honour to a fool is to put a word in a madman's hand, with which we know not what mischief he may do, even to use that put it into his hand. 3. They are not fit to deliver wise sayings, nor should they undertake to handle any matter of weight, though they should be instructed concerning it and be able to say something to it. Wise sayings, as a foolish man delivers them and applies them (in such a manner that one may know he does not rightly understand them), are their excellency and usefulness: *A parable in the mouth of fools* ceases to be a parable, and becomes a jest. If a man who lives a wicked life, yet speaks religiously and takes God's covenant into his mouth, (1.) He does not shame himself and his profession: *As the legs of the lame are not equal*, by reason of which their going is unseemly, so unseemly it is for a fool to pretend to speak apophthegms, and give advice, and for a man to speak devoutly whose conversation is a constant contradiction to his talk and gives him no lie. His good words raise him up, but in his bad life takes him down, and so *the legs are not equal*. "A wise saying," says bishop Patrick) "doth as ill become a man as dancing doth a cripple; for, as his lameness never so much appears as when he would seem nimble, so the other's folly is never so ridiculous as when he would seem wise." As therefore it is best for a lame man to keep his seat, so it is best for a silly

man, or a bad man, to hold his tongue. (2.) He does but do mischief with it to himself and others, as a drunkard does with a thorn, or any other sharp thing which he takes in his hand, with which he tears himself and those about him, because he knows not how to manage it. Those that talk well and do not live well, their good words will aggravate their own condemnation and others will be hardened by their inconsistency with themselves. Some give this sense of it: The sharpest saying, by which a sinner, one would think, should be pricked to the heart, makes no more impression upon a fool, no, though it come out of his own mouth, than the scratch of a thorn does upon the hand of a man when he is drunk, who then feels it not nor complains of it, ch. xxiii. 35.

10 The great God that formed all things both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors.

Our translation gives this verse a different reading in the text and in the margin; and accordingly it expresses either, 1. The equity of a good God. The Master, or Lord (so *Rab* signifies), or, as we read it, *The great God that formed all things* at first, and still governs them in infinite wisdom, renders to every man according to his work. He rewards the fool, who sinned through ignorance, who knew not his Lord's will, with few stripes; and he rewards the transgressor, who sinned presumptuously and with a high hand, who knew his Lord's will and would not do it, with many stripes. Some understand it of the goodness of God's common providence even to fools and transgressors, on whom he causes his sun to shine and his rain to fall. Or, 2. The iniquity of a bad prince (so the margin reads it): *A great man grieves all, and he hires the fool; he hires also the transgressors*. When a wicked man gets power in his hand, by himself, and by the fools and knaves whom he employs under him, whom he hires and chooses to make use of, he grieves all who are under him and is vexatious to them. We should therefore pray for kings and all in authority, that, under them, our lives may be quiet and peaceable.

11 As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly.

See here, 1. What an abominable thing sin is, and how hateful sometimes it is made to appear, even to the sinner himself. When his conscience is convinced, or he feels smart from his sin, he is sick of it, and vomits it up; he seems then to detest it and to be willing to part with it. It is in itself, and, first or last, will be to the sinner, more loathsome than the vomit of a dog, Ps. xxxvi. 2. How apt sinners are to relapse into it notwithstanding. As the dog, after he has gained ease by vomiting that which burdened his stomach, yet goes and licks it up again, so sinners, who have been convinced only and not converted, return to sin

again, forgetting how sick it made them. The apostle (2 Pet. ii. 22) applies this proverb to those that *have known the way of righteousness but are turned from it*; but God will spue them out of his mouth, Rev. iii. 16.

12 Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? *there is more hope of a fool than of him.*

Here is, 1. A spiritual disease supposed, and that is self-conceit. *Seest thou a man?* Yes, we see many a one, *wise in his own conceit*, who has some little sense, but is proud of it, thinks it much more than it is, more than any of his neighbours have, and enough, so that he needs no more, has such a conceit of his own abilities as makes him opinionative, dogmatical, and censorious; and all the use he makes of his knowledge is that it puffs him up. Or, if by a wise man we understand a religious man, it describes the character of those who, making some show of religion, conclude their spiritual state to be good when really it is very bad; like Laodicea, Rev. iii. 17. 2. The danger of this disease. It is in a manner desperate. *There is more hope of a fool*, that knows and owns himself to be such, *than of such a one*. Solomon was not only a wise man himself, but a teacher of wisdom; and this observation he made upon his pupils, that he found his work most difficult and least successful with those that had a good opinion of themselves and were not sensible that they needed instruction. Therefore he that *seems to himself to be wise must become a fool*, that he *may be wise*, 1 Cor. iii. 18. There is more hope of a publican than of a proud Pharisee, Matt. xxi. 32. Many are hindered from being truly wise and religious by a false and groundless conceit that they are so, John ix. 40, 41.

13 The slothful man saith, *There is a lion in the way*; a lion is in the streets.

When a man talks foolishly we say, He talks idly; for none betray their folly more than those who are idle and go about to excuse themselves in their idleness. As men's folly makes them slothful, so their slothfulness makes them foolish. Observe, 1. What *the slothful man* really dreads. He dreads *the way, the streets*, the place where work is to be done and a journey to be gone; he hates business, hates every thing that requires care and labour. 2. What he dreams of, and pretends to dread—a *lion in the way*. When he is pressed to be diligent, either in his worldly affairs or in the business of religion, this is his excuse (and a sorry excuse it is, as bad as none), *There is a lion in the way*, some insuperable difficulty or danger which he cannot pretend to grapple with. Lions frequent woods and deserts; and, in the day-time, when man has business to do, they are in their dens, Ps. civ. 22, 23. But the sluggard

fancies, or rather pretends to fancy, *a lion in the streets*, whereas the lion is only in his own fancy, nor is he so fierce as he is painted. Note, It is a foolish thing to frighten ourselves from real duties by fancied difficulties. Eccl. xi. 4.

14 As the door turneth upon hinges, so *doth the slothful upon his bed.*

Having seen the slothful man in fear of work, here we find him in love with his bed. He lies in his bed on one side till he is weary of that, and then turns to the other, but in his bed, when it is far in the day and work is to be done, as the door is moved, but not removed; and so his business is neglected and his opportunities are let slip. See the sluggard's character. 1. He is one that does not care to get out of his bed, but seems to be hung upon it, *as the door upon the hinges*. Bodily ease, too much consulted, is the occasion of many a spiritual disease. That love sleep will prove in the end to be a loved death. 2. He does not care to get up and ward with his business; in that he stirs to get up a little, but to no purpose; he is when he stirs as if he were in his bed. Slothful professors turn, in profession, *like the door upon the hinges*. The world and the flesh are the two hinges on which they are hung, and though they move in a corner of external services, have got into a room of duties, and tread around in them like a horse in the mill, yet they get no good, they get no ground, they are never the nearer heaven—sinners unchanged, saints unimproved.

15 The slothful hideth his hand from his bosom; it grieveth him to bring his hand again to his mouth.

The sluggard has now, with much ado, got out of his bed, but he might as well have stayed there still for any thing he is likely to be able to pass in his work, so awkwardly does he manage about it. Observe, 1. The pretence he makes for his slothfulness: He *hides his hand from his bosom* for fear of cold; next to his warmth is his warm bosom. Or he pretends that he is lame, as some do that make a trade of idleness; something ails his hand; he would have it thought that it is blistered with yesterday's hard work. Or it intimates, in general, his aversion to business; he has tired and his hands are not used to labour, therefore he hugs himself in his own ease and cares for nobody. Note, It is common to those that will not do their duty to pretend they cannot. *I cannot dig*, Luke xvi. 3. The prejudice he sustains by his slothfulness. He himself is the loser by it, for he starves himself: *It grieves him to bring his hand to his mouth*, that is, he cannot find in his head to feed himself, but dreads, as if it were a mill to lift his hand to his head. It is an arrogant hyperbole, aggravating his sin, that he cannot endure to take the least pains, not for the greatest profit, and showing how

is his punishment. Those that are slothful in the business of religion will not be at the pains to feed their own souls with the word of God, the bread of life, nor to fetch in promised blessings by prayer; though they might have them for the fetching.

16 The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.

Observe, 1. The high opinion which the sluggard has of himself, notwithstanding the gross absurdity and folly of his slothfulness: he thinks himself *wiser than seven men*, than even wise men, for they are such as *can render a reason*. It is the wisdom of a man to be able to *render a reason*, of a good man to be able to give a *reason of the hope that is in him*, 1 Pet. iii. 15. What we do we should be able to *render a reason* for, though perhaps we may not have wit enough to show the fallacy of every objection against it. He that takes pains in religion can render a good reason for it; he knows that he is working for a good Master and that *his labour shall be in vain*. But the sluggard thinks himself *wiser than seven* such; for let seven such persuade him to be diligent, with all the reasons they can render for it, it is to no purpose; his own determination, he thinks, is answer enough to them and all their reasons. The reference that this has to his slothfulness. It is the sluggard, above all men, who is thus self-conceited; for, (1.) His good opinion of himself is the cause of his slothfulness; he will not take pains to get wisdom because he thinks he is wise enough already. (2.) His conceit of the sufficiency of our attainments is a great enemy to our improvement. (3.) His slothfulness is the cause of his good opinion of himself. If he would but take pains to examine himself, and compare himself with the laws of wisdom, he would have other thoughts of himself. Indulged slothfulness is at the bottom of prevailing self-conceit. Nay, (3.) So wretchedly besotted is that he takes his slothfulness to be his wisdom; he thinks it is his wisdom to make much of himself, and take all the ease he can, and do no more in religion than he needs most, to avoid suffering, to sit still and see what other people do, that he may have the assurance of finding fault with them. Of such sluggards, who are proud of that which is their shame, there is little hope, v. 12.

17 He that passeth by, and meddles with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears.

That which is here condemned is *meddling with strife that belongs not to us*. If must not be hasty to strive in our own cause (ch. xxiv. 8), much less in other people's, especially theirs that we are no way related or concerned in, but light on accidentally and pass by. If we can be instrumental to

make peace between those that are at variance we must do it, though we should thereby get the ill-will of both sides, at least while they are in their heat; but to make ourselves busy in other men's matters, and parties in other men's quarrels, is not only to court our own trouble, but to thrust ourselves into temptation. *Who made me a judge?* Let them end it, as they began it, between themselves. 2. We are cautioned against it because of the danger it exposes us to; it is like taking a snarling cur *by the ears*, that will snap at you and bite you; you had better have let him alone, for you cannot get clear of him when you would, and must thank yourselves if you come off with a wound and dishonour. He that has got *a dog by the ears*, if he lets him go he flies at him, if he keeps him hold, he has his hands full, and can do nothing else. Let every one *with quietness work and mind his own business*, and not with unquietness quarrel and meddle with other people's business.

18 As a mad man who casteth fire-brands, arrows, and death, 19 So is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport?

See here, 1. How mischievous those are that make no scruple of *deceiving their neighbours*; they are *as madmen that cast fire-brands, arrows, and death*, so much hurt may they do by their deceits. They value themselves upon it as politic cunning men, but really they are *as madmen*. There is not a greater madness in the world than a wilful sin. It is not only the passionate furious man, but the malicious deceitful man, that is a *madman*; he does in effect *cast fire-brands, arrows, and death*; he does more mischief than he can imagine. Fraud and falsehood burn like fire-brands, kill, even at a distance, like arrows. 2. See how frivolous the excuse is which men commonly make for the mischief they do, that they did it in jest; with this they think to turn it off when they are reproved for it, *Am not I in sport?* But it will prove dangerous playing with fire and jesting with edge-tools. Not that those are to be commended who are captious, and can take no jest (those that themselves are *wise must suffer fools*, 2 Cor. xi. 19, 20), but those are certainly to be condemned who are any way abusive to their neighbours, impose upon their credulity, cheat them in their bargains with them, tell lies to them or tell lies of them, give them ill language, or sully their reputation, and then think to excuse it by saying that they did but jest. *Am not I in sport?* He that sins in jest must repent in earnest, or his sin will be his ruin. Truth is too valuable a thing to be sold for a jest, and so is the reputation of our neighbour. By lying and slandering in jest men learn themselves, and teach others, to lie and slander in earnest; and a false report, raised in mirth, may be spread in malice; besides; if a man

may tell a lie to make himself merry, why not to make himself rich, and so *truth quite perishes*, and men *teach their tongues to tell lies*, Jer. ix. 5. If men would consider that a lie comes from the devil, and brings to hell-fire, surely that would spoil the sport of it; it is *casting arrows and death to themselves*.

20 Where no wood is, *there* the fire goeth out: so where *there is* no tale-bearer, the strife ceaseth. 21 *As* coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife. 22 The words of a talebearer *are* as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

Contention is as a fire; it heats the spirit, burns up all that is good, and puts families and societies into a flame. Now here we are told how that fire is commonly kindled and kept burning, that we may avoid the occasions of strife and so prevent the mischievous consequences of it. If then we would keep the peace, 1. We must not give ear to *talbearers*, for they feed the fire of contention with fuel; nay, they spread it with combustible matter; the tales they carry are fireballs. Those who by insinuating base characters, revealing secrets, and misrepresenting words and actions, do what they can to make relations, friends, and neighbours, jealous one of another, to alienate them one from another, and sow discord among them, are to be banished out of families and all societies, and then strife will as surely cease as the fire will go out when it has no fuel; the contenders will better understand one another and come to a better temper; old stories will soon be forgotten when there are no new ones told to keep up the remembrance of them, and both sides will see how they have been imposed upon by a common enemy. Whisperers and backbiters are incendiaries not to be suffered. To illustrate this, he repeats (v. 22) what he had said before (ch. xviii. 8), that the words of a tale-bearer are as wounds, deep and dangerous wounds, wounds in the vitals. They wound the reputation of him who is belied, and perhaps the wound proves incurable, and even the plaster of a recantation (which yet can seldom be obtained) may not prove wide enough for it. They wound the love and charity which he to whom they are spoken ought to have for his neighbour and give a fatal stab to friendship and Christian fellowship. We must therefore not only not be tale-bearers ourselves at any time, nor ever do any ill offices, but we should not give the least countenance to those that are. 2. We must not associate with peevish passionate people, that are exceptionous, and apt to put the worst constructions upon everything, that pick quarrels upon the least occasion, and are quick, and high, and hot, in resenting affronts. These are *contentious men*, that kindle strife, v. 21. The less we have to do

with such the better, for it will be very difficult to avoid quarrelling with those that quarrelsome.

23 Burning lips and a wicked heart are like a potsherd covered with silver dross.

This may be meant either, 1. Of a wicked heart showing itself in burning lips, full of passionate, outrageous words, burning in malice, and persecuting those to whom, or whom, they are spoken; ill words and will agree as well together as a potsherd and the dross of silver, which, now that the pot is broken and the dross separated from the silver, are fit to be thrown together to the dunghill. 2. Or of a wicked heart disguising itself with burning lips, burning with the professions of love and friendship, and even persecuting a man with flatteries; this is like a potsherd covered with the scum or dross of silver, with which one that is weak may be imposed upon, as if it were of some value, but a wise man is soon aware of the cheat. This sense agrees with the following verse.

24 He that hateth dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up deceit within him; 25 When he speaketh fair, believe him not: for there are seven abominations in his heart. 26 Whose hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall be showed before the whole congregation.

There is cause to complain, not only of the want of sincerity in men's profession of friendship, and that they do not love so well as they pretend nor will serve their friends as much as they promise, but, which is much worse, of wicked designs in the profession of friendship, and the making of it subservient to the most malicious intentions. This is here spoken of as a common thing (v. 24): *He that hates his neighbour*, and is contriving to do him a mischief, yet *dissembles with his lips*, professes to have a respect for him and to be ready to serve him, talks kindly with him, Cain with Abel, asks, *Art thou in health, my brother?* as Joab to Amasa, that his malice may not be suspected and guarded against, and so he may have the fairer opportunity to execute the purposes of it, this man *lays a deceit within him*, that is, he keeps in his mind the mischief he intends to do his neighbour till he catches him at an advantage. This malice which has no less of the subtlety than it has of the venom of the old serpent in it. Now, as to this matter, we are here cautioned. 1. Not to be so foolish as to suffer oneself to be imposed upon by the pretensions of friendship. Remember to distrust when a man speaks fair; be not too forward to believe him unless you know him well, for it is possible there may be seven abominations in his heart, a great many projects of mischief against you, which he is labouring so indu

ously to conceal with his fair speech. Satan is an enemy that hates us, and yet in his temptations speaks fair, as he did to Eve, but his madness to give credit to him, for there are seven abominations in his heart; seven other spirits does one unclean spirit bring more wicked than himself. 2. Not to be so wicked to impose upon any with a profession of friendship; for, though the fraud may be carried on plausibly awhile, it will be brought to light, v. 26. He whose hatred is covered by deceit will one time or other be discovered, and his wickedness shown, to his shame and confusion, before the whole congregation; and nothing will do more to make a man odious than all companies. Love (says one) is the best armour, but the worst cloak, and will serve assemblers as the disguise which Ahab put on and perished in.

27 Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, will return upon him.

See here, 1. What pains men take to do mischief to others. As they put a force upon themselves by concealing their design with a profession of friendship, so they put themselves to a great deal of labour to bring it out; it is *digging a pit*, it is *rolling a stone*, hard work, and yet men will not stick at it to satisfy their passion and revenge. 2. What separation they hereby make of mischief to themselves. Their violent dealing will return on their own heads; they shall themselves *fall into the pit they digged*, and the stone they *rolled will return upon them*, Ps. vii. 15, 16; 15, 16. The righteous God will take the case, not only in their own craftiness, but in their own cruelty. It is the plotter's doom. A man is hanged on a gallows of his own preparing.

— nec lex est justior ulla
Quam necis artifices arte perire sua—

There is no law more just than that the contrivers of destruction should perish by their own arts.

28 A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin.

There are two sorts of lies equally detestable:—1. A slandering lie, which avowedly hates those it is spoken of: *A lying tongue hates those that are afflicted by it*; it afflicts them by calumnies and reproaches because it hates them, and can thus smite them secretly where they are without defence; and it hates them because it has afflicted them and made them its enemies. The mischief of this is open and obvious; it afflicts, it hates, and ruins it, and every body sees it. 2. A flattering lie, which secretly works the ruin of those it is spoken to. In the former the mischief is plain, and men guard against it as well as they can, but in this it is little suspected, and men betray themselves by being credulous of their own praises and the commendations that are passed upon them. A wise man therefore will be more afraid of a flat-

terer that kisses and kills than of a slanderer that proclaims war.

CHAP. XXVII.

BOAST not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

Here is, 1. A good caution against presuming upon time to come: *Boast not thyself*, no, *not of to-morrow*, much less of many days or years to come. This does not forbid preparing for to-morrow, but presuming upon to-morrow. We must not promise ourselves the continuance of our lives and comforts till to-morrow, but speak of it with submission to the will of God and as those who with good reason are kept at uncertainty about it. We must not *take thought for the morrow* (Matt. vi. 34), but we must cast our care concerning it upon God. See James iv. 13—15. We must not put off the great work of conversion, that one thing needful, till to-morrow, as if we were sure of it, *but to-day, while it is called to-day*, hear God's voice. 2. A good consideration, upon which this caution is grounded: *We know not what a day may bring forth*, what event may be in the teeming womb of time; it is a secret till it is born, Eccl. xi. 5. A little time may produce considerable changes, and such as we little think of. *We know not what the present day may bring forth*; the evening must commend it. *Nescis quid serus vespere vehat—Thou knowest not what the close of evening may bring with it*. God has wisely kept us in the dark concerning future events, and reserved to himself the knowledge of them, as a flower of the crown, that he may train us up in a dependence upon himself and a continued readiness for every event, Acts i. 7.

2 Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.

Note, 1. We must do that which is commendable, for which even strangers may praise us. Our *light must shine before men*, and we must do good works that may be seen, though we must not do them on purpose that they may be seen. Let our own works be such as will praise us, even *in the gates*, Phil. iv. 8. 2. When we have done it we must not commend ourselves, for that is an evidence of pride, folly, and self-love, and a great lessening to a man's reputation. Every one will be forward to run him down that cries himself up. There may be a just occasion for us to vindicate ourselves, but it does not become us to applaud ourselves. *Proprio laus sordet in ore—Self-praise defiles the mouth*.

3 A stone is heavy, and the sand weighty; but a fool's wrath is heavier than them both. 4 Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?

These two verses show the intolerable mis-

chief, 1. Of ungoverned passion. The wrath of a fool, who when he is provoked cares not what he says and does, is more grievous than a great stone or a load of sand. It lies heavily upon himself. Those who have no command of their passions do themselves even sink under the load of them. The wrath of a fool lies heavily upon those he is enraged at, to whom, in his fury, he will be in danger of doing some mischief. It is therefore our wisdom not to give provocation to a fool, but, if he be in a passion, to get out of his way. 2. Of rooted malice, which is as much worse than the former as coals of juniper are worse than a fire of thorns. *Wrath* (it is true) is *cruel*, and does many a barbarous thing, *and anger is outrageous*; but a secret enmity at the person of another, an envy at his prosperity, and a desire of revenge for some injury or affront, are much more mischievous. One may avoid a sudden heat, as David escaped Saul's javelin, but when it grows, as Saul's did, to a settled envy, there is no *standing before it*; it will pursue; it will overtake. He that grieves at the good of another will be still contriving to do him hurt, and will keep his anger for ever.

5 *Open rebuke is better than secret love.* 6 *Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.*

Note, 1. It is good for us to be reprov'd, and told of our faults, by our friends. If true love in the heart has but zeal and courage enough to show itself in dealing plainly with our friends, and reprov'ing them for what they say and do amiss, this is really better, not only than secret hatred (as Lev. xix. 17), but *than secret love*, that love to our neighbours which does not show itself in this good fruit, which compliments them in their sins, to the prejudice of their souls. *Faithful are the reproofs of a friend*, though for the present they are painful as *wounds*. It is a sign that our friends are faithful indeed if, in love to our souls, they will not suffer sin upon us, nor let us alone in it. The physician's care is to cure the patient's disease, not to please his palate. 2. It is dangerous to be caressed and flattered by an enemy, whose kisses are *deceitful*. We can take no pleasure in them because we can put no confidence in them (Joab's kiss and Judas's were deceitful), and therefore we have need to stand upon our guard, that we be not deluded by them; they are to be deprecated. Some read it: *The Lord deliver us from an enemy's kisses, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue.*

7 *The full soul loatheth a honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.*

Solomon here, as often in this book, shows that the poor have in some respects the advantage of the rich; for, 1. They have a better relish of their enjoyments than the rich

have. Hunger is the best sauce. *Contentment*, with a good appetite to it, has a sensible pleasantness in it, which those are strangers to whose hearts are *overcharged with surfeiting*. Those that fare sumptuously every day nauseate even delicate food, as the Israelites did the quails; whereas those that have more than their necessary food, though it be such as *the full soul would call bitter*, to them it is *sweet*; they eat it with pleasure, digest it, and are refreshed by it. 2. They are more thankful for their enjoyments: *The hungry will bless God for bread and water*, while those that are *full* think the greatest dainties and varieties scarcely worth giving thanks for. The virgin Mary seems to refer to this when she says (Luke i. 53), *The hungry, who know how to value God's blessings, are filled with good things, but the rich, who despise them, are justly sent empty away.*

8 *As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place.*

Note, 1. There are many that do not know when they are well off, but are uneasy with their present condition, and given to change God, in his providence, has appointed them a place fit for them and has made it comfortable to them; but they affect unsettledness: they love to wander; they are glad of a pretence to go abroad, and do not care for staying long at a place; they needlessly absent themselves from their own work and care, and meddle with that which belongs not to them. 2. Those that thus desert the post assigned to them are like *a bird that wandereth from her nest*. It is an instance of their folly: they are like a silly bird; they are always wavering, like the wandering bird that hops from bough to bough and rests nowhere. It is unsafe; the bird that wanders is exposed: a man's place is his castle; he that quits makes himself an easy prey to the fowler. When the bird wanders from her nest the eggs and young ones there are neglected. Those that love to be abroad leave their work at home undone. *Let every man therefore in the calling wherein he is called, therein abide, therein abide with God.*

9 *Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel.* 10 *Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not; neither go into thy brother's house in the day of calamity: for better is a neighbour that is near than a brother far off.*

Here is, 1. A charge given to be faithful and constant to our friends, our old friends to keep up an intimacy with them, and to be ready to do them all the good offices that lie in our power. It is good to have a friend, a bosom-friend, whom we can be free with, and with whom we may communicate counsel.

is not necessary that this friend should be relation, or any way akin to us, though it is happiest when, among those who are so, we find one fit to make a friend of. Peter and Andrew were brethren, so were James and John; yet Solomon frequently distinguishes between a friend and a brother. But it is advisable to choose a friend among our neighbours who live near us, that acquaintance may be kept up and kindnesses the more frequently interchanged. It is good also to have a special respect to those who have been kind to our family: "*Thy own friend, especially if he have been thy father's friend, forsake not; fail not both to serve him and to use him, as there is occasion. He is a tried friend; he knows thy affairs; he has a particular concern for thee; therefore be advised by him.*" It is a duty we owe to our parents, when they are gone, to love their friends and consult with them. Solomon's commend himself by forsaking the counsel of his father's friends. 2. A good reason why we should thus value true friendship and be choice of it. (1.) Because of the pleasure of it. There is a great deal of sweetness in conversing and consulting with a faithful friend. It is like ointment and perfume; which are very grateful to the smell, and exhilarate the spirits. It rejoices the heart; the burden of care is made lighter by communicating ourselves to our friend, and it is a great satisfaction to us to have his sentiments concerning our affairs. *The sweetness of friendship lies not in hearty mirth, and hearty laughter, but in hearty counsel, faithful advice, sincerely given and without flattery, by counsel the soul (so the word is), counsel which touches the case, and comes to the heart, counsel about soul-concerns, Ps. lvi. 16. We should reckon that the most pleasant conversation which is about spiritual things, and promotes the prosperity of the soul. (2.) Because of the profit and advantage of it, especially in a day of calamity. We are here advised not to go into a brother's house, not expect relief from a kinsman merely for blood-sake, for the obligation of that commonly goes little further than calling cousin fails when it comes to the trial of a real friendship, but rather to apply ourselves to our neighbours, who are at hand, and will be ready to help us at an exigence. It is wisdom to oblige them by being neighbourly, for we shall have the benefit of it in distress, by finding them so to us, ch. xviii. 24. 11 My son, be wise, and make my heart glad, that I may answer him that reproacheth me.*

Children are here exhorted to be wise and good, 1. That they may be a comfort to their parents and may make their hearts glad, even in the evil days come, and so recompense them for their care, ch. xxiii. 15. 2. That they may be a credit to them: "*That I may answer him that reproaches me with having*

been over-strict and severe in bringing up my children, and having taken a wrong method with them in restraining them from the liberties which other young people take. *My son, be wise, and then it will appear, in the effect, that I went the wisest way to work with my children.*" Those that have been blessed with a religious education should in every thing conduct themselves so as to be a credit to their education and to silence those who say, *A young saint, an old devil*; and to prove the contrary, *A young saint, an old angel.*

12 A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished.

This we had before, ch. xxii. 3. Note, 1. Evil may be foreseen. Where there is temptation, it is easy to foresee that if we thrust ourselves into it there will be sin, and as easy to foresee that if we venture upon the evil of sin there will follow the evil of punishment; and, commonly, God warns before he wounds, having set watchmen over us, Jer. vi. 17. 2. It will be well or ill with us according as we do or do not improve the foresight we have of evil before us: The prudent man, foreseeing the evil, forecasts accordingly, and hides himself, but the simple is either so dull that he does not foresee it or so wilful and slothful that he will take no care to avoid it, and so he passes on securely and is punished. We do well for ourselves when we provide for hereafter.

13 Take his garment that is surety for a stranger, and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.

This also we had before, ch. xx. 16. 1 It shows who those are that are hastening to poverty, those that have so little consideration as to be bound for every body that will ask them and those that are given to women. Such as these will take up money as far as ever their credit will go, but they will certainly cheat their creditors at last, nay, they are cheating them all along. An honest man may be made a beggar, but he is not honest that makes himself one. 2. It advises us to be so discreet in ordering our affairs as not to lend money to those who are manifestly wasting their estates, unless they give very good security for it. Foolish lending is injustice to our families. He does not say, "Get another to be bound with him," for he that makes himself a common voucher will have those to be his security who are as insolvent as himself; therefore take his garment.

14 He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him.

Note, 1. It is a great folly to be extravagant in praising even the best of our friends and benefactors. It is our duty to give every one his due praise, to applaud those who excel

in knowledge, virtue, and usefulness, and to acknowledge the kindnesses we have received with thankfulness; but to do this *with a loud voice, rising early in the morning*, to be always harping on this string, in all companies, even to our friend's face, or so as that he may be sure to hear it, to do it studiously, as we do that which we rise early to, to magnify the merits of our friend above measure and with hyperboles, is fulsome, and nauseous, and savours of hypocrisy and design. Praising men for what they have done is only to get more out of them; and every body concludes the parasite hopes to be well paid for his panegyric or epistle dedicatory. We must not give that praise to our friend which is due to God only, as some think is intimated in *rising early* to do it; for in the morning God is to be praised. We must not *make too much haste to praise men* (so some understand it), not cry up men too soon for their abilities and performances, but let them first be proved; lest they be lifted up with pride, and laid to sleep in idleness. 2. It is a greater folly to be fond of being ourselves extravagantly praised. A wise man rather counts it *a curse*, and a reflection upon him, not only designed to pick his pocket, but which may really turn to his prejudice. Modest praises (as a great man observes) invite such as are present to add to the commendation, but immodest immoderate praises tempt them to detract rather, and to censure one that they hear over-commended. And, besides, over-praising a man makes him the object of envy; every man puts in for a share of reputation, and therefore reckons himself injured if another monopolize it or have more given him than his share. And the greatest danger of all is that it is a temptation to pride; men are apt to think of themselves above what is meet when others speak of them above what is meet. See how careful blessed Paul was not to be over-valued, 2 Cor. xii. 6.

15 A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike. 16 Whosoever hideth her hideth the wind, and the ointment of his right hand, *which bewrayeth itself*.

Here, as before, Solomon laments the case of him that has a peevish passionate wife, that is continually chiding, and making herself and all about her uneasy. 1. It is a grievance that there is no avoiding, for it is like *a continual dropping in a very rainy day*. The contentions of a neighbour may be like a sharp shower, troublesome for the time, yet, while it lasts, one may take shelter; but *the contentions of a wife* are like a constant soaking rain, for which there is no remedy but patience. See *ch. xix. 13*. 2. It is a grievance that there is no concealing. A wise man would hide it if he could, for the sake both of his own and his wife's reputation, but he cannot, any more than he can conceal the noise of the wind when it blows or the smell

of a strong perfume. Those that are froward and brawling will proclaim their own shame even when their friends, in kindness to them, would cover it.

17 Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.

This intimates both the pleasure and advantage of conversation. One man is to another body; nor will poring upon a book in a corner accomplish a man as the reading and studying of men will. Wise and profitable discourse sharpens men's wits; and that that have ever so much knowledge may in conference have something added to it. It sharpens men's looks, and, by cheering the spirits, puts a briskness and liveliness to the countenance, and gives a man such an air as shows he is pleased himself and makes him pleasing to those about him. Good men's graces are sharpened by converse with those that are good, and bad men's lusts and passions are sharpened by converse with those that are bad, as iron is sharpened by its like, especially by the file. Men are filed, made smooth, and bright, and fit for business (were rough, and dull, and inactive), by conversation. This is designed, 1. To recommend to us this expedient for sharpening ourselves, but with a caution to take heed whom we choose to converse with, because the influence upon us is so great either for the better or for the worse. 2. To direct what we must have in our eye in conversation, namely to improve both others and ourselves, not to pass away time or banter one another, but to *provoke one another to love and to good works* and so to make one another wiser and better.

18 Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof: so he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured.

This is designed to encourage diligence, faithfulness, and constancy, even in mean employments. Though the calling be laborious and despicable, yet those who keep it will find there is something to be got by it. 1. Let not a poor gardener, who keeps a *fig-tree*, be discouraged; though it requires constant care and attendance to nurse the fig-trees, and, when they have grown to maturity, to keep them in good order, and gather the figs in their season, yet he shall be paid for his pains: *He shall eat the fruit of it*. Cor. ix. 7. 2. Nay, let not a poor servant think himself incapable of thriving and being preferred; for if he be diligent in waiting on his master, observant of him and obedient to him, if he keep his master (so the word is) if he do all he can for the securing of his person and reputation and take care that his estate be not wasted or damaged, such a one *shall be honoured*, shall not only get a good word, but be preferred and rewarded. God is a Master who has engaged to put

hear on those that serve him faithfully,
 ch. xii. 26.

19 As in water face *answereth* to
 be, so the heart of man to man.

This shows us that there is a way, 1. Of
 knowing ourselves. As the water is a look-
 ing-glass in which we may see our faces by
 reflection, so there are mirrors by which the
 heart of a man is discovered to a man, that is,
 himself. Let a man examine his own con-
 science, his thoughts, affections, and inten-
 tions. Let him behold his *natural face* in the
 laws of the divine law (Jam. i. 23), and he
 may discern what kind of man he is and what
 his true character, which it will be of great
 use to every man rightly to know. 2. Of
 knowing one another by ourselves; for, as
 there is a similitude between the face of a man
 and the reflection of it in the water, so there
 is between one man's heart and another's;
 God has fashioned men's hearts alike;
 in many cases we may judge of others
 by ourselves, which is one of the foundations
 of that rule which is built of doing to others
 as we would be done by, Exod. xxiii. 9. *Nihil
 unum uni tam simile, tam par, quam omnes
 et nosmet ipsos sumus. Sui nemo ipse tam
 similis quam omnes sunt omnium—No one thing
 so like another as man is to man. No per-
 son so like himself as each person is to all
 others.* Cic. de Legib. lib. 1. One corrupt
 heart is like another, and so is one sanctified
 heart, for the former bears the same image of
 earthiness, the latter the same image of the
 heavenly.

20 Hell and destruction are never
 satisfied; so the eyes of man are never
 satisfied.

Two things are here said to be insatiable,
 they are two things near of kin—death
 and sin. 1. Death is insatiable. The first
 death, the second death, both are so. The
 grave is not clogged with the multitude of
 dead bodies that are daily thrown into it,
 it is still an *open sepulchre*, and cries, *Give,
 Give*. Hell also has enlarged itself, and still
 room for the damned spirits that are
 admitted to that prison. *Tophet is deep
 large*, Isa. xxx. 33. 2. Sin is insatiable:
the eyes of man are never satisfied, nor the
 appetites of the carnal mind towards profit or
 pleasure. *The eye is not satisfied with seeing,
 nor is he that loves silver satisfied with
 it.* Men labour for that which surfeits,
 it satisfies not; nay, it is dissatisfying;
 in a perpetual uneasiness have men justly
 been doomed to ever since our first parents
 were not satisfied with all the trees of Eden,
 they must meddle with the forbidden
 tree. Those whose eyes are ever towards the
 earth in him are satisfied, and shall for ever
 be so.

21 As the fining pot for silver, and
 the furnace for gold; so is a man to his
 trial.

This gives us a touchstone by which we
 may try ourselves. Silver and gold are tried
 by putting them into the furnace and fining-
 pot; so is a man tried by praising him. Let
 him be extolled and preferred, and then he
 will show himself what he is. 1. If a man
 be made, by the applause that is given him,
 proud, conceited, and scornful,—if he take
 the glory to himself which he should trans-
 mit to God, as Herod did,—if, the more he
 is praised, the more careless he is of what he
 says and does,—if he *lie in bed till noon* be-
 cause *his name is up*, thereby it will appear
 that he is a vain foolish man, and a man who,
 though he be praised, has nothing in him
 truly praise-worthy. 2. If, on the contrary,
 a man is made by his praise more thankful
 to God, more respectful to his friends, more
 watchful against every thing that may blemish
 his reputation, more diligent to improve him-
 self, and do good to others, that he may an-
 swer the expectations of his friends from him,
 by this it will appear that he is a wise and
 good man. He has a good temper of mind
 who knows how to pass by evil report and
 good report, and is still the same, 2 Cor. vi. 8.

22 Though thou shouldest bray a
 fool in a mortar among wheat with a
 pestle, yet will not his foolishness de-
 part from him.

Solomon had said (ch. xxii. 15), *The foolish-
 ness which is bound in the heart of a child may
 be driven out by the rod of correction*, for then
 the mind is to be moulded, the vicious habits
 not having taken root; but here he shows
 that, if it be not done then, it will be next to
 impossible to do it afterwards; if the disease
 be inveterate, there is a danger of its being
 incurable. *Can the Ethiopian change his skin?*
 Observe, 1. Some are so bad that rough and
 severe methods must be used with them, after
 gentle means have been tried in vain; they
 must be *brayed in a mortar*. God will take
 this way with them by his judgments; the
 magistrates must take this way with them by
 the rigour of the law. Force must be used
 with those that will not be ruled by reason,
 and love, and their own interest. 2. Some
 are so incorrigibly bad that even those rough
 and severe methods do not answer the end,
 their *foolishness will not depart from them*, so
 fully are their hearts set in them to do evil:
 they are often under the rod and yet not
 humbled, in the furnace and yet not refined,
 but, like Ahaz, trespass yet more (2 Chron.
 xxviii. 22); and what remains then but that
 they should be rejected as reprobate silver?

23 Be thou diligent to know the
 state of thy flocks, and look well to
 thy herds. 24 For riches are not for
 ever: and doth the crown endure to
 every generation? 25 The hay appear-
 eth, and the tender grass showeth it-
 self, and herbs of the mountains are

gathered. 26 The lambs are for the clothing, and the goats are the price of the field. 27 And thou shalt have goats' milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household, and for the maintenance for thy maidens.

Here is, I. A command given us to be diligent in our callings. It is directed to husbandmen and shepherds, and those that deal in cattle, but it is to be extended to all other lawful callings; whatever our business is, within doors or without, we must apply our minds to it. This command intimates, 1. That we ought to have some business to do in this world and not to live in idleness. 2. We ought rightly and fully to understand our business, and know what we have to do, and not meddle with that which we do not understand. 3. We ought to have an eye to t ourselves, and not turn over all the care of it to others. We should, with our own eyes, inspect the *state of our flocks*: it is the master's eye that makes them fat. 4. We must be discreet and considerate in the management of our business, *know the state of things, and look well to them*, that nothing may be lost, no opportunity let slip, but every thing done in proper time and order, and so as to turn to the best advantage. 5. We must be diligent and take pains; not only sit down and contrive, but be up and doing: "Set thy heart to thy herds, as one in care; lay thy hands, lay thy bones, to thy business."

II. The reasons to enforce this command. Consider,

1. The uncertainty of worldly wealth (v. 24): *Riches are not for ever*. (1.) Other riches are not so durable as these are: "Look well to thy flocks and herds, thy estate in the country and the stock upon that, for these are staple commodities, which, in a succession, will be for ever, whereas riches in trade and merchandise will not be so; the crown itself may perhaps not be so sure to thy family as thy flocks and herds." (2.) Even these riches will go to decay if they be not well looked after. If a man had an *abbey* (as we say), and were slothful and wasteful, he might make an end of it. Even the crown and the revenues of it, if care be not taken, will suffer damage, nor will it *continue to every generation* without very good management. Though David had the crown entailed on his family, yet he *looked well to his flocks*, 1 Chron. xxvii. 29, 31.

2. The bounty and liberality of nature, or rather of the God of nature, and his providence (v. 25): *The hay appears*. In taking care of the flocks and herds, (1.) "There needs no great labour, no ploughing or sowing; the food for them is the spontaneous product of the ground; thou hast nothing to do but to turn them into it in the summer, when the grass shows itself, and to gather the herbs of the mountains for them against winter. God

has done his part; thou art ungrateful to him, and unjustly refusest to serve his providence, if thou dost not do thine." (2.) "There is an opportunity to be observed, an improved, a time when the hay appears; but if thou let slip that time, thy flocks and herds will fare the worse for it. As for ourselves, so for our cattle, we ought, with the autumn, to provide meat in summer."

3. The profit of good husbandry in a family: "Keep thy sheep, and thy sheep will help to keep thee; thou shalt have food, thy children and servants, *goats' milk enough* (v. 27); and *enough is as good as a feast*. Thou shalt have raiment likewise: *the lambs' wool shall be for thy clothing*. Thou shalt have money to pay thy rent; the goats thou shalt have to sell shall be the price of the field;" say, as some understand it, "Thou shalt become a purchaser, and buy land, and leave to thy children," v. 26. Note, (1.) If we have food and raiment, and what we wishal to give every body his own, we have enough, and ought to be not only contented but thankful. (2.) Masters of families must provide not only for themselves, but for their families, and see that their servants have fitting maintenance. (3.) Plain food and plain clothing, if they be but competent, are all we should aim at. "Reckon thyself well do to if thou be clothed with home-spun cloth with the fleece of thy own lambs, and fed with goats' milk; let that serve for thy food, which serves for the food of thy household, and the maintenance of thy maidens. Be not desirous of dainties, far-fetched and dearly bought." (4.) This should encourage us to be careful and industrious about our business, that that will bring in a sufficient maintenance for our families; we shall eat the labour of our hands.

CHAP. XXVIII.

THE wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion.

See here, 1. What continual frights the wicked are subject to that go on in wicked ways. Guilt in the conscience makes men a terror to themselves, so that they are ready to fly when none pursues; like one that absconds for debt, who thinks every one he meets a bailiff. Though they pretend to be easy, there are secret fears which haunt them wherever they go, so that they fear where no present or imminent danger is, Ps. liii. Those that have made God their enemy, and know it, cannot but see the whole creation at war with them, and therefore can have no true enjoyment of themselves, no confidence, no courage, but a fearful looking for of judgment. Sin makes men cowards.

Degeneres animos timor arguit—
Fear argues a degenerate soul. VIRGIL.

Quos diri conscia facti mens habet attentos—
The consciousness of atrocious crimes astonishes and commands the attention. JOURNAL.

If they flee when none pursues, what will

they do when they shall see God himself
 using them with his armies? Job xx. 24;
 24. See Deut. xxviii. 25; Lev. xxvi. 36.
 What a holy security and serenity of mind
 those enjoy who keep conscience void of offence
 and so keep themselves in the love of God:
 The righteous are bold as a lion, as a
 lion; in the greatest dangers they have
 God of almighty power to trust to. There-
 fore will not we fear though the earth be re-
 vered. Whatever difficulties they meet with
 in the way of their duty, they are not daunted
 by them. None of those things move me.

Hic murus aheneus esto, nil conscire sibi—

Be this thy brazen bulwark of defence, —

Still to preserve thy conscious innocence. Hon.

2 For the transgression of a land
 many are the princes thereof: but by
 a man of understanding and know-
 ledge the state thereof shall be pro-
 vided.

Note, 1. National sins bring national dis-
 tresses and the disturbance of the public re-
 pose: For the transgression of a land, and a
 general defection from God and religion to
 idolatry, profaneness, or immorality, many
 the princes thereof, many at the same
 time pretending to the sovereignty and con-
 tending for it, by which the people are crum-
 bled into parties and factions, biting and de-
 stroying one another, or many successively,
 a little time, one cutting off another, as 1
 Kings xvi. 8, &c., or soon cut off by the
 hand of God or of a foreign enemy, as 2
 Kings xxiv. 5, &c. As the people suffer for
 sins of the prince,

Delirant reges, plectuntur Achivi—

Kings play the madmen, and their people suffer for it,

the government sometimes suffers for the
 sins of the people. 2. Wisdom will prevent
 and redress these grievances: By a man, that
 is, by a people, of understanding, that come
 into themselves and their right mind,
 things are kept in a good order, or, if dis-
 ordered, brought back to the old channel
 again. Or, By a prince of understanding and
 knowledge, a privy-counsellor, or minister of
 state, that will restrain or suppress the trans-
 gression of the land, and take the right me-
 thods of healing the state thereof, the good
 state of it will be prolonged. We cannot
 imagine what a great deal of service one wise
 man may do to a nation in a critical juncture.
 3 A poor man that oppresses the
 poor is like a sweeping rain which
 becometh no food.

See here, 1. How hard-hearted poor peo-
 ple frequently are to one another, not only
 doing such good offices as they might do
 to one another, but imposing upon and over-
 reaching one another. Those who know by
 experience the miseries of poverty should be
 compassionate to those who suffer the like,
 but they are inexcusably barbarous if they
 are injurious to them. 2. How imperious
 and griping those commonly are who, being

indigent and necessitous, get into power
 If a prince prefer a poor man, he forgets that
 ever he was poor, and none shall be so op-
 pressive to the poor as he, nor squeeze them
 so cruelly. The hungry leech and the dry
 sponge suck most. Set a beggar on horse-
 back, and he will ride without mercy. He is
 like a sweeping rain, which washes away the
 corn in the ground, and lays and beats out
 that which has grown, so that it leaves no
 food. Princes therefore ought not to put
 those into places of trust who are poor, and
 in debt, and behind-hand in the world, nor
 any who make it their main business to en-
 rich themselves.

4 They that forsake the law praise
 the wicked: but such as keep the law
 contend with them.

Note, 1. Those that praise the wicked make
 it to appear that they do themselves forsake
 the law, and go contrary to it, for that curses
 and condemns the wicked. Wicked peo-
 ple will speak well of one another, and so
 strengthen one another's hands in their
 wicked ways, hoping thereby to silence the
 clamours of their own consciences and to
 serve the interests of the devil's kingdom,
 which is not done by any thing so effectually
 as by keeping vice in reputation. 2. Those
 that do indeed make conscience of the law
 of God themselves will, in their places, vi-
 gorously oppose sin, and bear their testimony
 against it, and do what they can to shame
 and suppress it. They will reprove the
 works of darkness, and silence the excuses
 which are made for those works, and do
 what they can to bring gross offenders to
 punishment, that others may hear and fear.

5 Evil men understand not judg-
 ment: but they that seek the Lord
 understand all things.

Note, I. As the prevalency of men's lusts
 is owing to the darkness of their understand-
 ings, so the darkness of their understand-
 ings is very much owing to the dominion of
 their lusts: Men understand not judgment,
 discern not between truth and falsehood,
 right and wrong; they understand not the
 law of God as the rule either of their duty or
 of their doom; and, 1. Therefore it is that
 they are evil men; their wickedness is the
 effect of their ignorance and error, Eph. iv.
 18. 2. Therefore they understand not judg-
 ment, because they are evil men; their cor-
 ruptions blind their eyes, and fill them with
 prejudices, and because they do evil they hate
 the light. It is just with God also to give
 them up to strong delusions.

II. As men's seeking the Lord is a good
 sign that they do understand much, so it is
 a good means of their understanding more,
 even of their understanding all things need-
 ful for them. Those that set God's glory be-
 fore them as their end, his favour as their
 felicity, and his word as their rule, and apply

to him upon all occasions by prayer, *they seek the Lord*, and he will give them the spirit of wisdom. If a man *do his will*, he shall *know his doctrine*, John vii. 17. *A good understanding those have*, and a better they shall have, that *do his commandments*, Ps. cxi. 10; 1 Cor. ii. 12, 15.

6 Better *is* the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than *he that is perverse in his ways*, though *he be rich*.

Here, 1. It is supposed that a man may *walk in his uprightness* and yet be poor in this world, may be poor in the world, which is a temptation to dishonesty, and yet may resist the temptation and continue to *walk in his uprightness*—also that a man may be *perverse in his ways*, injurious to God and man, and yet be rich, and prosper in the world, for a while, may be rich, and so lie under great obligations and have great opportunities to do good, and yet be *perverse in his ways* and do a great deal of hurt. 2. It is maintained as a paradox to a blind world that an honest, godly, poor man, is better than a wicked, ungodly, rich man, has a better character, is in a better condition, has more comfort in himself, is a greater blessing to the world, and is worthy of much more honour and respect. It is not only certain that his case will be better at death, but it is better in life. When Aristides was by a rich man upbraided with his poverty he answered, *Thy riches do thee more hurt than my poverty does me*.

7 Whoso keepeth the law *is* a wise son: but he that *is* a companion of riotous *men* shameth his father.

Note, 1. Religion is true wisdom, and it makes men wise in every relation. He that conscientiously *keeps the law* is wise, and he will be particularly *a wise son*, that is, will act discreetly towards his parents, for the law of God teaches him to do so. 2. Bad company is a great hindrance to religion. Those that are *companions of riotous men*, that choose such for their companions and delight in their conversation, will certainly be drawn from *keeping the law of God* and drawn to transgress it, Ps. cxix. 115. 3. Wickedness is not only a reproach to the sinner himself, but to all that are akin to him. He that keeps rakish company, and spends his time and money with them, not only grieves his parents, but shames them; it turns to their disrepute, as if they had not done their duty to him. They are ashamed that a child of theirs should be scandalous and abusive to their neighbours.

8 He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor.

Note, 1. That which is ill-got, though it may increase much, will not last long. A man may perhaps raise a great estate, in a little time, by usury and extortion, fraud, and oppression of the poor, but it will not con-

tinue; he gathers it for himself, but it shall prove to have been gathered for somebody else that he has no kindness for. His estate shall go to decay, and another man's shall be raised out of the ruins of it. 2. Sometimes God in his providence so orders it that the wicked man who has gathered it, which one got unjustly another uses charitably; it is strangely turned into the hands of one that will *pity the poor* and do good with it, and so cut off the entail of the curse which he brought upon it who got it by deceit and violence. Thus the same Providence that punishes the cruel, and disables them to do any more hurt, rewards the merciful, and enables them to do so much the more good. *To him that has the ten pounds give the poor*, which the wicked servant hid in the napkin for *him that has*, and uses it well, *much shall be given*, Luke xix. 24. Thus the poor are repaid, the charitable are encouraged, and God is glorified.

9 He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.

Note, 1. It is by the word and prayer that our communion with God is kept up. God speaks to us by his law, and expects that we should hear him and heed him; *we speak him by prayer*, to which we wait for an answer of peace. How reverent and serious should we be, whenever we are hearing God and speaking to the Lord of glory! God's word be not regarded by us, our prayers shall not only not be accepted of God, but they shall be an abomination to him, and only our sacrifices, which were ceremonial appointments, but even our prayers, which are moral duties, and which, when they are put up by the upright, are so much his delight. See Isa. i. 11, 15. The sinner whose prayers God is thus angry at is one who is fully and obstinately refuses to obey God's commandments, who will not so much as give them the hearing, but causes his ears to *decline the law*, and refuses when God calls. God will therefore justly refuse him when he calls. See Prov. i. 24, 28.

10 Whoso causeth the righteous to go astray in an evil way, he shall himself fall into his own pit: but the upright shall have good things in possession.

Here is, 1. The doom of seducers, who attempt to draw good people, or those who profess to be such, into sin and mischief. Who would take a pride in *causing the righteous to go astray in an evil way*, in drawing them into a snare, that they may insult of them. They shall not gain their point; it is impossible to deceive the elect. But they shall *fall themselves into their own pit*; they shall have been not only sinners, but tempters, not only unrighteous, but enemies to the righteous, their condemnation will be so much the greater, Matt. xxiii. 14, 15. 2. The be-

business of the sincere. They shall not only be preserved from the evil way which the wicked would decoy them into, but they shall have good things, the best things, in possession, the graces and comforts of God's Spirit, besides what they have in reversion.

11 The rich man *is* wise in his own conceit; but the poor that hath understanding searcheth him out.

Note, 1. Those that are rich are apt to think themselves wise, because, whatever else they are ignorant of, they know how to get and save; and those that are purse-proud expect that all they say should be regarded as an oracle and a law, and that none should dare to contradict them, but every sheaf bow to theirs; this humour is fed by flatterers, who, because (like Jezebel's prophets) they are fed at their table, cry up their wisdom.

2. Those that are poor often prove themselves wiser than they: A poor man, who has taken pains to get wisdom, having no other way (as the rich man has) to get a reputation, searches him out, and makes it to appear that he is not such a scholar, nor such a politician, as he is taken to be. See how variously God dispenses his gifts; to some he gives wealth, to others wisdom, and it is easy to say which of these is the better gift, which we should covet more earnestly.

12 When righteous men do rejoice, there *is* great glory: but when the wicked rise, a man is hidden.

Note, 1. The comfort of the people of God is the honour of the nation in which they live. There is a great glory dwelling in the land when the righteous do rejoice, when they have their liberty, the free exercise of their religion, and are not persecuted, when the government countenances them and speaks comfortably to them, when they prosper and grow rich, and, much more, when they are preferred and employed and have power put into their hands. 2. The advancement of the wicked is the eclipsing of the beauty of a nation: When the wicked rise and get head they make head against all that is sacred, and then a man is hidden, a good man is thrust into obscurity, is necessitated to abscond for his own safety; corruptions prevail so generally that, as in Elijah's time, there seem to be no good men left, the wicked walk so thickly on every side.

13 He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

Here is, 1. The folly of indulging sin, of palliating and excusing it, denying or extenuating it, diminishing it, dissembling it, or throwing the blame of it upon others: He that thus covers his sins shall not prosper, let him never expect it. He shall not succeed in his endeavour to cover his sin, for it will be discovered, sooner or later. There is nothing hid which shall not be revealed. A bird

of the air shall carry the voice. Murder will out, and so will other sins. He shall not prosper, that is, he shall not obtain the pardon of his sin, nor can he have any true peace of conscience. David owns himself to have been in a constant agitation while he covered his sins, Ps. xxxii. 3, 4. While the patient conceals his distemper he cannot expect a cure. 2. The benefit of parting with it, both by a penitent confession and a universal reformation: He that confesses his guilt to God, and is careful not to return to sin again, shall find mercy with God, and shall have the comfort of it in his own bosom. His conscience shall be eased and his ruin prevented. See 1 John i. 9; Jer. iii 12, 13. When we set sin before our face (as David, *My sin is ever before me*) God casts it behind his back.

14 Happy *is* the man that feareth alway: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.

Here is, 1. The benefit of a holy caution. It sounds strangely, but it is very true *Happy is the man that feareth alway*. Most people think that those are happy who never fear; but there is a fear which is so far from having torment in it that it has in it the greatest satisfaction. Happy is the man who always keeps up in his mind a holy awe and reverence of God, his glory, goodness, and government, who is always afraid of offending God and incurring his displeasure, who keeps conscience tender and has a dread of the appearance of evil, who is always jealous of himself, distrustful of his own sufficiency, and lives in expectation of troubles and changes, so that, whenever they come, they are no surprise to him. He who keeps up such a fear as this will live a life of faith and watchfulness, and therefore happy is he, blessed and holy. 2. The danger of a sinful presumption: He that hardens his heart, that mocks at fear, and sets God and his judgments at defiance, and receives not the impressions of his word or rod, shall fall into mischief; his presumption will be his ruin, and whatever sin (which is the greatest mischief) he falls into it is owing to the hardness of his heart.

15 As a roaring lion, and a ranging bear; so is a wicked ruler over the poor people.

It is written indeed, *Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people*; but if he be a wicked ruler, that oppresses the people, especially the poor people, robbing them of the little they have and making a prey of them, whatever we may call him, this scripture calls him a roaring lion and a ranging bear. 1. In respect of his character. He is brutish, barbarous, and blood-thirsty; he is rather to be put among the beasts of prey, the wildest and most savage, than to be reckoned of that noble rank of beings whose glory is reason

and humanity. 2. In respect of the mischief he does to his subjects. He is dreadful as the *roaring lion*, who makes the forest tremble; he is *devouring as a hungry bear*, and the more necessitous he is the more mischief he does and the more greedy of gain he is.

16 The prince that wanteth understanding is also a great oppressor: but he that hateth covetousness shall prolong *his days*.

Two things are here intimated to be the causes of the mal-administration of princes:—1. The love of money, that *root of all evil*; for *hating covetousness* here stands opposed to *oppression*, according to Moses's character of good magistrates, *men fearing God and hating covetousness* (Exod. xviii. 21), not only not being covetous, but hating it, and shaking the hands from the holding of bribes. A ruler that is covetous will neither do justly nor love mercy, but the people under him shall be bought and sold. 2. Want of consideration. *He that hates covetousness shall prolong his government and peace*, shall be happy in the affections of his people and the blessing of his God. It is as much the interest as the duty of princes to reign in righteousness. Oppressors therefore and tyrants are the greatest fools in the world; they *want understanding*; they do not consult their own honour, ease, and safety, but sacrifice all to their ambition of an absolute and arbitrary power. They might be much happier in the hearts of their subjects than in their necks or estates.

17 A man that doeth violence to the blood of *any person* shall flee to the pit; let no man stay him.

This agrees with that ancient law, *Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed* (Gen. ix. 6), and proclaims, 1. The doom of the shedder of blood. He that has committed murder, though he flees for his life, shall be continually haunted with terrors, shall himself *flee to the pit*, betray himself, and torment himself, like Cain, who, when he had killed his brother, became a fugitive and a vagabond, and trembled continually. 2. The duty of the avenger of blood, whether the magistrate or the next of kin, or whoever are concerned in making inquisition for blood, let them be close and vigorous in the prosecution, and let it not be bought off. Those that acquit the murderer, or do any thing to help him off, come in sharers in the guilt of blood; nor can the land be purged from blood but by the blood of him that shed it, Num. xxxiv. 33.

18 Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved: but *he that is perverse in his ways* shall fall at once.

Note, 1. Those that are honest are always safe. He that acts with sincerity, that speaks as he thinks, has a single eye, in every thing,

to the glory of God and the good of his brethren, that would not, for a world, do an unjust thing if he knew it, that in all manner of conversation *walks uprightly*, he shall be saved hereafter. We find a glorious company of those in *whose mouth was found no guile*, Rev. xiv. 5. They shall be safe now. Integrity and uprightness will preserve men, will give them a holy security in the worst of times; for it will preserve their comfort, their reputation, and all their interests. They may be injured, but they cannot be hurt. 2. Those that are false and dishonest are never safe: *He that is perverse in his ways*, that thinks to secure himself by fraudulent practices, by dissimulation and treachery, or by an estate ill-got, *he shall fall, nay, he shall fall at once*, not gradually, and with warning given, but suddenly, without previous notice, for he is least safe when he is most secure. *He falls at once*, and so has neither time to guard against his ruin nor to provide for it; and, being a surprise upon him, it will be so much the greater terror to him.

19 He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain *persons* shall have poverty enough.

Note, 1. Those that are diligent in their callings take the way to live comfortably: *He that tills his land*, and tends his shop, and minds his business, whatever it is, *he shall have plenty of bread*, of that which is necessary for himself and his family and with which he may be charitable to the poor; *he shall eat the labour of his hands*. 2. Those that are idle, and careless, and company-keepers, though they indulge themselves in living (as they think) easily and pleasantly, they take the way to live miserably. *He that has land and values himself upon that*, but does not till it, neglects his business, will not take pains, *but follows after vain persons*, drinks with them, joins with them in their frolics and vain sports, and idles away his time with him, *he shall have poverty enough*, shall be *satiated or replenished* with poverty (so the word is); he takes those courses which lead so directly to it that he seems to court it, and he shall have his fill of it.

20 A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.

Here, 1. We are directed in the true way to be happy, and that is to be holy and honest. *He that is faithful to God and man* shall be blessed of the Lord, and *he shall abound with blessings* of the upper and nether springs. Men shall praise him, and pray for him, and be ready to do him any kindness. *He shall abound in doing good*, and shall himself be a blessing to the place where he lives. Usefulness shall be the reward of faithfulness, and it is a good reward. 2. We are cautioned

against a false and deceitful way to happiness, and that is, right or wrong, raising an estate suddenly. Say not, *This is the way to abound with blessings, for he that makes haste to be rich, more haste than good speed, shall not be innocent*; and, if he be not, he shall not be blessed of God, but rather bring a curse upon what he has; nor, if he be not innocent, can he long be easy to himself; he shall not be accounted innocent by his neighbours, but shall have their ill will and ill word. He does not say that he *cannot be innocent*, but there is all the probability in the world that he will not prove so: *He that hasteth with his feet sinneth, stumbleth, falleth. Sed quæ reverentia legum, quis metus, aut pudor, est unquam properantis avari?—What reverence for law, what fear, what shame, was ever indicated by an avaricious man hasting to be rich?*

21 To have respect of persons is not good: for for a piece of bread that man will transgress.

Note, 1. It is a fundamental error in the administration of justice, and that which cannot but lead men to abundance of transgression, to consider the parties concerned more than the merits of the cause, so as to favour one because he is a gentleman, a scholar, my countryman, my old acquaintance, has formerly done me a kindness, or may do me one, or is of my party and persuasion, and to bear hard on the other party because he is a stranger, a poor man, has done me an ill turn, is or has been my rival, or is not of my mind, or has voted against me. Judgment is perverted when any consideration of this kind is admitted into the scale, any thing but pure right. 2. Those that are partial will be paltry. Those that have once broken through the bonds of equity, though, at first, it must be some great bribe, some noble present, that would bias them, yet, when they have debauched their consciences, they will, at length, be so sordid that for a piece of bread they will give judgment against their consciences; they will rather play at small game than sit out.

22 He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him.

Here again Solomon shows the sin and folly of those that will be rich; they are resolved that they will be so, *per fas, per ne-*—*right or wrong*: they will be so with all speed; they are getting hastily an estate. 1. They have no comfort in it: They have an evil eye, that is, they are always grieving at those that have more than they, and always grudging their necessary expenses, because they think the former keep them from seeming rich, the latter from being so, and between both they must needs be perpetually uneasy. 2. They have no assurance of the continuance of it, and yet take no thought to

provide against the loss of it: *Poverty shall come upon them, and the riches which they made wings for, that they might fly to them, will make themselves wings to fly from them; but they are secure and improvident, and do not consider this, that while they are making haste to be rich they are really making haste to be poor, else they would not trust to uncertain riches*

23 He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue.

Note, 1. Flatterers may please those for a time who, upon second thoughts, will detest and despise them. If ever they come to be convinced of the evil of those sinful courses they were flattered in, and to be ashamed of the pride and vanity which were humoured and gratified by those flatteries, they will hate the fawning flatterers as having had an ill design upon them, and the fulsome flatteries as having had an ill effect upon them and become nauseous. 2. Reprovers may displease those at first who yet afterwards, when the passion is over and the bitter physic begins to work well, will love and respect them. He that deals faithfully with his friend, in telling him of his faults, though he may put him into some heat for the present, and perhaps have hard words, instead of thanks, for his pains, yet afterwards he will not only have the comfort in his own bosom of having done his duty, but he also whom he reproveth will acknowledge that it was a kindness, will entertain a high opinion of his wisdom and faithfulness, and look upon him as fit to be a friend. He that cries out against his surgeon for hurting him when he is searching his wound will yet pay him well, and thank him too, when he has cured it.

24 Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, *It is no transgression*; the same is the companion of a destroyer.

As Christ shows the absurdity and wickedness of those children who think it is no duty, in some cases, to maintain their parents (Matt. xv. 5), so Solomon here shows the absurdity and wickedness of those who think it is no sin to rob their parents, either by force or secretly, by wheedling them or threatening them, or by wasting what they have, and (which is no better than robbing them) running into debt and leaving them to pay ... Now, 1. This is commonly made light of by untoward children; they say, "*It is no transgression*, for it will be our own shortly, our parents can well enough spare it, we have occasion for it, we cannot live as gentlemen upon the allowance our parents give us, it is too strait for us." With such excuses as these they endeavour to shift off the conviction. But, 2. How lightly soever an ungoverned youth makes of it, it is really a very

great sin; he that does it is the companion of a destroyer, no better than a robber on the highway. What wickedness will he scruple to commit who will rob his own parents?

25 He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife: but he that putteth his trust in the LORD shall be made fat.

Note, 1. Those make themselves lean, and continually unquiet, that are haughty and quarrelsome, for they are opposed to those that shall be made fat: *He that is of a proud heart*, that is conceited of himself and looks with a contempt upon all about him, that cannot bear either competition or contradiction, he *stirs up strife*, makes mischief, and creates disturbance to himself and every body else. 2. Those make themselves fat, and always easy, that live in a continual dependence upon God and his grace: *He who puts his trust in the Lord*, who, instead of struggling for himself, commits his cause to God, shall be made fat. He saves the money which others spend upon their pride and contentiousness; he enjoys himself, and has abundant satisfaction in his God; and thus his soul dwells at ease, and he is most likely to have plenty of outward good things. None live so easily, so pleasantly, as those who live by faith.

26 He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.

Here is, 1. The character of a fool: *He trusts to his own heart*, to his own wisdom and counsels, his own strength and sufficiency, his own merit and righteousness, and the good opinion he has of himself; he that does so is a fool, for he trusts to that, not only which is *deceitful above all things* (Jer. xvii. 9), but which has often deceived him. This implies that it is the character of a wise man (as before, v. 25) to *put his trust in the Lord*, and in his power and promise, and to follow his guidance, Prov. iii. 5, 6. 2. The comfort of a wise man: *He that walks wisely*, that trusts not to his own heart, but is humble and self-diffident, and goes on in the strength of the Lord God, *he shall be delivered*; when the fool, that trusts in his own heart, shall be destroyed.

27 He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse.

Here is, 1. A promise to the charitable: *He that gives to the poor* shall himself be never the poorer for so doing; *he shall not lack*. If he have but little, and so be in danger of lacking, let him give out of his little, and that will prevent it from coming to nothing; as the bounty of the widow of Sarepta to Elijah (for whom she made a little cake first) saved what she had, when it was reduced to a handful of meal. If he have much, let him give much out of it, and that will prevent its growing less; he and his

shall not want what is given in pious charity. What we gave we have. 2. A threatening to the uncharitable: *He that hides his eyes*, that he may not see the miseries of the poor nor read their petitions, lest his eye should affect his heart and extort some relief from him, *he shall have many a curse*, both from God and man, and neither causeless, and therefore they shall come. Woeful is the condition of that man who has the word of God and the prayers of the poor against him.

28 When the wicked rise, men hide themselves: but when they perish, the righteous increase.

This is to the same purport with what we had, v. 12. 1. When bad men are preferred, that which is good is clouded and run down. When power is put into the hands of the wicked, men hide themselves; wise men retire into privacy, and decline public business, not caring to be employed under them; rich men get out of the way, for fear of being squeezed for what they have; and, which is worst of all, good men abscond, despairing to do good and fearing to be persecuted and ill-treated. 2. When bad men are disgraced, degraded, and their power taken from them, then that which is good revives again, then the righteous increase; for, when they perish, good men will be put in their room, who will, by their example and interest, countenance religion and righteousness. It is well with a land when the number of good people increases in it; and it is therefore the policy of all princes, states, and potentates, to encourage them and to take special care of the good education of youth.

CHAP. XXIX.

HE, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

Here, 1. The obstinacy of many wicked people in a wicked way is to be greatly lamented. They are often reproved by parents and friends, by magistrates and ministers, by the providence of God and by their own consciences, have had their sins set in order before them and fair warning given them of the consequences of them, but all in vain; they harden their necks. Perhaps they fly away, and will not so much as give the reproof a patient hearing; or, if they do, yet they go on in the sins for which they are reproved; they will not bow their necks to the yoke, but are children of Belial; they refuse reproof (ch. x. 17), despise it (ch. v. 12), hate it, ch. xii. 1. 2. The issue of this obstinacy is to be greatly dreaded: Those that go on in sin, in spite of admonition, shall be destroyed; those that will not be reformed must expect to be ruined; if the rods answer not the end, expect the axes. They shall be suddenly destroyed, in the midst of their security, and without remedy; they have sinned against the prevent-

ing remedy, and therefore let them not expect any recovering remedy. Hell is remediless destruction. *They shall be destroyed, and no healing,* so the word is. If God wounds, who can heal?

2 When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.

This is what was said before, *ch. xxviii. 12, 28.* 1. *The people will have cause to rejoice or mourn* according as their rulers are *righteous or wicked*; for, if *the righteous* be in *authority*, sin will be punished and restrained, religion and virtue will be supported and kept in reputation; *but, if the wicked* get power in their hands, wickedness will abound, religion and religious people will be persecuted, and so the ends of government will be perverted. 2. *The people will actually rejoice or mourn* according as their rulers are *righteous or wicked*. Such a conviction are even the common people under of the excellency of virtue and religion that they will rejoice when they see them preferred and countenanced; and, on the contrary, let men have ever so much honour or power, if they be wicked and vicious, and use it ill, they *make themselves contemptible and base before all the people* (as those priests, *Mal. ii. 9*) and subjects will think themselves miserable under such a government.

3 Whoso loveth wisdom rejoiceth his father: but he that keepeth company with harlots spendeth *his* substance.

Both the parts of this verse repeat what has been often said, but, on comparing them together, the sense of them will be enlarged from each other. 1. Be it observed, to the honour of a virtuous young man, that he *loves wisdom*, he is a *philosopher* (for that signifies a *lover of wisdom*), for religion is the best philosophy; he avoids bad company, and especially the company of lewd women. Hereby he *rejoices his* parents, and has the satisfaction of being a comfort to them, and increases his estate, and is likely to live comfortably. 2. Be it observed, to the reproach of a vicious young man, that he *hates wisdom*; he *keeps company with* scandalous women, who will be his ruin, both in soul and body; he grieves his parents, and, like the prodigal son, devours their living *with harlots*. Nothing will beggar men sooner than the lusts of uncleanness; and the best preservative from those ruinous lusts is *wisdom*.

4 The king by judgment establisheth the land: but he that receiveth gifts overthroweth it.

Here is, 1. The happiness of a people under a good government. The care and business of a prince should be to *establish the land*, to maintain its fundamental laws, to

settle the minds of his subjects and make them easy, to secure their liberties and properties from hostilities and for posterity, and to set in order the things that are wanting; this he must do *by judgment*, by wise counsels, and by the steady administration of justice, without respect of persons, which will have these good effects. 2. The misery of a people under a bad government: *A man of oblations* (so it is in the margin) *overthrows the land*; a man that is either sacrilegious or superstitious, or that invades the priest's office, as Saul and Uzziah—or a man that aims at nothing but getting money, and will, for a good bribe, connive at the most guilty, and, in hope of one, persecute the innocent—such governors as these will ruin a country.

5 A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet.

Those may be said to *flatter their neighbours* who commend and applaud that good in them (the good they do or the good they have) which really either is not or is not such as they represent it, and who profess that esteem and that affection for them which really they have not; these *spread a net for their feet*. 1. For their neighbours' feet, whom they *flatter*. They have an ill design in it; they would not praise them as they do but that they hope to make an advantage of them, and it is therefore wisdom to suspect those who flatter us, that they are secretly laying a snare for us, and to stand on our guard accordingly. Or it has an ill effect on those who are flattered; it puffs them up with pride, and makes them conceited and confident of themselves, and so proves a net that entangles them in sin. 2. For their own feet; so some understand it. He that flatters others in expectation that they will return his compliments and flatter him, does but make himself ridiculous and odious even to those he flatters.

6 In the transgression of an evil man *there is* a snare: but the righteous doth sing and rejoice.

Here is, 1. The peril of a sinful way. There is not only a punishment at the end of it, but *a snare* in it. One sin is a temptation to another, and there are troubles which, as a *snare*, come suddenly upon evil men in the midst of their transgressions; nay, their transgression itself often involves them in vexations; their sin is their punishment, and they are *holden in the cords of their own iniquity*, *ch. v. 22*. 2. The pleasantness of the way of holiness. The snare that is *in the transgression of evil men* spoils all their mirth, but *righteous men* are kept from those snares, or delivered out of them; they walk at liberty, walk in safety, and therefore they *sing and rejoice*. Those that make God their chief joy have him for their exceeding joy, and it is their own fault if they do not *rejoice ever*.

more. If there be any true joy on this side heaven, doubtless those have it whose conversation is in heaven.

7 The righteous considereth the cause of the poor: *but* the wicked regardeth not to know it.

It is a pity but that every one who sues *sub forma pauperis*—as a pauper, should have an honest cause (they are of all others inexcusable if they have not), because the scripture has so well provided that it should have a fair hearing, and that the judge himself should be of counsel, as for the prisoner, so for the pauper. 1. It is here made the character of a righteous judge that he considers the cause of the poor. It is every man's duty to consider the poor (Ps. xli. 1), but the judgment of the poor is to be considered by those that sit in judgment; they must take as much pains to find out the right in a poor man's cause as in a rich man's. Sense of justice must make both judge and advocate as solicitous and industrious in the poor man's cause as if they hoped for the greatest advantage. 2. It is made the character of a wicked man that because it is a poor man's cause, which there is nothing to be got by, he regards not to know it, in the true state of it, for he cares not which way it goes, right or wrong. See Job xxix. 16.

8 Scornful men bring a city into a snare: but wise men turn away wrath.

See here, 1. Who are the men that are dangerous to the public—*scornful men*. When such are employed in the business of the state they do things with precipitation, because they scorn to deliberate, and will not take time for consideration and consultation; they do things illegal and unjustifiable, because they scorn to be hampered by laws and constitutions; they break their faith, because they scorn to be bound by their word, and provoke the people, because they scorn to please them. Thus they bring a city into a snare by their ill conduct, or (as the margin reads it) they set a city on fire; they sow discord among the citizens and run them into confusion. Those are *scornful men* that mock at religion, the obligations of conscience, the fears of another world, and every thing that is sacred and serious. Such men are the plagues of their generation; they bring God's judgments upon a land, set men together by the ears, and so bring all to confusion. 2. Who are the men that are the blessings of a land—the *wise men* who by promoting religion, which is true wisdom, turn away the wrath of God, and who, by prudent counsels, reconcile contending parties and prevent the mischievous consequences of divisions. Proud and foolish men kindle the fires which wise and good men must extinguish.

9 If a wise man contendeth with a foolish man, whether he rage or laugh, there is no rest.

A wise man is here advised not to set his wit to a fool's, not to dispute with him, or by contending with him to think either of fastening reason upon him or gaining right from him: *If a wise man contend with a wise man, he may hope to be understood, and, as far as he has reason and equity on his side, to carry his point, at least to bring the controversy to a head and make it issue amicably; but, if he contend with a foolish man, there is no rest; he will see no end of it, nor will he have any satisfaction in it, but must expect to be always uneasy.* 1. Whether the foolish man he contends with *rage or laugh*, whether he take angrily or scornfully what is said to him, whether he rail at it or mock at it, one of the two he will do, and so there will be no rest. However it is given, it will be ill-taken, and the wisest man must expect to be either scolded or ridiculed if he contend with a fool. He that fights with a dunghill, whether he be conqueror or conquered, is sure to be defiled. 2. Whether the wise man himself *rage or laugh*, whether he take the serious or the jocular way of dealing with the fool, whether he be severe or pleasant with him, whether he come with a rod or with the *spirit of meekness* (1 Cor. iv. 21), it is all alike, no good is done. *We have piped unto you, and you have not danced, mourned unto you, and you have not lamented.*

10 The bloodthirsty hate the upright: but the just seek his soul.

Note, 1. Bad men hate their best friends: *The blood-thirsty*, all the seed of the old serpent, who was a murderer from the beginning, all that inherit his enmity against the seed of the woman, *hate the upright*; they seek the ruin of good men because they condemn the wicked world and witness against it. Christ told his disciples that they should be *hated of all men*. Bloody men do especially *hate upright* magistrates, who would restrain and reform them, and put the laws in execution against them, and so really do them a kindness. 2. Good men love their worst enemies: *The just*, whom the bloody men hate, *seek their soul*, pray for their conversion, and would gladly do any thing for their salvation. This Christ taught us. *Father, forgive them. The just seek his soul*, that is, the soul of the upright, whom the bloody hate (so it is commonly understood), seek to protect it from violence, and save it from, or avenge it at, the hands of the *blood-thirsty*.

11 A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.

Note, 1. It is a piece of weakness to be very open: He is a *fool* who utters all his mind,—who tells every thing he knows, and has in his mouth instantly whatever he has in his thoughts, and can keep no counsel,—who, whatever is started in discourse, quickly shoots his bolt,—who, when he is provoked, will say any thing that comes uppermost.

whoever is reflected upon by it,—who, when he is to speak of any business, will say all he thinks, and yet never thinks he says enough, whether choice or refuse, corn or chaff, pertinent or impertinent, you shall have it all.

2. It is a piece of wisdom to be upon the reserve: *A wise man will not utter all his mind at once, but will take time for a second thought, or reserve the present thought for a fitter time, when it will be more pertinent and likely to answer his intention; he will not deliver himself in a continued speech, or starched discourse, but with pauses, that he may hear what is to be objected and answer it.* *Non minus interdum oratorum est tacere quam dicere—True oratory requires an occasional pause.* Plin. Ep. vii. 6.

12 If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked.

Note, 1. It is a great sin in any, especially in rulers, to *hearken to lies*; for thereby they not only give a wrong judgment themselves of persons and things, according to the lies they give credit to, but they encourage others to give wrong informations. Lies will be told to those that will hearken to them; but the receiver, in this case, is as bad as the thief. 2. Those that do so will have *all their servants wicked*. All their servants will appear wicked, for they will have lies told of them; and they will be wicked, for they will tell lies to them. All that have their ear will fill their ear with slanders and false characters and representations; and so if princes, as well as people, will be deceived, they shall be deceived, and, instead of devolving the guilt of their own false judgments upon their servants that misinformed them, they must share in their servants' guilt, and on them will much of the blame lie for encouraging such misinformations and giving countenance and ear to them.

13 The poor and the deceitful man meet together: the LORD lighteneth both their eyes.

This shows how wisely the great God serves the designs of his providence by persons of very different tempers, capacities, and conditions in the world, even, 1. By those that are contrary the one to the other. Some are poor and forced to borrow; others are rich, have a great deal of *the mammon of unrighteousness* (*deceitful riches* they are called), and they are creditors, or *usurers*, as it is in the margin. Some are poor, and honest, and laborious; others are rich, slothful, and *deceitful*. They meet together in the business of this world, and have dealings with one another, and *the Lord enlightens both their eyes*; he causes his sun to shine upon both and gives them both the comforts of this life. To some of both sorts he gives his grace. He enlightens the eyes of the poor by giving them patience, and of the deceitful by giving them repentance, as Zaccheus. 2. By those that we think could best be spared. *The poor and*

the deceitful we are ready to look upon as blemishes of Providence, but God makes even them to display the beauty of Providence; he has wise ends not only in leaving the poor always with us, but in permitting *the deceived and the deceiver*, for both are his (Job xii. 16) and turn to his praise.

14 The king that faithfully judgeth the poor, his throne shall be established for ever.

Here is, 1. The duty of magistrates, and that is, to judge faithfully between man and man, and to determine all causes brought before them, according to truth and equity, particularly to take care of *the poor*, not to countenance them in an unjust cause for the sake of their poverty (Exod. xxiii. 3), but to see that their poverty do not turn to their prejudice if they have a just cause. The rich will look to themselves, but *the poor* and needy the prince must defend (Ps. lxxxii. 3) and plead for, Prov. xxxi. 9. 2. The happiness of those magistrates that do their duty. Their *throne of honour, their tribunal of judgment, shall be established for ever*. This will secure to them the favour of God and strengthen their interest in the affections of their people, both which will be the establishment of their power, and help to transmit it to posterity and perpetuate it in the family.

15 The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.

Parents, in educating their children, must consider, 1. The benefit of due correction. They must not only tell their children what is good and evil, but they must chide them, and correct them too, if need be, when they either neglect that which is good or do that which is evil. If a *reproof* will serve without *the rod*, it is well, but *the rod* must never be used without a rational and grave *reproof*; and then, though it may be a present uneasiness both to the father and to the child, yet it will *give wisdom*. *Vexatio dat intellectum—Vexation sharpens the intellect*. The child will take warning, and so will get *wisdom*. 2. The mischief of undue indulgence: *A child that is not restrained or reproofed, but is left to himself*, as Adonijah was, to follow his own inclinations, may do well if he will, but, if he take to ill courses, nobody will hinder him; it is a thousand to one but he proves a disgrace to his family, and *brings his mother, who fondled him and humoured him in his licentiousness, to shame*, to poverty, to reproach, and perhaps will himself be abusive to her and give her ill language.

16 When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increaseth: but the righteous shall see their fall.

Note, 1. The more sinners there are the more sin there is: *When the wicked, being countenanced by authority, grow numerous,*

and walk on every side, no marvel if *transgression increases*, as a plague in the country is said to increase when still more and more are infected with it. *Transgression* grows more impudent and bold, more imperious and threatening, when there are many to keep it in countenance. In the old world, when *men began to multiply*, they began to degenerate and corrupt themselves and one another. 2. The more sin there is the nearer is the ruin threatened. Let not *the righteous* have their faith and hope shocked by the increase of sin and sinners. Let them not say that they have *cleansed their hands in vain*, or that *God has forsaken the earth*, but wait with patience; the transgressors shall fall, the measure of their iniquity will be full, and then they shall fall from their dignity and power, and fall into disgrace and destruction, and *the righteous shall* have the satisfaction of *seeing their fall* (Ps. xxxvii. 34), perhaps in this world, certainly in the judgment of the great day, when the fall of God's implacable enemies will be the joy and triumph of glorified saints. See Isa. lxvi. 24; Gen. xix. 28.

17 Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.

Note, 1. It is a very happy thing when children prove the comfort of their parents. Good children are so; they *give them rest*, make them easy, and free from the many cares they have had concerning them; *yea, they give delight unto their souls*. It is a pleasure to parents, which none know but those that are blessed with it, to see the happy fruit of the good education they have given their children, and to have a prospect of their well-doing for both worlds; it *gives delight* proportionable to the many thoughts of heart that have been concerning them. 2. In order to this, children must be trained up under a strict discipline, and not suffered to do what they will and to go without rebuke when they do amiss. The foolishness bound up in their hearts must by correction be driven out when they are young, or it will break out, to their own and their parents' shame, when they are grown up.

18 Where *there is* no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.

See here, 1. The misery of the people that want a settled ministry: *Where there is no vision*, no prophet to expound the law, no priest or Levite to teach the good knowledge of the Lord, no means of grace, the word of the Lord is scarce, there is *no open vision* (1 Sam. iii. 1), where it is so *the people perish*; the word has many significations, any of which will apply here. 1. *The people are made naked*, stripped of their ornaments and so exposed to shame, stripped of their armour and so exposed to danger. How bare

does a place look without Bibles and ministers, and what an easy prey is it to the enemy of souls! 2. *The people rebel*, not only against God, but against their prince; good preaching would make people good subjects, but, for want of it, they are turbulent and factious, and *despise dominions*, because they know no better. 3. *The people are idle*, or *they play*, as the scholars are apt to do when the master is absent; they do nothing to any good purpose, but stand all the day idle, and sporting in the market-place, for want of instruction what to do and how to do it. 4. *They are scattered as sheep having no shepherd*, for want of the masters of assemblies to call them and keep them together, Mark vi. 34. They are scattered from God and their duty by apostasies, from one another by divisions; God is provoked to scatter them by his judgments, 2 Chron. xv. 3, 5. *They perish*; they are *destroyed for lack of knowledge*, Hos. iv. 6. See what reason we have to be thankful to God for the plenty of *open vision* which we enjoy.

II. The felicity of a people that have not only a settled, but a successful ministry among them, the people that hear and *keep the law*, among whom religion is uppermost; *happy* are such a people and every particular person among them. It is not having the law, but obeying it, and living up to it, that will entitle us to blessedness.

19 A servant will not be corrected by words: for though he understand he will not answer.

Here is the description of an unprofitable, slothful, wicked servant, a slave that serves not from conscience, or love, but purely from fear. Let those that have such servants put on patience to bear the vexation and not disturb themselves at it. See their character. 1. No rational words will work upon them: *they will not be corrected* and reformed, not brought to their business, nor cured of their idleness and laziness, by fair means, no, nor by foul words; even the most gentle masters will be forced to use severity with them; no reason will serve their turn, for they are unreasonable. 2. No rational words will be got from them. They are dogged and sullen; and, *though they understand* the questions you ask them, *they will not give you an answer*; though you make it ever so plain to them what you expect from them, they will not promise you to mend what is amiss nor to mind their business. See the folly of those servants whose mouth by their silence calls for strokes; they might be *corrected by words* and save blows, but they *will not*.

20 Seest thou a man *that is hasty* in his words? *there is* more hope of a fool than of him.

Solomon here shows that there is little hope of bringing a man to wisdom that is hasty either, 1. Through rashness and in-

consideration: *Seest thou a man that is hasty in his matters*, that is of a light desultory wit, that seems to take a thing quickly, but takes it by the halves, gallops over a book or science, but takes no time to digest it, no time to pause or muse upon a business? *There is more hope of making a scholar and a wise man of one that is dull and heavy, and slow in his studies, than of one that has such a mercurial genius and cannot fix.* 2. Through pride and conceitedness: *Seest thou a man that is forward to speak to every matter that is started, and affects to speak first to it, to open it, and speak last to it, to give judgment upon it, as if he were an oracle?* *There is more hope of a modest fool, who is sensible of his folly, than of such a self-conceited one.*

21 He that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child shall have him become *his son* at the length.

Note, 1. It is an imprudent thing in a master to be too fond of a servant, to advance him too fast, and admit him to be too familiar with him, to suffer him to be over-nice and curious in his diet, and clothing, and lodging, and so to bring him up delicately, because he is a favourite, and an agreeable servant; it should be remembered that he is a servant, and, by being thus indulged, will be spoiled for any other place. Servants must endure hardness. 2. It is an ungrateful thing in a servant, but what is very common, to behave insolently because he has been used tenderly. The humble prodigal thinks himself unworthy to be called a son, and is content to be a servant; the pampered slave thinks himself too good to be called a servant, and will be a son at the length, will take his ease and liberty, will be on a par with his master, and perhaps pretend to the inheritance. Let masters give their servants that which is equal and fit for them, and neither more nor less. This is very applicable to the body, which is a servant to the soul; those that delicately bring up the body, that humour it, and are over-tender of it, will find that at length it will forget its place, and become a son, a master, a perfect tyrant.

22 An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression.

See here the mischief that flows from an angry, passionate, furious disposition. 1. It makes men provoking to one another: *An angry man stirs up strife*, is troublesome and quarrelsome in the family and in the neighbourhood, blows the coals, and even forces those to fall out with him that would live peaceably and quietly by him. 2. It makes men provoking to God: *A furious man*, who is wedded to his humours and passions, cannot but abound in transgressions. Undue anger is a sin which is the cause of many sins; it not only hinders men from calling upon

God's name, but it occasions their swearing, and cursing, and profaning God's name.

23 A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.

This agrees with what Christ said more than once, 1. That those who *exalt themselves shall be abased*. Those that think to gain respect by lifting up themselves above their rank, by looking high, talking big, appearing fine, and applauding themselves, will on the contrary expose themselves to contempt, lose their reputation, and provoke God by humbling providences to bring them down and lay them low. 2. That those who *humble themselves shall be exalted*, and shall be established in their dignity: *Honour shall uphold the humble in spirit*; their humility is their honour, and that shall make them truly and safely great, and recommend them to the esteem of all that are wise and good.

24 Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul: he heareth cursing, and bewrayeth it not.

See here what sin and ruin those involve themselves in who are drawn away by the enticement of sinners. 1. They incur a great deal of guilt: *He does so that goes partner with such as rob and defraud, and casts in his lot among them*, ch. i. 11, &c. The receiver is as bad as the thief; and, being drawn in to join with him in the commission of the sin, he cannot escape joining with him in the concealment of it, though it be with the most horrid perjuries and execrations. They hear cursing when they are sworn to tell the whole truth, but they will not confess. 2. They hasten to utter ruin: They even *hate their own souls*, for they wilfully do that which will be the inevitable destruction of them. See the absurdities sinners are guilty of; they love death, than which nothing is more dreadful, and *hate their own souls*, than which nothing is more dear.

25 The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.

Here, 1. We are cautioned not to dread the power of man, neither the power of a prince nor the power of the multitude; both are formidable enough, but the slavish fear of either brings a snare, that is, exposes men to many insults (some take a pride in terrifying the timorous), or rather exposes men to many temptations. Abraham, for fear of man, denied his wife, and Peter his Master, and many a one his God and religion. We must not shrink from duty, nor commit sin, to avoid the wrath of man, nor, though we see it coming upon us, be disquieted with fear, Dan. iii. 16; Ps. cxviii. 6. He must himself die (Isa. li. 12) and can but kill our body, Luke xii. 5. 2. We are encouraged to depend upon the power of God, which would keep us from all that fear of man which has

either torment or temptation in it. *Whoso puts his trust in the Lord*, for protection and supply in the way of duty, *shall be set on high*, above the power of man and above the fear of that power. A holy confidence in God makes a man both great and easy, and enables him to look with a gracious contempt upon the most formidable designs of hell and earth against him. If God be my salvation, *I will trust and not be afraid.*

26 Many seek the ruler's favour; but every man's judgment cometh from the LORD:

See here, 1. What is the common course men take to advance and enrich themselves, and make themselves great: they seek the ruler's favour, and, as if all their judgment proceeded from him, to him they make all their court. Solomon was himself a ruler, and knew with what sedulity men made their application to him, some on one errand, others on another, but all for his favour. It is the way of the world to make interest with great men, and expect much from the smiles of second causes, which yet are uncertain, and frequently disappoint them. Many take a great deal of pains in seeking the ruler's favour and yet cannot have it; many have it for a little while, but they cannot keep themselves in it, by some little turn or other they are brought under his displeasure; many have it, and keep it, and yet it does not answer their expectation, they cannot make that hand of it that they promised themselves they should. Haman had the ruler's favour, and yet it availed him nothing. 2. What is the wisest course men can take to be happy. Let them look up to God, and seek the favour of the Ruler of rulers; for every man's judgment proceeds from the Lord. It is not with us as the ruler pleases; his favour cannot make us happy, his frowns cannot make us miserable. But it is as God pleases; every creature is that to us that God makes it to be, no more and no other. He is the first Cause, on which all second causes depend; if he help not, they cannot, 2 Kings vi. 27; Job xxxiv. 29.

27 An unjust man is an abomination to the just: and he that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked.

This expresses not only the innate contrariety that there is between virtue and vice, as between light and darkness, fire and water, but the old enmity that has always been between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, Gen. iii. 15. 1. All that are sanctified have a rooted antipathy to wickedness and wicked people. They have a good will to the souls of all (God has, and would have none perish); but they hate the ways and practices of those that are impious towards God and injurious towards men; they cannot hear of them nor speak of them with-

out a holy indignation; they loathe the society of the ungodly and unjust, and dread the thought of giving them any countenance, but do all they can to bring the wickedness of the wicked to an end. Thus an unjust man makes himself odious to the just, and it is one part of his present shame and punishment that good men cannot endure him. 2. All that are unsanctified have a like rooted antipathy to godliness and godly people: *He that is upright in the way*, that makes conscience of what he says and does, is an abomination to the wicked, whose wickedness is restrained perhaps and suppressed, or, at least, shamed and condemned, by the uprightness of the upright. Thus Cain did, who was of his father the devil. And this is not only the wickedness of the wicked, that they hate those whom God loves, but their misery too, that they hate those whom they shall shortly see in everlasting bliss and honour, and who shall have dominion over them in the morning, Ps. xlix. 14.

CHAP. XXX.

This and the following chapter are an appendix to Solomon's proverbs; but they are both expressly called prophecies in the first verses of both, by which it appears that the penmen of them, whoever they were, were divinely inspired. This chapter was penned by one that bears the name of "Agur Ben Jakob." What tribe he was of, or when he lived, we are not told; what he wrote, being indited by the Holy Ghost, is here kept upon record. We have here, I. His confession of faith, ver. 1-6. II. His prayer, ver. 7-9. III. A caution against wronging servants, ver. 10. IV. Four wicked generations, ver. 11-14. V. Four things insupportable, ver. 15, 16, to which is added fair warning to ungodly children, ver. 17. VI. Four things unsearchable, ver. 18-20. VII. Four things intolerable, ver. 21-23. VIII. Four things little and wise, ver. 24-28. IX. Four things stately, ver. 29 to the end.

THE words of Agur the son of Jakeh, even the prophecy: the man spake unto Ithiel, even unto Ithiel and Ucal, 2 Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. 3 I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy. 4 Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell? 5 Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. 6 Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.

Some make Agur to be not the name of this author, but his character; he was a collector (so it signifies), a gatherer, one that did not compose things himself, but collected the wise sayings and observations of others, made abstracts of the writings of others, which some think is the reason why he says (v. 3), "I have not learned wisdom myself, but have been a scribe, or amanuensis, to other wise and learned men." Note, We must not

our talent, though it be but one, but, as we have received the gift, so minister the same, if it be but to collect what others have written. But we rather suppose it to be his name, which, no doubt, was well known then, though not mentioned elsewhere in scripture.

Ithiel and *Ucal* are mentioned, either, 1. As the names of his pupils, whom he instructed, or who consulted him as an oracle, having a great opinion of his wisdom and goodness. Probably they wrote from him what he dictated, as Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah, and by their means it was preserved, and they were ready to attest it to be his, for it was spoken to them; they were two witnesses of it. Or, 2. As the subject of his discourse. *Ithiel* signifies *God with me*, the application of *Immanuel*, *God with us*. The word calls him *God with us*; faith appropriates this, and calls him "*God with me*, who loved me, and gave himself for me, and into union and communion with whom I am admitted." *Ucal* signifies the *Mighty One*, for it is upon one that is mighty that help is laid for us. Many good interpreters therefore apply this to the Messiah, for to him all the prophecies bear witness, and why not this men? It is what Agur spoke concerning *Ithiel*, even concerning *Ithiel* (that is the name in which the stress is laid) and *Ucal*—the *Mighty God* (Isa. ix. 6) *with us*, Isa. vii. 14.

Three things the prophet here aims at:—
1. To abase himself. Before he makes confession of his faith he makes confession of his folly and the weakness and deficiency of reason, which make it so necessary that we be guided and governed by faith. Before he speaks concerning the Saviour he speaks of himself as needing a Saviour, and as nothing without him; we must go out of ourselves before we go into Jesus Christ. 1. He speaks of himself as wanting a righteousness, and having done foolishly, very foolishly. When he reflects upon himself he owns, *Surely I am more brutish than any man*. Every man has some brutish, Jer. x. 14. But he that knows his own heart knows so much more evil of himself than he does of any other that he cries out, "*Surely I cannot but think that I am more brutish than any man*; surely no man has such a corrupt deceitful heart as I have. I have acted as one that has not the understanding of Adam, as one that is wretchedly degenerated from the knowledge and righteousness in which man was at first created; nay, I have not the common sense and reason of a man, else I should not have done what I have done." Agur, when he was applied to by others as wiser than most, acknowledged himself more foolish than any. Whatever high opinion others may have of us, it becomes us to have low thoughts of ourselves. He speaks of himself as wanting a revelation to guide him in the ways of truth and wisdom. He owns (v. 3) "*I neither learned wisdom by any power of my own* (the depths it cannot be fathomed by my line and

plummet) nor know I the knowledge of the holy ones, the angels, our first parents in innocence, nor of the holy things of God; I can get no insight into them, nor make any judgment of them, further than God is pleased to make them known to me." The natural man, the natural powers, perceive not, nay, they receive not, the things of the Spirit of God. Some suppose Agur to be asked, as Apollo's oracle was of old, *Who was the wisest man?* The answer is, *He that is sensible of his own ignorance*, especially in divine things. *Hoc tantum scio, me nihil scire*—*All that I know is that I know nothing*.

II. To advance Jesus Christ and the Father in him (v. 4): *Who hath ascended up into heaven, &c.* 1. Some understand this of God and of his works, which are both incomparable and unsearchable. He challenges all mankind to give an account of the heavens above, of the winds, the waters, the earth: "*Who can pretend to have ascended up to heaven*, to take a view of the orbs above, and then to have descended, to give us a description of them? Who can pretend to have had the command of the winds, to have grasped them in his hand and managed them, as God does, or to have bound the waves of the sea with a swaddling band, as God has done? Who has established the ends of the earth, or can describe the strength of its foundations or the extent of its limits? Tell me what is the man's name who can undertake to vie with God or to be of his cabinet-council, or, if he be dead, what is his name to whom he has bequeathed this great secret." 2. Others refer it to Christ, to *Ithiel* and *Ucal*, the Son of God, for it is the Son's name, as well as the Father's, that is here enquired after, and a challenge given to any to vie with him. We must now exalt Christ as one revealed; they then magnified him as one concealed, as one they had heard something of but had very dark and defective ideas of. *We have heard the fame of him with our ears*, but cannot describe him (Job xxviii. 22); certainly it is God that has gathered the wind in his fists and bound the waters as in a garment; but what is his name? It is, *I am that I am* (Exod. iii. 14), a name to be adored, not to be understood. What is his Son's name, by whom he does all these things? The Old-Testament saints expected the Messiah to be the *Son of the Blessed*, and he is here spoken of as a person distinct from the Father, but his name as yet secret. Note, The great Redeemer, in the glories of his providence and grace, can neither be paralleled nor found out to perfection (1.) The glories of the kingdom of his grace are unsearchable and unparalleled; for who besides has ascended into heaven and descended? Who besides is perfectly acquainted with both worlds, and has himself a free correspondence with both, and is therefore fit to settle a correspondence between them, as Mediator, as Jacob's ladder? He was in heaven in the Father's bosom (John i. 1, 18);

thence he descended to take our nature upon him; and never was there such condescension. In that nature he again ascended (Eph. (v. 9), to receive the promised glories of his exalted state; and who besides has done this? Rom. x. 6. (2.) The glories of the kingdom of his providence are likewise unsearchable and unparalleled. The same that reconciles heaven and earth was the Creator of both and governs and disposes of all. His government of the three lower elements of *air, water, and earth*, is here particularised. [1.] The motions of the air are of his directing. Satan pretends to be *the prince of the power of the air*, but even there Christ has *all power*; he *rebuked the winds* and they obeyed him. [2.] The bounds of the water are of his appointing: He *binds the waters as in a garment*; *hitherto they shall come, and no further*, Job xxxviii. 9—11. [3.] The foundations of the earth are of his establishing. He founded it at first; he upholds it still. If Christ had not interposed, the foundations of the earth would have sunk under the load of the curse upon the ground, for man's sin. Who and what is the mighty He that does all this? We cannot find out God, nor the Son of God, unto perfection. *Oh the depth of that knowledge!*

III. To assure us of the truth of the word of God, and to recommend it to us, v. 5, 6. Agur's pupils expect to be instructed by him in the things of God. "Alas!" says he, "I cannot undertake to instruct you; go to the word of God; see what he has there revealed of himself, and of his mind and will; you need know no more than what that will teach you, and that you may rely upon as sure and sufficient. *Every word of God is pure*; there is not the least mixture of falsehood and corruption in it." The words of men are to be heard and read with jealousy and with allowance, but there is not the least ground to suspect any deficiency in the word of God; it is *as silver purified seven times* (Ps. xii. 6), without the least dross or alloy. *Thy word is very pure*, Ps. cxix. 140. 1. It is sure, and therefore we must trust to it and venture our souls upon it. God in his word, God in his promise, is *a shield*, a sure protection, to all those that put themselves under his protection and *put their trust in him*. The word of God, applied by faith, will make us easy in the midst of the greatest dangers, Ps. xli. 1, 2. 2. It is sufficient, and therefore we must not add to it (v. 6): *Add thou not unto his words*, because they are pure and perfect. This forbids the advancing of any thing, not only in contradiction to the word of God, but in competition with it; though it be under the plausible pretence of explaining it, yet, if it pretend to be of equal authority with it, it is *adding to his words*, which is not only a reproach to them as insufficient, but opens a door to all manner of errors and corruptions; for, that one absurdity being granted, that the word of any man, or company of men, is to be received with the same faith and vene-

ration as the word of God, a thousand follow. We must be content with what God has thought fit to make known to us of his mind and not covet to be *wise above what is written*, for, (1.) God will resent it as a heinous affront "He will *reprove thee*, will reckon with thee as a traitor against his crown and dignity and lay thee under the heavy doom of those that add to his words, or diminish from them," Deut. iv. 2; xii. 32. (2.) We shall run ourselves into endless mistakes: "Thou wilt be found a liar, a corrupter of the word of truth, a broacher of heresies, and guilty of the worst of forgeries, counterfeiting the broad seal of heaven, and pretending a divine mission and inspiration, when it is all a cheat. Men may be thus deceived, but *God is not mocked*."

7 *Two things* have I required of thee; deny me *them* not before I die. 8 Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: 9 Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.

After Agur's confession and creed, here follows his litany, where we may observe,

I. The preface to his prayer: *Two things have I required* (that is, *requested*) of thee O God! Before we go to pray it is good to consider what we need, and what the things are which we have to ask of God.—What does our case require? What do our hearts desire? What would we that God should do for us?—that we may not have to seek for our petition and request when we should be presenting it. He begs, *Deny me not before I die*. In praying, we should think of dying, and pray accordingly. "Lord, give me pardon, and peace, and grace, before I die, before I go hence and be no more; for, if I be not renewed and sanctified before I die, the work will not be done after; if I do not prevail in prayer before I die, prayers afterwards will not prevail, no, not *Lord, Lord*. There is none of this wisdom or working in the grave. *Deny me not thy grace*, for, if thou do, I die; I perish; if thou be silent to me, *I am like those that go down to the pit*, Ps. xxviii. 1. *Deny me not before I die*; as long as I continue in the land of the living, let me continue under the conduct of thy grace and good providence."

II. The prayer itself. The *two things* he requires are grace sufficient and food convenient. 1. Grace sufficient for his soul. *Remove from me vanity and lies*; deliver me from sin, from all corrupt principles, practices, and affections, from error and mistake, which are at the bottom of all sin, from the love of the world and the things of it, which are *all vanity and a lie*." Some understand it as a prayer for the pardon of sin, for, when

God forgives sin, he removes it, he takes it away. Or, rather, it is a prayer of the same import with that, *Lead us not into temptation*. Nothing is more mischievous to us than sin, and therefore there is nothing which we should more earnestly pray against than that we may do no evil. 2. Food convenient for his body. Having prayed for the operations of divine grace, he here begs the favours of the divine Providence, but such as may tend to the good and not to the prejudice of the soul. (1.) He prays that of God's free gift he might receive a competent portion of the good things of this life: "*Feed me with the bread of my allowance*, such bread as thou thinkest fit to allow me." As to all the gifts of the divine Providence, we must refer ourselves to the divine wisdom. Or, "*the bread that is fit for me*, as a man, a master of a family, that which is agreeable to my rank and condition in the world." For *as is the man so is his competency*. Our Saviour seems to refer to this when he teaches us to pray, *Give us this day our daily bread*, as this seems to refer to Jacob's vow, in which he wished for no more than *bread to eat and raiment to put on*. Food convenient for us is what we ought to be content with, though we have not dainties, varieties, and superfluities—what is for necessity, though we have not for delight and ornament; and it is what we may in faith pray for and depend upon God for. (2.) He prays that he may be kept from every condition of life that would be a temptation to him. [1.] He prays against the extremes of abundance and want: *Give me neither poverty nor riches*. He does not hereby prescribe to God, nor pretend to teach him what condition he shall allot to him, nor does he pray against poverty or riches absolutely, as in themselves evil, for either of them, by the grace of God, may be sanctified and be a means of good to us; but, *First*, He hereby intends to express the value which wise and good men have for a middle state of life, and, with submission to the will of God, desires that that might be his state, neither great honour nor great contempt. We must learn how to manage both (as St. Paul, Phil. iv. 12), but rather wish to be always between both. *Optimus pecuniæ modus qui nec in paupertatem cedit nec procul à paupertate discedit*—*The best condition is that which neither implies poverty nor yet recedes far from it*. Seneca. *Secondly*, He hereby intimates a holy jealousy he had of himself, that he could not keep his ground against the temptations either of an afflicted or a prosperous condition. Others may preserve their integrity in either, but he is afraid of both, and therefore grace teaches him to pray against riches as much as nature against poverty; but *the will of the Lord be done*. [2.] He gives a pious reason for his prayer, v. 9. He does not say, "*Lest I be rich*, and cumbered with care, and envied by my neighbours, and eaten up with a multitude of servants, or, *lest I be poor*

and trampled on, and forced to work hard and fare hard;" but, "*Lest I be rich and sin, or poor and sin*." Sin is that which a good man is afraid of in every condition and under every event; witness Nehemiah (ch. vi. 13), *that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin*. *First*, He dreads the temptations of a prosperous condition, and therefore even deprecates that: *Lest I be full and deny thee* (as Jeshurun, who waxed fat and kicked, and forsook God who made him, Deut. xxxii. 15), and say, as Pharaoh in his pride, *Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?* Prosperity makes people proud and forgetful of God, as if they had no need of him and were therefore under no obligation to him. *What can the Almighty do for them?* Job xxii. 17. And therefore they will do nothing for him. Even good men are afraid of the worst sins, so deceitful do they think their own hearts to be; and they know that the greatest gains of the world will not balance the least guilt. *Secondly*, He dreads the temptations of a poor condition, and for that reason, and no other, deprecates that: *Lest I be poor and steal*. Poverty is a strong temptation to dishonesty, and such as many are overcome by, and they are ready to think it will be their excuse; but it will not bear them out at God's bar any more than at men's to say, "*I stole because I was poor*," yet, if a man *steal for the satisfying of his soul when he is hungry*, it is a case of compassion (ch. vi. 30) and what even those that have some principles of honesty in them may be drawn to. But observe why Agur dreads this, not because he should endanger himself by it, "*Lest I steal*, and be hanged for it, whipped or put in the stocks, or sold for a bondman," as among the Jews poor thieves were, who had not wherewithal to make restitution; but lest he should dishonour God by it: "*Lest I should steal, and take the name of my God in vain*, that is, discredit my profession of religion by practices disagreeable to it." Or, "*Lest I steal*, and, when I am charged with it, forswear myself." He therefore dreads one sin, because it would draw on another, for the way of sin is downhill. Observe, He calls God his God, and therefore he is afraid of doing any thing to offend him because of the relation he stands in to him.

10 Accuse not a servant unto his master, lest he curse thee, and thou be found guilty. 11 *There is* a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother. 12 *There is* a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness. 13 *There is* a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up. 14 *There is* a generation, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as

knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.

Here is, I. A caution not to abuse other people's servants any more than our own, nor to make mischief between them and their masters, for it is an ill office, invidious, and what will make a man odious, v. 10. Consider, 1. It is an injury to the servant, whose poor condition makes him an object of pity, and therefore it is barbarous to add affliction to him that is afflicted: *Hurt not a servant with thy tongue* (so the margin reads it); for it argues a sordid disposition to smite any body secretly with the scourge of the tongue, especially a servant, who is not a match for us, and whom we should rather protect, if his master be severe with him, than exasperate him more. 2. "It will perhaps be an injury to thyself. If a servant be thus provoked, perhaps he will curse thee, will accuse thee and bring thee into trouble, or give thee an ill word and blemish thy reputation, or appeal to God against thee, and imprecate his wrath upon thee, who is the patron and protector of oppressed innocency."

II. An account, upon occasion of this caution, of some wicked generations of men, that are justly abominable to all that are virtuous and good. 1. Such as are abusive to their parents, give them bad language and wish them ill, call them bad names and actually injure them. *There is a generation of such*; young men of that black character commonly herd together, and irritate one another against their parents. *A generation of vipers* those are who curse their natural parents, or their magistrates, or their ministers, because they cannot endure the yoke; and those are near of kin to them who, though they have not yet arrived at such a pitch of wickedness as to curse their parents, yet do not bless them, cannot give them a good word, and will not pray for them. 2. Such as are conceited of themselves, and, under a show and pretence of sanctity, hide from others, and perhaps from themselves too, abundance of reigning wickedness in secret (v. 12); they are *pure in their own eyes*, as if they were in all respects such as they should be. They have a very good opinion of themselves and their own character, that they are not only righteous, but *rich and increased with goods* (Rev. iii. 17), and yet *are not cleansed from their filthiness*, the filthiness of their hearts, which they pretend to be the best part of them. They are, it may be, swept and garnished, but they are not washed, not sanctified; as the Pharisees that within were *full of all uncleanness*, Matt. xxiii. 25, 26. 3. Such as are haughty and scornful to those about them, v. 13. He speaks of them with amazement at their intolerable pride and insolence: "*Oh how lofty are their eyes!* With what disdain do they look upon their neighbours, as not worthy to be set with the dogs of their flock! What a

distance do they expect every body should keep; and, when they look upon themselves how do they strut and vaunt like the peacock, thinking they make themselves illustrious when really they make themselves ridiculous! There is a generation of such on whom he that *resists the proud* will put contempt. 4. Such as are cruel to the poor and barbarous to all that lie at their mercy (v. 14); their teeth are iron and steel, *swords and knives*, instruments of cruelty, with which they *devour the poor* with the greatest pleasure imaginable, and as greedily as hungry men cut their meat and eat it. God has so ordered it that the *poor we shall always have with us*, that they shall *never cease out of the land*; but there are those who, because they hate to relieve them, would, if they could, abolish them from the earth, from among men, especially God's poor. Some understand it of those who wound and ruin others by slander and false accusations, and severe censures of their everlasting state; their tongues, and their teeth too (which are likewise organs of speech), are *as swords and knives*, Ps. lvii. 4.

15 The horseleech hath two daughters, crying, Give, give. There are three things that are never satisfied yea, four things say not, *It is enough*. 16 The grave; and the barren womb of the earth that is not filled with water, and the fire that saith not, *It is enough*. 17 The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.

He had spoken before of those that devoured the poor (v. 14), and had spoken of them last, as the worst of all the four generations there mentioned; now here he speaks of their insatiableness in doing this. The temper that puts them upon it is made up of cruelty and covetousness. Now those are two daughters of the horse-leech, its genuine offspring, that still cry, "*Give, give, give more blood, give more money;*" for the bloody are still blood-thirsty; being drunk with blood, they add thirst to their drunkenness, and will seek it yet again. Those also that *love silver* shall never be satisfied with silver. Thus, while from these two principles they are devouring the poor, they are continually uneasy to themselves, as David's enemies, Ps. lix. 14, 15. Now, for the further illustration of this,

I. He specifies four other things which are insatiable, to which those devourers are compared, which say not, *It is enough*, or *It is wealth*. Those are never rich that are always coveting. Now these four things that are always craving are, 1. The grave, into which multitudes fall, and yet still more will fall, and it swallows them all up, and returns none

Hell and destruction are never full, ch. xxvii. 20. When it comes to our turn, we shall find the grave ready for us, Job xvii. 1. 2. The barren womb, which is impatient of its affliction in being barren, and cries, as Rachel did, *Give me children.* 3. The parched ground in time of drought (especially in those hot countries), which still soaks in the rain that comes in abundance upon it and in a little time wants more. 4. The fire, which, when it has consumed abundance of fuel, yet still devours all the combustible matter that is thrown into it. So insatiable are the corrupt desires of sinners, and so little satisfaction have they even in the gratification of them.

II. He adds a terrible threatening to disobedient children (v. 17), for warning to the first of those four wicked generations, that curse their parents (v. 11), and shows here,

1. Who they are that belong to that generation, not only those that curse their parents in heat and passion, but, (1.) Those that mock at them, though it be but with a scornful eye, looking with disdain upon them because of their bodily infirmities, or looking sour or dogged at them when they instruct or command, impatient at their checks and angry at them. God takes notice with what eye children look upon their parents, and will reckon for the leering look and the casts of the evil eye as well as for the bad language given them. (2.) Those that *despise to obey* them, that think it a thing below them to be dutiful to their parents, especially to the mother, they scorn to be controlled by her; and thus she that bore them in sorrow in greater sorrow bears their manners.

2. What their doom will be. Those that dishonour their parents shall be set up as monuments of God's vengeance; they shall be hanged in chains, as it were, for the birds of prey to pick out their eyes; those eyes with which they looked so scornfully on their good parents. The dead bodies of malefactors were not to hang all night, but before night the ravens would have picked out their eyes. If men do not punish undutiful children, God will, and will load those with the greatest infamy that conduct themselves haughtily towards their parents. Many who have come to an ignominious end have owned that the wicked courses that brought them to it began in a contempt of their parents' authority.

18 There be three *things* which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not: 19 The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maid. 20 Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness. 21 For

three *things* the earth is disquieted, and for four *which* it cannot bear: 22 For a servant when he reigneth; and a fool when he is filled with meat; 23 For an odious woman when she is married; and a handmaid that is heir to her mistress.

Here is, I. An account of four things that are unsearchable, *too wonderful* to be fully known. And here,

1. The first three are natural things, and are only designed as comparisons for the illustration of the last. We cannot trace, (1.) *An eagle in the air:* Which way she has flown cannot be discovered either by the footstep or by the scent, as the way of a beast may upon ground; nor can we account for the wonderful swiftness of her flight, how soon she has gone beyond our ken. (2.) *A serpent upon a rock.* The way of a serpent in the sand we may find by the track, but not of a serpent upon the hard rock; nor can we describe how a serpent will, without feet, in a little time creep to the top of a rock. (3.) *A ship in the midst of the sea.* The leviathan indeed *makes a path to shine after him, one would think the deep to be hoary* (Job xli. 32), but a ship leaves no mark behind it, and sometimes it is so tossed upon the waves that one would wonder how it lives at sea and gains its point. The kingdom of nature is full of wonders, marvellous things which the God of nature does, *past finding out.*

2. The fourth is a mystery of iniquity, more unaccountable than any of these; it belongs to the depths of Satan, that deceitfulness and that desperate wickedness of the heart which none can know, Jer. xvii. 9. It is twofold—(1.) The cursed arts which a vile adulterer has to debauch a maid, and to persuade her to yield to his wicked and abominable lust. This is what a wanton poet wrote a whole book of, long since, *De arte amandi—On the art of love.* By what pretensions and protestations of love, and all its powerful charms, promises of marriage, assurances of secrecy and reward, is many an unwary virgin brought to sell her virtue, and honour, and peace, and soul, and all to a base traitor; for so all sinful lust is in the kingdom of love. The more artfully the temptation is managed the more watchful and resolute ought every pure heart to be against it. (2.) The cursed arts which a vile adulteress has to conceal her wickedness, especially from her husband, from whom she treacherously departs; so close are her intrigues with her lewd companions, and so craftily disguised, that it is as impossible to discover her as to track an eagle in the air. She eats the forbidden fruit, after the similitude of Adam's transgression, and then *wipes her mouth*, that it may not betray itself, and with a bold and impudent face says, *I have done no wickedness.* [1.] To the world she denies the fact,

and is ready to swear it that she is as chaste and modest as any woman, and never did the wickedness she is suspected of. Those are the works of darkness which are industriously kept from coming to the light. [2.] To her own conscience (if she have any left) she denies the fault, and will not own that that *great wickedness* is any wickedness at all, but an innocent entertainment. See Hos. xii. 7, 8. Thus multitudes ruin their souls by calling evil good and out-facing their convictions with a self-justification.

II. An account of four things that are intolerable, that is, four sorts of persons that are very troublesome to the places where they live and the relations and companies they are in; the earth is *disquieted for them*, and groans under them as a burden it cannot bear, and they are all much alike.—1. *A servant* when he is advanced, and entrusted with power, who is, of all others, most insolent and imperious; witness Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, Neh. ii. 10. 2. *A fool*, a silly, rude, boisterous, vicious man, who when he has grown rich, and is partaking of the pleasures of the table, will disturb all the company with his extravagant talk and the affronts he will put upon those about him. 3. An ill-natured, cross-grained, *woman*, when she gets a husband, one who, having made herself odious by her pride and sourness, so that one would not have thought any body would ever love her, yet, if at last she be married, that honourable estate makes her more intolerably scornful and spiteful than ever. It is a pity that that which should sweeten the disposition should have a contrary effect. A gracious woman, when she is married, will be yet more obliging. 4. An old maid-servant that has prevailed with her mistress, by humouring her, and, as we say, getting the length of her foot, to leave her what she has, or is as dear to her as if she was to be her heir, such a one likewise will be intolerably proud and malicious, and think all too little that her mistress gives her, and herself wronged if any thing be left from her. Let those therefore whom Providence has advanced to honour from mean beginnings carefully watch against that sin which will most easily beset them, pride and haughtiness, which will in them, of all others, be most insufferable and inexcusable; and let them humble themselves with the remembrance of the rock out of which they were hewn.

24 There be four *things which are* little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise: 25 The ants *are* a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer; 26 The conies *are but* a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks; 27 The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands: 28 The

spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces.

I. Agur, having specified four things that seem great and yet are really contemptible, here specifies four things that are little and yet are very admirable, great in miniature, in which, as bishop Patrick observes, he teaches us several good lessons; as, 1. Not to admire bodily bulk, or beauty, or strength, nor value persons or think the better of them for such advantages, but to judge of men by their wisdom and conduct, their industry and application to business, which are characters that deserve respect. 2. To admire the wisdom and power of the Creator in the smallest and most despicable animals, in an ant as much as in an elephant. 3. To blame ourselves who do not act so much for our own true interest as the meanest creatures do for theirs. 4. Not to despise the weak things of the world; there are those that are *little upon the earth*, poor in the world and of small account, and yet *are exceedingly wise*, wise for their souls and another world, and those *are exceedingly wise, wiser than their neighbours*. Margin, *They are wise, made wise by the special instinct of nature*. All that are wise to salvation are made wise by the grace of God.

II. Those he specifies are, 1. The *ants*, minute animals and very weak, and yet they are very industrious in gathering proper food, and have a strange sagacity to do it in the summer, the proper time. This is so great a piece of wisdom that we may learn of them to be wise for futurity, *ch. vi. 6*. When the ravening *lions lack, and suffer hunger*, the laborious ants have plenty, and know no want. 2. The *conies*, or, as some rather understand it, the Arabian mice, field-mice, weak creatures, and very timorous, yet they have so much wisdom as to *make their houses in the rocks*, where they are well guarded, and their feebleness makes them take shelter in those natural fastnesses and fortifications. Sense of our own indigence and weakness should drive us to him that is a *rock higher than we* for shelter and support; there let us make our habitation. 3. The *locusts*; they are little also, and *have no king*, as the bees have, but *they go forth all of them by bands*, like an army in battle-array; and, observing such good order among themselves, it is not any inconvenience to them that they *have no king*. They are called God's *great army* (Joel ii. 25): for, when he pleases, he musters, he marshals them, and wages war by them, as he did upon Egypt. *They go forth all of them gathered together* (so the margin); sense of weakness should engage us to keep together, that we may strengthen the hands of one another. 4. The *spider*, an insect, but as great an instance of industry in our houses as the ants are in the field. Spiders are very ingenious in weaving their webs with a fineness and exactness such as no art can pretend to come

ear: They take hold with their hands, and spin a fine thread out of their own bowels, with a great deal of art; and they are not only in poor men's cottages, but in *kings' palaces*, notwithstanding all the care that is here taken to destroy them. Providence wonderfully keeps up those kinds of creatures, not only which men provide not for, but which every man's hand is against and seeks the destruction of. Those that will mind their business, and take hold of it with their hands, shall be in *kings' palaces*; sooner or later, they will get preferment, and may go with it, notwithstanding the difficulties and discouragements they meet with. If one well-spun web be swept away, it is but making another.

29 There be three things which go well, yea, four are comely in going: 30 A lion which is strongest among beasts, and turneth not away for any; 31 A greyhound; a he goat also; and a king, against whom there is no rising up. 32 If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, lay thine hand upon thy mouth. 33 Surely the churning of milk bringeth forth butter, and the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood: so the forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife.

Here is, I. An enumeration of four things which are majestic and stately in their going, which look great:—1. A lion, the king of beasts, because *strongest among beasts*. Among beasts it is strength that gives the pre-eminence, but it is a pity that it should do so among men, whose wisdom is their honour, not their strength and force. The lion turns of away, nor alters his pace, for fear of any pursuers, since he knows he is too hard for them. Herein the righteous are bold as a lion, but they turn not away from their duty for fear of any difficulty they meet with in it. 2. A greyhound that is girt in the loins and fit for running; or (as the margin reads it) a horse, which ought not to be omitted among the creatures that are comely in going, for so it is, especially when he is dressed up in his harness or trappings. 3. A he-goat, the comeliness of whose going is when he goes stately and leads the flock. It is the comeliness of a Christian's going to go first in a good work and to lead others in the right way. 4. A king, who, when he appears in his majesty, is looked upon with reverence and awe, and we agree that there is no rising up against him; we can vie with him, none can contend with him, whoever does it, it is at his peril, and, if there is no rising up against an earthly ruler, woe to him then that strives with his maker. It is intended that we should learn courage and fortitude in all virtuous actions

from the lion and not to turn away for any difficulty we meet with; from the greyhound we may learn quickness and despatch, from the he-goat the care of our family and those under our charge, and from a king to have our children in subjection with all gravity, and from them all to go well, and to order the steps of our conversation so as that we may not only be safe, but comely, in going.

II. A caution to us to keep our temper at all times and under all provocations, and to take heed of carrying our resentments too far upon any occasion, especially when there is a king in the case, against whom there is no rising up, when it is a ruler, or one much our superior, that is offended; nay, the rule is always the same.

1. We must bridle and suppress our own passion, and take shame to ourselves, whenever we are justly charged with a fault, and not insist upon our own innocency: If we have lifted up ourselves, either in a proud conceit of ourselves or a peevish opposition to those that are over us, if we have transgressed the laws of our place and station, we have therein done foolishly. Those that magnify themselves over others or against others, that are haughty and insolent, do but shame themselves and betray their own weakness. Nay, if we have but thought evil, if we are conscious to ourselves that we have harboured an ill design in our minds, or it has been suggested to us, we must lay our hand upon our mouth, that is, (1.) We must humble ourselves for what we have done amiss, and even lie in the dust before God, in sorrow for it, as Job did, when he repented of what he had said foolishly (ch. xl. 4, *I will lay my hand upon my mouth*), and as the convicted leper, who put a covering upon his upper lip. If we have done foolishly, we must not stand to it before men, but by silence own our guilt, which will be the best way of appeasing those we have offended. 2. We must keep the evil thought we have conceived in our minds from breaking out in any evil speeches. Do not give the evil thought an imprimatur—a license; allow it not to be published; but lay thy hand upon thy mouth; use a holy violence with thyself, if need be, and enjoin thyself silence; as Christ suffered not the evil spirits to speak. It is bad to think ill, but it is much worse to speak it, for that implies a consent to the evil thought and a willingness to infect others with it.

2. We must not irritate the passions of others. Some are so very provoking in their words and conduct that they even force wrath, they make those about them angry whether they will or no, and put those into a passion who are not only not inclined to it, but resolved against it. Now this forcing of wrath brings forth strife, and where that is there is confusion and every evil work. As the violent agitation of the cream fetches all the good out of the milk, and the hard wringing of the nose will extort blood from it, so this forcing

of wrath wastes both the body and spirits of a man, and robs him of all the good that is in him. Or, as it is in the churning of milk and the wringing of the nose, that is done by force which otherwise would not be done, so the spirit is heated by degrees with strong passions; one angry word begets another, and that a third; one passionate debate makes work for another, and so it goes on till it ends at length in irreconcilable feuds. Let nothing therefore be said or done with violence, but every thing with softness and calmness.

CHAP. XXXI.

This chapter is added to Solomon's proverbs, some think because it is of the same author, supposing king Lemuel to be king Solomon; others only because it is of the same nature, though left in writing by another author, called Lemuel; however it be, it is a prophecy, and therefore given by inspiration and direction of God, which Lemuel was under in the writing of it, and putting it into this form, as his mother was in dictating to him the matter of it. Here is, I. An exhortation to Lemuel, a young prince, to take heed of the sins he would be tempted to and to do the duties of the place he was called to, ver. 1-9. II. The description of a virtuous woman, especially in the relation of a wife and the mistress of a family, which Lemuel's mother drew up, not as an encomium of herself, though, no doubt, it was her own true picture, but either as an instruction to her daughters, as the foregoing verses were to her son, or as a direction to her son in the choice of a wife; she must be chaste and modest, diligent and frugal, dutiful to her husband, careful of her family, discreet in her discourse, and in the education of her children, and, above all, conscientious in her duty to God: such a one as this, if he can find her, will make him happy, ver. 10-31.

THE words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him: 2 What, my son? and what, the son of my womb? and what, the son of my vows? 3 Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings. 4 It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: 5 Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted. 6 Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. 7 Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more. 8 Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction. 9 Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy.

Most interpreters are of opinion that Lemuel is Solomon; the name signifies one that is for God, or devoted to God; and so it agrees well enough with that honourable name which, by divine appointment, was given to Solomon (2 Sam. xii. 25), *Jedediah—beloved of the Lord*. Lemuel is supposed to be a pretty, fond, endearing name, by which his mother used to call him; and so much did he value himself upon the interest he had in his mother's affections that he was not ashamed to call himself by it. One would the rather incline to think it is Solomon that

here tells us what his mother taught him because he tells us (*ch. iv. 4*) what his father taught him. But some think (and the conjecture is not improbable) that Lemuel was a prince of some neighbouring country, whose mother was a daughter of Israel, perhaps the house of David, and taught him the good lessons. Note, 1. It is the duty of mothers, as well as fathers, to teach their children what is good, that they may do it, and what is evil, that they may avoid it, when they are young and tender they are most under the mother's eye, and she has then an opportunity of moulding and fashioning their minds well, which she ought not to let slip. 2. Even kings must be catechised, the greatest of men is less than the least of the ordinances of God. 3. Those that have grown up to maturity should often call to mind, and make mention of, the good instructions they received when they were children, for their own admonition, the edification of others, and the honour of God, who were the guides of their youth.

Now, in this mother's (this queen mother's) catechism, observe,

I. Her expostulation with the young prince by which she lays hold of him, claims an interest in him, and awakens his attention what she is about to say (v. 2): "What! my son? What shall I say to thee?" She speaks as one considering what advice to give him, and choosing out words to reason with him, so full of concern is she for his welfare! (*What is it that thou doest?*) It seems to be a chiding question. She observed, when he was young, that he was too much inclined to women and wine, and therefore she found it necessary to take him to task and deal roundly with him. "What! my son? Is this the course of life thou intendest to lead? Had I taught thee no better than thus? I may reprove thee, and reprove thee sharply, and thou must take it well, for," 1. "Thou art descended from me; thou art the son of my womb, and therefore what I say comes from the authority and affection of a parent, which cannot be suspected to come from any other will. Thou art a piece of myself. I burden thee with sorrow, and I expect no other return for all the pains I have taken with thee, and undergone for thee, than this, Be wise and good, and then I am well paid." "Thou art devoted to my God; thou art the son of my vows, the son I prayed to God to give me and promised to give back to God, and did so" (thus Samuel was the son of Hannah's vows); "thou art the son I have often prayed to God to give his grace to" (*Ps. lxxii. 1*), and shall a child of so many prayers miscarry? And shall all my hopes concerning thee be disappointed?" Of children that by baptism are dedicated to God, for whom and in whose name we are contented with God, may well be called *children of our vows*; and, as this may have made a good plea with God in our pray-

for them, so it may be made a good plea with them in the instructions we give them; we may tell them they are baptized, are the children of our vows, and it is at their peril they break those bonds in sunder which in their infancy they were solemnly brought under.

II. The caution she gives him against those two destroying sins of uncleanness and drunkenness, which, if he allowed himself in them, would certainly be his ruin. 1. Against uncleanness (v. 3): *Give not thy strength unto women*, unto strange women. He must not be soft and effeminate, nor spend that time in a vain conversation with the ladies which should be spent in getting knowledge and despatching business, nor employ that wit which is the strength of the soul in courting and complimenting them which he should employ about the affairs of his government.

Especially shun all adultery, fornication, and lasciviousness, which waste the strength of the body, and bring into it dangerous diseases. *Give not thy ways*, thy affections, thy conversation, to that which destroys kings, which has destroyed many, which gave such shock to the kingdom even of David himself, in the matter of Uriah. Let the sufferings of others be thy warnings." It lessens the honour of kings and makes them mean. Are those fit to govern others that are themselves slaves to their own lusts? It makes them unfit for business, and fills their court with the basest and worst of animals. Kings exposed to temptations of this kind, having wherewith both to please the humours and to bear the charges of the sin, and therefore they ought to double their guard; and, if they would preserve their people from the unclean spirit, they must themselves be patterns of purity. Meaner people may also apply it to themselves. Let none give their strength to that which destroys souls. 2. Against drunkenness, v. 4, 5. He must not drink wine or strong drink to excess; he must never sit to drink, as they used to do at the day of their king, when the princes made him sick with bottles of wine, Hos. vii. 7. Whatever temptation he might be in from the excellency of the wine, or the charms of the company, he must deny himself, and be strictly sober, considering, (1.) The indecency of drunkenness in a king. However some may call it a fashionable accomplishment and entertainment, it is not for kings, O Lemuel! it is not for kings, to allow themselves that liberty; it is a disparagement to their dignity, and profanes their crown, by confusing the head that wears it; that which for the most unmanly them does for the time unking them. Shall we say, *They are gods*? No, they are worse than the beasts that perish. If Christians are made to our God kings and priests, and must apply this to themselves. it is not for Christians, it is not for Christians, to drink to excess; they debase themselves if they do; it ill becomes the heirs of

the kingdom and the spiritual priests, Lev. x. 9. (2.) The ill consequences of it (v. 5): *Lest, they drink away their understandings and memories, drink and forget the law by which they are to govern; and so, instead of doing good with their power, do hurt with it, and pervert or alter the judgment of all the sons of affliction*, and, when they should right them, wrong them, and add to their affliction. It is a sad complaint which is made of the priests and prophets (Isa. xlviii. 7), that they have erred through wine, and through strong drink they are out of the way; and the effect is as bad in kings, who when they are drunk, or intoxicated with the love of wine, cannot but stumble in judgment. Judges must have clear heads, which those cannot have who so often make themselves giddy, and incapacitate themselves to judge of the most common things.

III. The counsel she gives him to do good. 1. He must do good with his wealth. Great men must not think that they have their abundance only that out of it they may make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts of it, and may the more freely indulge their own genius; no, but that with it they may relieve such as are in distress, v. 6, 7. "Thou hast wine or strong drink at command; instead of doing thyself hurt with it, do others good with it; let those have it that need it." Those that have wherewithal must not only give bread to the hungry and water to the thirsty, but they must give strong drink to him that is ready to perish through sickness or pain and wine to those that are melancholy and of heavy heart; for it was appointed to cheer and revive the spirits, and make glad the heart (as it does where there is need of it), not to burden and oppress the spirits, as it does where there is no need of it. We must deny ourselves in the gratifications of sense, that we may have to spare for the relief of the miseries of others, and be glad to see our superfluities and dainties better bestowed upon those whom they will be a real kindness to than upon ourselves whom they will be a real injury to. Let those that are ready to perish drink soberly, and it will be a means so to revive their drooping spirits that they will forget their poverty for the time and remember their misery no more, and so they will be the better able to bear it. The Jews say that upon this was grounded the practice of giving a stupifying drink to condemned prisoners when they were going to execution, as they did to our Saviour. But the scope of the place is to show that wine is a cordial, and therefore to be used for want and not for wantonness, by those only that need cordials, as Timothy, who is advised to drink a little wine, only for his stomach's sake and his often infirmities, 1 Tim. v. 23. 2. He must do good with his power, his knowledge, and interest, must administer justice with care, courage, and compassion, v. 8, 9. (1.) He must himself take cognizance of the causes his subjects have depend-

ing in his courts, and inspect what his judges and officers do, that he may support those that do their duty, and lay those aside that neglect it or are partial. (2.) He must, in all matters that come before him, judge *righteously*, and, without fear of the face of man, boldly pass sentence according to equity: *Open thy mouth*, which denotes the liberty of speech that princes and judges ought to use in passing sentence. Some observe that only wise men *open* their mouths, for fools have their mouths always open, are full of words. (3.) He must especially look upon himself as obliged to be the patron of oppressed innocence. The inferior magistrates perhaps had not zeal and tenderness enough to *plead the cause of the poor and needy*; therefore the king himself must interpose, and appear as an advocate, [1.] For those that were unjustly charged with capital crimes, as Naboth was, that were *appointed to destruction*, to gratify the malice either of a particular person or of a party. It is a case which it well befits a king to appear in, for the preserving of innocent blood. [2.] For those that had actions unjustly brought against them, to defraud them of their right, because they were *poor and needy*, and unable to defend it, not having wherewithal to fee counsel; in such a case also kings must be advocates for the poor. Especially, [3.] For those that were *dumb*, and knew not how to speak for themselves, either through weakness or fear, or being over-talked by the prosecutor or over-awed by the court. It is generous to speak for those that cannot speak for themselves, that are absent, or have not words at command, or are timorous. Our law appoints the judge to be of counsel for the prisoner.

10 Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. 11 The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. 12 She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. 13 She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. 14 She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. 15 She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. 16 She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. 17 She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. 18 She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. 19 She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. 20 She stretcheth out her hand to the

poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hand to the needy. 21 She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. 22 She maketh herself covering of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. 23 Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. 24 She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. 25 Strength and honour are her clothing, and she shall rejoice in time to come. 26 She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. 27 She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. 28 Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. 29 Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. 30 Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. 31 Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.

This description of the *virtuous woman* is designed to show what wives the women should make and what wives the men should choose; it consists of twenty-two verses, each beginning with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet in order, as some of the *Psalms*, which makes some think it was no part of the lesson which Lemuel's mother taught him, but a poem by itself, written by some other hand, and perhaps had been commonly repeated among the pious Jews, for the ease of which it was made alphabetical. We have the abridgment of it in the New Testament (1 Tim. ii. 9, 10, 1 Pet. iii. 1—6), where the duty prescribed to wives agrees with this description of a good wife; and with good reason is so much stress laid upon it, since it contributes as much as any one thing to the keeping up of religion in families, and the entail of it upon posterity, that the mothers be wise and good; and of what consequence it is to the wealth and outward prosperity of a household every one is sensible. He that will thrive must ask his wife leave. Here is,

I. A general enquiry after such a one (v. 10) where observe, 1. The person enquired after and that is a *virtuous woman*—a woman of *strength* (so the word is), though the weakest vessel, yet made strong by wisdom and grace and the fear of God: it is the same word that is used in the character of good judges (Exod. xviii. 21), that they are *able men*, men qualified for the business to which they are called *men of truth, fearing God*. So it follow

A virtuous woman is a woman of spirit, who has the command of her own spirit and knows how to manage other people's, one that is pious and industrious, and a help meet for a man. In opposition to this strength, we read of the weakness of the heart of an *imperious* *whorish woman*, Ezek. xvi. 30. A *virtuous woman* is a woman of resolution, who, having espoused good principles, is firm and steady to them, and will not be frightened with winds and clouds from any part of her duty. 2. The difficulty of meeting with such a one: *Who can find her?* This intimates that good women are very scarce, and many that seem to be so do not prove so; he that thought he had found a *virtuous woman* was deceived; *Behold, it was Leah*, and not the Rachel he expected. But he that designs to marry ought to seek diligently for such a one, to have this principally in his eye, in all his enquiries, and to take heed that he be not biassed by beauty or gaiety, wealth or parentage, dressing well or dancing well; for all these may be and yet the woman not be virtuous, and there is many a woman truly virtuous who yet is not recommended by these advantages. 3. The unpeakable worth of such a one, and the value which he that has such a wife ought to put upon her, showing it by his thankfulness to God and his kindness and respect to her, whom he must never think he can do too much for. *Her price is far above rubies*, and all the rich ornaments with which vain women adorn themselves. The more rare such good wives are the more they are to be valued.

II. A particular description of her and of her excellent qualifications.

1. She is very industrious to recommend herself to her husband's esteem and affection. Those that are good really will be good relatively. A good woman, if she be brought into the marriage state, will be a good wife, and make it her business to *please her husband*, 1 Cor. vii. 34. Though she is a woman of spirit herself, yet *her desire is to her husband*, to know his mind, that she may accommodate herself to it, and she is willing that *he should rule over her*. (1.) She conducts herself so that he may repose an entire confidence in her. He trusts in her chastity, which she never gave him the least occasion to suspect or to entertain any jealousy of; he is not morose and reserved, but modest and grave, and has all the marks of virtue in her countenance and behaviour; her husband knows it, and therefore his *heart doth safely rest in her*; he is easy, and makes her so. He trusts in her conduct, that she will speak in all companies, and act in all affairs, with rudeness and discretion, so as not to occasion him either damage or reproach. He trusts in her fidelity to his interests, and that she will never betray his counsels nor have any interest separate from that of his family. When he goes abroad, to attend the concerns of the public, he can confide in her to order his affairs at home, as well as if he him-

self were there. She is a good wife that is fit to be trusted, and he a good husband that will leave it to such a wife to manage for him. (2.) She contributes so much to his content and satisfaction that *he shall have no need of spoil*; he needs not be griping and scraping abroad, as those must be whose wives are proud and wasteful at home. She manages his affairs so that he is always before-hand, has such plenty of his own that he is in no temptation to prey upon his neighbours. He thinks himself so happy in her that he envies not those who have most of the wealth of this world; he needs it not, he has enough, having such a wife. Happy the couple that have such a satisfaction as this in each other! (3.) She makes it her constant business to *do him good*, and is afraid of doing any thing, even through inadvertency, that may turn to his prejudice, v. 12. She shows her love to him, not by a foolish fondness, but by prudent endearments, accommodating herself to his temper, and not crossing him, giving him good words, and not bad ones, no, not when he is out of humour, studying to make him easy, to provide what is fit for him both in health and sickness, and attending him with diligence and tenderness when any thing ails him; nor would she, no, not for the world, wilfully do any thing that might be a damage to his person, family, estate, or reputation. And this is her care *all the days of her life*; not at first only, or now and then, when she is in a good humour, but perpetually; and she is not weary of the good offices she does him: *She does him good*, not only all the days of *his* life, but of *her own* too; if she survive him, still she is doing him good in her care of his children, his estate, and good name, and all the concerns he left behind him. We read of kindness shown, not only *to the living*, but *to the dead*, Ruth ii. 20. (4.) She adds to his reputation in the world (v. 23): *Her husband is known in the gates*, known to have a good wife. By his wise counsels, and prudent management of affairs, it appears that he has a discreet companion in his bosom, by conversation with whom he improves himself. By his cheerful countenance and pleasant humour it appears that he has an agreeable wife at home; for many that have not have their tempers strangely soured by it. Nay, by his appearing clean and neat in his dress, every thing about him decent and handsome, yet not gaudy, one may know he has a good wife at home, that takes care of his clothes.

2. She is one that takes pains in the duty of her place and takes pleasure in it. This part of her character is much enlarged upon here. (1.) She hates to sit still and do nothing: *She eats not the bread of idleness*, v. 27. Though she needs not work for her bread (she has an estate to live upon), yet she will not eat it in idleness, because she knows that we were none of us sent into this world to be idle, that when we have nothing

to do the devil will soon find us something to do, and that it is not fit that those who *will not labour should eat*. Some eat and drink because they can find themselves nothing else to do, and needless visits must be received with fashionable entertainments; these are eating the bread of idleness, which she has no relish for, for she neither gives nor receives idle visits nor idle talk. (2.) She is careful to fill up time, that none of that be lost. When day-light is done, she does not then think it time to lay by her work, as those are forced to do whose business lies abroad in the fields (Ps. civ. 23), but her business lying within-doors, and her work worth candle-light, with that she lengthens out the day; and *her candle goes not out by night*, v. 18. It is a mercy to have candle-light to supply the want of day-light, and a duty, having that advantage, to improve it. We say of an elaborate piece, It smells of the lamp. (3.) *She rises early, while it is yet night* (v. 15), to give her servants their breakfast, that they may be ready to go cheerfully about their work as soon as the day breaks. She is none of those who sit up playing at cards, or dancing, till midnight, till morning, and then lie in bed till noon. No; the *virtuous woman* loves her business better than her ease or her pleasure, is in care to be found in the way of her duty every hour of the day, and has more true satisfaction in having *given meat to her household* betimes in the morning than those can have in the money they have won, much more in what they have lost, who sat up all night at play. Those that have a family to take care of should not love their bed too well in a morning. (4.) She applies herself to the business that is proper for her. It is not in scholar's business, or statesman's business, or husbandman's business, that she employs herself, but in women's business: *She seeks wool and flax*, where she may have the best of each at the best hand, and cheapest; she has a stock of both by her, and every thing that is necessary to the carrying on both of the woollen and the linen manufacture (v. 13), and with this she does not only set the poor on work, which is a very good office, but does herself work, and *work willingly, with her hands*; she *works with the counsel or delight of her hands* (so the word is); she goes about it cheerfully and dexterously, lays not only her hand, but her mind to it, and goes on in it without weariness in well-doing. *She lays her own hands to the spindle, or spinning-wheel, and her hands hold the distaff* (v. 19), and she does not reckon it either an abridgment of her liberty or a disparagement to her dignity, or at all inconsistent with her repose. The spindle and the distaff are here mentioned as her honour, while the ornaments of the daughters of Zion are reckoned up to their reproach, Isa. iii. 18, &c. (5.) She does what she does with all her might, and does not trifle in it (v. 17): *She girds her lains with strength, and*

strengthens her arms; she does not employ herself in sitting work only, or in that which is only the nice performance of the finger (there are works that are scarcely one removed from doing nothing); but, if there be occasion, she will go through with work that requires all the strength she has, which she will use as one that knows it is the way to have more.

3. She is one that makes what she does to turn to a good account, by her prudent management of it. She does not toil all night and catch nothing; no, she herself *perceives that her merchandise is good* (v. 18); she is sensible that *in all her labour there is profit*, and that encourages her to go on in it. She perceives that she can make things herself better and cheaper than she can buy them; she finds by observation what branch of her employment brings in the best returns, and to that she applies herself most closely. (1.) She brings in provisions of all things necessary and convenient for her family, v. 14. *No merchants' ships*, no, no Solomon's navy, ever made a more advantageous return than her employments do. Do they bring in foreign commodities with the effects they export? So does she with the fruit of her labours. What her own ground does not produce she can furnish herself with, if she have occasion for it, by exchanging her own goods for it; and so *she brings her food from afar*. Not that she values things the more for their being far-fetched, but, if they be ever so far off, if she must have them she knows how to come by them. (2.) She purchases lands, and enlarges the demesne of the family (v. 16): *She considers a field, and buys it*. She considers what an advantage it will be to the family, and what a good account it will turn to, and therefore she buys it; or, rather, though she have ever so much mind to it she will not buy it till she has first considered it, whether it be worth her money, whether she can afford to take so much money out of her stock as must go to purchase it, whether the title be good, whether the ground will answer the character given of it, and whether she has money at command to pay for it. Many have undone themselves by buying without considering; but those who would make advantageous purchases must consider, and then buy. *She also plants a vineyard*, but it is *with the fruit of her hands*; she does not take up money, or run into debt, to do it, but she does it with what she can spare out of the gains of her own housewifery. Men should not lay out any thing upon superfluities, till, by the blessing of God upon their industry, they have got before-hand, and can afford it; and *then* the fruit of the vineyard is likely to be doubly sweet, when it is the fruit of honest industry. (3.) She furnishes her house well and has good clothing for herself and her family (v. 22): *She makes herself coverings of tapestry* to hang her rooms, and

she may be allowed to use them when they are of her own making. *Her own clothing* is rich and fine: it is *silk and purple*, according to her place and rank. Though she is not so vain as to spend much time in dressing herself, nor makes the putting on of apparel her adorning, nor values herself upon it, yet she has rich clothes and puts them on well. The senator's robes which her husband wears are of her own spinning, and they look better and wear better than any that are bought. She also gets good warm clothing for her children, and her servants' liveries. She needs not fear the cold of the most pinching winter, for she and her family are well provided with clothes, sufficient to keep out cold, which is the end chiefly to be aimed at in clothing: *All her household are clothed in scarlet*, strong cloth and fit for winter, and yet rich and making a good appearance. They are *all double clothed* (so some read it), have change of raiment, a winter suit and a summer suit. (4.) She trades abroad. She makes more than she and her household have occasion for; and therefore, when she has sufficiently stocked her family, *she sells fine linen and girdles to the merchants* (v. 24), who carry them to Tyre, the mart of the nations, or some other trading city. Those families are likely to thrive that sell more than they buy; as it is well with the kingdom when abundance of its home manufactures are exported. It is no disgrace to those of the best quality to sell that they can spare, nor to deal in trade and send ventures by sea. (5.) She lays up for hereafter: *She shall rejoice in time to come*, having laid in a good stock for her family, and having good portions for her children. Those that take pains when they are in their prime will have the pleasure and joy of it when they are old, both in reflecting upon it and in reaping the benefit of it.

4. She takes care of her family and all the affairs of it, *gives meat to her household* (v. 15), to every one *his portion of meat in due season*, so that none of her servants have reason to complain of being kept short or faring hard. She gives also a *portion* (an allotment of work, as well as meat) to her *maidens*; they shall all of them know their business and have their task. *She looks well to the ways of her household* (v. 27); she inspects the manners of all her servants, that she may check what is amiss among them, and oblige them all to behave properly and do their duty to God and one another, as well as to her; as Job, who put away iniquity far from his tabernacle, and David, who would suffer no wicked thing in his house. She does not intermeddle in the concerns of other people's houses; she thinks it enough for her to look well to her own.

5. She is charitable to the poor, v. 20. She is as intent upon giving as she is upon getting; she often serves the poor with her own hand, and she does it freely, cheerfully, and very liberally, with an out-stretched hand.

Nor does she relieve her poor neighbours only, and those that are nigh at hand, but *she reaches forth her hands to the needy* that are at a distance, seeking opportunities to do good and to communicate, which is as good housewifery as any thing she does.

6. She is discreet and obliging in all her discourse, not talkative, censorious, nor peevish, as some are, that know how to take pains; no, *she opens her mouth with wisdom*; when she does speak, it is with a great deal of prudence and very much to the purpose; you may perceive by every word she says how much she governs herself by the rules of wisdom. She not only takes prudent measures herself, but gives prudent advice to others; and this not as assuming the authority of a dictator, but with the affection of a friend and an obliging air: *In her tongue is the law of kindness*; all she says is under the government of that law. The law of love and kindness is written in the heart, but it shows itself in the tongue; if we are *kindly affectioned one to another*, it will appear by affectionate expressions. It is called a *law of kindness*, because it gives law to others, to all she converses with. Her wisdom and kindness together put a commanding power into all she says; they command respect, they command compliance. How forcible are right words! *In her tongue is the law of grace, or mercy* (so some read it), understanding it of the word and law of God, which she delights to talk of among her children and servants. She is full of pious religious discourse, and manages it prudently, which shows how full her heart is of another world even when her hands are most busy about this world.

7. That which completes and crowns her character is that *she fears the Lord*, v. 30. With all those good qualities she lacks not that *one thing needful*; she is truly pious, and, in all she does, is guided and governed by principles of conscience and a regard to God; this is that which is here preferred far before *beauty*; that is *vain and deceitful*; all that are wise and good account it so, and value neither themselves nor others on it. Beauty recommends none to God, nor is it any certain indication of wisdom and goodness, but it has deceived many a man who has made his choice of a wife by it. There may be an impure deformed soul lodged in a comely and beautiful body; nay, many have been exposed by their beauty to such temptations as have been the ruin of their virtue, their honour, and their precious souls. It is a fading thing at the best, and therefore *vain and deceitful*. A fit of sickness will stain and sully it in a little time; a thousand accidents may blast this flower in its prime old age will certainly wither it and death and the grave consume it. But the fear of God reigning in the heart is the beauty of the soul; it recommends those that have it to the favour of God, and is, in his sight, of

great price; it will last for ever, and bid defiance to death itself, which consumes the beauty of the body, but consummates the beauty of the soul.

III. The happiness of this virtuous woman.

1. She has the comfort and satisfaction of her virtue in her own mind (v. 25): *Strength and honour are her clothing*, in which she wraps herself, that is, enjoys herself, and in which she appears to the world, and so recommends herself. She enjoys a firmness and constancy of mind, has spirit to bear up under the many crosses and disappointments which even the wise and virtuous must expect to meet with in this world; and this is her clothing, for defence as well as decency. She deals honourably with all, and she has the pleasure of doing so, *and shall rejoice in time to come*; she shall reflect upon it with comfort, when she comes to be old, that she was not idle or useless when she was young. In the day of death it will be a pleasure to her to think that she has lived to some good purpose. Nay, *she shall rejoice in an eternity to come*; she shall be recompensed for her goodness with *fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore*.

2. She is a great blessing to her relations, v. 28. (1.) *Her children grow up in her place, and they call her blessed*. They give her their good word, they are themselves a commendation to her, and they are ready to give great commendations of her; they pray for her, and bless God that they had such a good mother. It is a debt which they owe her, a part of that honour which the fifth commandment requires to be paid to father and mother; and it is a double honour that is due to a good father and a good mother. (2.) *Her husband thinks himself so happy in her that he takes all occasions to speak well of her, as one of the best of women*. It is no indecency at all, but a laudable instance of conjugal love, for husbands and wives to give one another their due praises.

3. She gets the good word of all her neighbours, as Ruth did, whom *all the city of her people knew to be a virtuous woman*, Ruth iii. 11. Virtue will have its praise, Phil. iv. 8. A woman that fears the Lord, shall have praise of God (Rom. ii. 29) and of men too. It is here shown, (1.) That she shall be highly praised (v. 29): *Many have done virtuously*. Virtuous women, it seems, are precious jewels, but not such rare jewels as was represented v. 10. There have been many,

but such a one as this cannot be paralleled. *Who can find her equal? She excels them all*. Note, Those that are good should aim and covet to excel in virtue. *Many daughters, in their father's house, and in the single state have done virtuously, but a good wife, if she be virtuous, excels them all, and does more good in her place than they can do in theirs*. Or, as some explain it, A man cannot but have his house so well kept by good daughters as by a good wife. (2.) That she shall be incontestably praised, without contradiction v. 31. Some are praised above what is their due, but those that praise her do but *give her of the fruit of her hands*; they give her that which she has dearly earned and which is justly due to her; she is wronged if she have it not. Note, Those ought to be praised the fruit of whose hands is praise-worthy. The tree is known by its fruits, and therefore, the fruit be good, the tree must have our good word. If her children be dutiful and respectful to her, and conduct themselves as they ought, they then *give her of the fruit of her hands*; she reaps the benefit of all the care she has taken of them, and thinks herself well paid. Children must thus study to *requite their parents*, and this is *showing piety at home*, 1 Tim. v. 4. But, if men be unjust, the thing will speak itself, *her own works will praise her in the gates*, openly before all the people. [1.] She leaves it to her own works to praise her, and does not court the applause of men. Those are none of the truly virtuous women that love to hear themselves commended. [2.] *Her own works will praise her*, if her relations and neighbours altogether hold their peace, her good works will proclaim her praise. The widows gave the best encomium of Dorcas when they *showed the coats and garments she had made for the poor*, Acts ix. 39. [3.] The least that can be expected from her neighbours is that they should *let her own works praise her*, and do nothing to hinder them. Those that *do that which is good*, let them have praise of the same (Rom. xiii. 10) and let not us enviously say, or do, any thing to the diminishing of it, but be provoked to it to a holy emulation. Let none have any report from us, that have a *good report even of the truth itself*. Thus is shut up the looking-glass for ladies, which they are desired to open and dress themselves by; and if they do so, their adorning will be found in praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

Twenty chapters of the book of *Proverbs* (beginning with *ch. x.* and ending with *ch. xxix.*), consisting mostly of entire sentences in each verse, could not well be reduced to proper heads, and the contents of them gathered; I have therefore here put the contents of all these chapters together, which perhaps may be of some use to those who desire to see at once all that is said in any one head in these chapters. Some of the verses, perhaps, I have not put under the same heads that another would have put them under, but the most of them fall (I hope) naturally enough to the places I have assigned them.

PROVERBS.—CONTENTS.

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3. Of slothfulness and diligence, *ch. x. 4, 26; xii. 11, 24, 27; xiii. 4, 23; xv. 19; xvi. 26; xviii. 9; xix. 15, 24; xx. 4, 13; xxi. 5, 25, 26; xxii. 13, 29; xxiv. 30—34; xxvi. 13—16; xxvii. 18, 23, 27; xxviii. 19.* Particularly the improving or neglecting opportunities, *ch. vi. 6; x. 5.*
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5. Of honour and dishonour, *ch. x. 7; xii. 8, 9; xviii. 3; xxvi. 1; xxvii. 21.* And of vain-glory, *ch. xxv. 14, 27; xxvii. 2.*
6. The wisdom of obedience, and folly of disobedience, *ch. x. 8, 17; xii. 1, 15; xiii. 1, 13, 18; xv. 5, 10, 12, 31, 32; xix. 16; xxviii. 4, 7, 9.*
7. Of mischievousness and usefulness, *ch. x. 10, 23; xi. 9—11, 23, 27; xii. 5, 6, 12, 18, 20; xiii. 2; xiv. 22; xvi. 29, 30; xvii. 11; xxi. 10; xxiv. 8; xxvi. 23, 27.*
8. The praise of wise and good discourse, and the hurt and shame of an ungoverned tongue, *ch. x. 11, 13, 14, 20, 21, 31, 32; xi. 30; xiv. 3; xv. 2, 4, 7, 23, 28; xvi. 20, 23, 24; xvii. 7; xviii. 4, 7, 20, 21; xx. 15; xxi. 23; xxiii. 9; xxiv. 26; xxv. 11.*
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14. Of justice and injustice, *ch. xi. 1; xiii. 16; xvi. 8, 11; xvii. 15, 26; xviii. 5; xx. 10, 23; xxii. 28; xxiii. 10, 11; xxix. 24.*
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AN

EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, OF THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES.

WE are still among Solomon's happy men, his happy servants, that *stood continually before him to hear his wisdom*; and they are the choicest of all the dictates of his wisdom, such as were more immediately given by divine inspiration, that are here transmitted to us, not to be heard, as by them, but once, and then liable to be mistaken or forgotten, and by repetition to lose their beauty, but to be read, reviewed, revolved, and had in everlasting remembrance. The account we have of Solomon's apostasy from God, in the latter end of his reign (1 Kings xi. 1), is the tragical part of his story; we may suppose that he spoke his *Proverbs* in the prime of his time, while he kept his integrity, but delivered his *Ecclesiastes* when he had grown old (for of the burdens and decays of age he speaks feelingly *ch. xii.*), and was, by the grace of God, recovered from his backslidings. There he dictated his observations; here he wrote his own experiences: this is what days speak, and wisdom which the multitude of years teaches. The title of the book and the penman we shall meet with in the first verse, and therefore shall here only observe.

I. That it is a sermon, a sermon in print; the text is (*ch. i. 2*), *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity*: that is the doctrine too; it is proved at large by many arguments and an induction of particulars, and divers objections are answered, and in the close we have the use and application of all, by way of exhortation, to *remember our Creator*, to *fear him*, and to *keep his commandments*. There are indeed many things in this book which are dark and hard to be understood, and some things which men of corrupt minds *urest to their own destruction*, for want of distinguishing between Solomon's arguments and the objections of atheists and epicures; but there is enough easy and plain to convince us (if we will admit the conviction) of the vanity of the world, and its utter insufficiency to make us happy, the vileness of sin, and its certain tendency to make us miserable, and of the wisdom of being religious, and the solid comfort and satisfaction that are to be had in doing our duty both to God and man. This should be intended in every sermon, and that is a good sermon by which these points are in any measure gained.

II. That it is a penitential sermon, as some of David's psalms are penitential psalms; it is a recantation-sermon, in which the preacher sadly laments his own folly and mistake, in promising himself satisfaction in the things of this world, and even in the forbidden pleasures of sense, which now he finds more bitter than death. His fall is a proof of the weakness of man's nature: *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom*, nor say, "I shall never be such a fool as to do so and so," when Solomon himself, the wisest of men, played the fool so egregiously; nor *let the rich man glory in his riches*, since Solomon's wealth was so great a snare to him, and did him a great deal more hurt than Job's poverty did him. His recovery is a proof of the power of God's grace, in bringing one back to God that had gone so far from him; it is a proof too of

the riches of God's mercy in accepting him notwithstanding the many aggravations of his sin, pursuant to the promise made to David, that if his children should commit iniquity, they should be corrected, but not abandoned and disinherited. 2 Sam. vii. 14, 15. Let him therefore that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall; and let him that has fallen make haste to get up again, and not despair either of assistance or acceptance therein. III. That it is a practical profitable sermon. Solomon, being brought to repentance, resolves, like his father, to *search transgressions God's way* (Ps. li. 13) and to give warning to all to take heed of spitting upon those rocks which had been fatal to him; and these were *fruits meet for repentance*. The fundamental error of the children of men, and that which is at the bottom of all their departures from God, is the same with that of our first parents, hoping to be as gods by entertaining themselves with that which seems good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and desirable to make one wise. Now the scope of this book is to show that this is a great mistake, that our happiness consists not in being as gods to ourselves, to have what we will and do what we will, but in having him that made us to be a God to us. The moral philosophers disputed much about man's felicity, or chief good. Various opinions they had about it: but Solomon, in this book, determines the question, and assures us that *to fear God and to keep his commandments is the wisdom of man*. He tried what satisfaction might be found in the wealth of the world and the pleasures of sense, and at last pronounced *all vanity and vexation*; yet multitudes will not take his word, but will make the same dangerous experiment, and it proves fatal to them. He, 1. Shows the vanity of those things in which men commonly look for happiness, as human learning and policy, sensual delight, honour and power, riches and great possessions. And then, 2. He prescribes remedies against the vexation of spirit that attends them. Though we cannot cure them of their vanity, we may prevent the trouble they give us, by sitting loose to them, enjoying them comfortably, but laying our expectations low from them, and acquiescing in the will of God concerning us in every event, especially by remembering God in the days of our youth, and continuing in his fear and service all our days, with an eye to the judgment to come.

CHAP. I.

In this chapter we have, I. The inscription, or title of the book, ver. 1. The general doctrine of the vanity of the creature laid down (ver. 2) and explained, ver. 3. II. The proof of this doctrine, taken, 1. From the shortness of human life and the multitude of births and burials in this life, ver. 4. 2. From their constant nature, and constant revolutions, of all the creatures, and the perpetual flux and reflux they are in, the sun, wind, and water, ver. 5-7. 3. From the abundant toil man has about them and the little satisfaction he has in them, ver. 8. 4. From the return of the same things again, which shows the end of all perfection, and that the stock is exhausted, ver. 9, 10. 5. From the odds on to which all things are condemned, ver. 11. IV. The first instance of the vanity of men's knowledge, and all the parts of learning, especially natural philosophy and politics. Observe, 1. The trial Solomon made of these, ver. 12, 13, 14, 15. 2. His judgment of them, that all is vanity, ver. 14. For, 1. There is labour in getting knowledge, ver. 13. (2.) There is little good to be done with it, ver. 15. (3.) There is no satisfaction in it, ver. 15. And, if this is vanity and vexation, all other things in this world, being much inferior to it in dignity and worth, must needs be so too. A great scholar cannot be happy unless he be a true saint.

THE words of the Preacher, the son of David, king of Jerusalem. 2 Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. 3 What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?

Here is, I. An account of the penman of this book; it was Solomon, for no other son of David was king of Jerusalem; but he conceals his name *Solomon*, peaceable, because by his sin he had brought trouble upon himself and his kingdom, had broken his peace with God and lost the peace of his conscience, and therefore was no more worthy of that name. Call me not *Solomon*, call me *Marah*, for, behold, for peace I had great bitterness. But he calls himself,

1. The preacher, which intimates his present character. He is *Kohleth*, which comes from a word which signifies to gather; but it is of a feminine termination, by which perhaps Solomon intends to upbraid himself

with his effeminacy, which contributed more than any thing to his apostasy: for it was to please his wives that he set up idols, Neb. xiii. 26. Or the word *soul* must be understood, and so *Kohleth* is.

(1.) A penitent soul, or one gathered, one that had rambled and gone astray like a lost sheep, but was now reduced, gathered in from his wanderings, gathered home to his duty, and come at length to himself. The spirit that was dissipated after a thousand vanities is now collected and made to centre in God. Divine grace can make great sinners great converts, and renew even those to repentance who, after they had known the way of righteousness, turned aside from it, and heal their backslidings, though it is a difficult case. It is only the penitent soul that God will accept, the heart that is broken, not the head that is bowed down like a bulrush only for a day, David's repentance, not Ahab's. And it is only the gathered soul that is the penitent soul, that comes back from its by-paths, that no longer scatters its way to the strangers (Jer. iii. 13), but is united to fear God's name. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak, and therefore we have here the words of the penitent, and those published. If eminent professors of religion fall into gross sin, they are concerned, for the honour of God and the repairing of the damage they have done to his kingdom, openly to testify their repentance, that the antidote may be administered as extensively as the poison.

(2.) A preaching soul, or one gathering. Being himself gathered to the congregation of saints, out of which he had by his sin thrown himself, and being reconciled to the church, he endeavours to gather others to it that had gone astray like him, and perhaps

were led astray by his example. He that has done any thing to seduce his brother ought to do all he can to restore him. Perhaps Solomon called together a congregation of his people, as he had done at the dedication of the temple (1 Kings viii. 2), so now at the rededicating of himself. In that assembly he presided as the people's mouth to God in prayer (v. 12); in this as God's mouth to them in preaching. God by his Spirit made him a preacher, in token of his being reconciled to him; a commission is a tacit pardon. Christ sufficiently testifies his forgiving Peter by committing his lambs and sheep to his trust. Observe, Penitents should be preachers; those that have taken warning themselves to turn and live should give warning to others not to go on and die. *When thou art converted strengthen thy brethren.* Preachers must be preaching souls, for that only is likely to reach to the heart that comes from the heart. Paul served God with his spirit in the gospel of his Son, Rom. i. 9.

2. *The son of David.* His taking this title intimates, (1.) That he looked upon it as a great honour to be the son of so good a man, and valued himself very much upon it. (2.) That he also looked upon it as a great aggravation of his sin that he had such a father, who had given him a good education and put up many a good prayer for him; it cuts him to the heart to think that he should be a blemish and disgrace to the name and family of such a one as David. It aggravated the sin of Jehoiakim that he was the son of Josiah, Jer. xxii. 15—17. (3.) That his being the son of David encouraged him to repent and hope for mercy, for David had fallen into sin, by which he should have been warned not to sin, but was not; but David repented, and therein he took example from him and found mercy as he did. Yet this was not all; he was that son of David concerning whom God had said that though he would chasten his transgression with the rod, yet he would not break his covenant with him, Ps. lxxxix. 34. Christ, the great preacher, was the Son of David.

3. *King of Jerusalem.* This he mentions, (1.) As that which was a very great aggravation of his sin. He was a king. — God had done much for him, in raising him to the throne, and yet he had so ill requited him; his dignity made the bad example and influence of his sin the more dangerous, and many would follow his pernicious ways; especially as he was king of Jerusalem, the holy city, where God's temple was, and of his own building too, where the priests, the Lord's ministers, were, and his prophets who had taught him better things. (2.) As that which might give some advantage to what he wrote, for *where the word of a king is there is power.* He thought it no disparagement to him, as a king, to be a preacher; but the people would regard him the more as a preacher because he was a king. If men of honour would lay

out themselves to do good, what a great deal of good might they do! Solomon looked great in the pulpit, preaching the vanity of the world, as in his throne of ivory, judging

The Chaldee-paraphrase (which, in this book, makes very large additions to the text or comments upon it, all along) gives this account of Solomon's writing this book, *That by the spirit of prophecy he foresaw the revolt of the ten tribes from his son, and, in process of time, the destruction of Jerusalem and the house of the sanctuary, and the captivity of the people, in the foresight of which he said, Vanity of vanities, all his vanity* and to that he applies many passages in this book.

II. The general scope and design of this book. What is it that this royal preacher has to say? That which he aims at is, for the making of us truly religious, to take down our esteem of and expectation from the things of this world. In order to this, he shows,

1. That they are *all vanity*, v. 2. This is the proposition he lays down and undertakes to prove: *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.* It was no new text; his father David had more than once spoken to the same purport. The truth itself here asserted is, that *all is vanity* all besides God and considered as abstracted from him, the *all* of this world, all worldly employments and enjoyments, the *all* that is in the world (1 John ii. 16), all that which is agreeable to our senses and to our fancies in this present state, which gains pleasure to ourselves or reputation with others. It is *all vanity*, not only in the abuse of it, when it is perverted by the sin of man, but even in the use of it. Man, considered with reference to these things, is vanity (Ps. xxxix. 5, 6), and if there were not another life after this were made in vain (Ps. lxxxix. 47); and those things, considered in reference to man (what ever they are in themselves), are *vanity*. They are impertinent to the soul, foreign, and add nothing to it; they do not answer the end nor yield any true satisfaction; they are uncertain in their continuance, are fading, and perishing, and passing away, and will certainly deceive and disappoint those that put a confidence in them. Let us not therefore *love vanity* (Ps. iv. 2), nor *lift up our souls to it* (Ps. xxiv. 4), for we shall but weary ourselves for it, Heb. ii. 13. It is expressed very emphatically; not only, *All is vain*, but in the abstract, *All is vanity*; as if vanity were the *proprium quarto modo*—property in the fourth mode, of the things of this world, that which enters into the nature of them. They are not only *vanity*, but *vanity of vanities*, the vainest vanity, vanity in the highest degree nothing but vanity, such a vanity as is the cause of a great deal of vanity. And this is redoubled, because the thing is certain and past dispute, it is *vanity of vanities*. This intimates that the wise man had his own heart fully convinced of and much affected with this truth, and that he was very desirous that

others should be convinced of it and affected with it, as he was, but that he found the generality of men very loth to believe it and consider it (Job xxxiii. 14); it intimates likewise that we cannot comprehend and express the vanity of this world. But who is it that speaks thus slightly of the world? Is it one that will stand to what he says? Yes, he puts his name to it—*saith the preacher*. Is it one that was a competent judge? Yes, as much as ever any man was. Many speak contemptuously of the world because they are hermits, and know it not, or beggars, and have it not; but Solomon knew it. He had lived into nature's depths (1 Kings iv. 33), and he had it, more of it perhaps than ever any man had, his head filled with its notions and his belly with its hidden treasures (Ps. xvii. 14), and he passes this judgment on it. But did he speak as one having authority? Yes, not only that of a king, but that of a prophet, a preacher; he spoke in God's name, and was divinely inspired to say it. But did he not say it in his haste, or in a passion, upon occasion of some particular disappointment? No; he said it deliberately, said it and proved it, laid it down as a fundamental principle, on which he grounded the necessity of being religious. And, as some think, one main thing he designed was to show that the everlasting throne and kingdom which God had by Nathan promised to David and his seed must be of another world; for all things in this world are subject to vanity, and therefore have not in them sufficient to answer the extent of that promise. If Solomon find all to be vanity, then the kingdom of the Messiah must come, in which we shall inherit substance.

2. That they are insufficient to make us happy. And for this he appeals to men's consciences: *What profit has a man of all the pains he takes?* v. 3. Observe here, (1.) The business of this world described. It is *labour*; the word signifies both care and toil. It is work that wearies men. There is a constant fatigue in worldly business. It is *labour under the sun*; that is a phrase peculiar to this book, where we meet with it twenty-eight times. There is a world above the sun, a world which needs not the sun, for the glory of God is its light, where there is work without labour and with great profit, the work of angels; but he speaks of the work *under the sun*, the pains of which are great and the gains little. It is *under the sun*, under the influence of the sun, by its light and in its heat; as we have the benefit of the light of the day, so we have sometimes the burden and heat of the day (Matt. xx. 12), and therefore in the *heat of our face we eat bread*. In the dark and cold grave the weary are at rest. (2.) The benefit of that business enquired into: *What profit has a man of all that labour?* Solomon says (Prov. xiv. 23), *In all labour there is profit*; and yet here he denies that there is any profit. As to our present condition in

the world, it is true that by labour we get that which we call *profit*; we eat the labour of our hands; but as the wealth of the world is commonly called *substance*, and yet it is *that which is not* (Prov. xxiii. 5), so it is called *profit*, but the question is whether it is really so or no. And here he determines that it is not, that it is not a real benefit, that it is not a remaining benefit. In short, the wealth and pleasure of this world, if we had ever so much of them, are not sufficient to make us happy, nor will they be a portion for us. [1.] As to the body, and the life that now is, *What profit has a man of all his labour?* *A man's life consists not in an abundance*, Luke xii. 15. As goods are increased care about them is increased, and those are increased that eat of them, and a little thing will embitter all the comfort of them; and then *what profit has a man of all his labour?* Early up, and never the nearer. [2.] As to the soul, and the life that is to come, we may much more truly say, *What profit has a man of all his labour?* All he gets by it will not supply the wants of the soul, nor satisfy its desires, will not atone for the sin of the soul, nor cure its diseases, nor countervail the loss of it; what profit will they be of to the soul in death, in judgment, or in the everlasting state? The fruit of our labour in heavenly things is *meat that endures to eternal life*, but the fruit of our labour for the world is only *meat that perishes*.

4 *One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever.* 5 The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. 6 The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. 7 All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again. 8 All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.

To prove the vanity of all things under the sun, and their insufficiency to make us happy, Solomon here shows, 1. That the time of our enjoyment of these things is very short, and only while we *accomplish as a hireling his day*. We continue in the world but for one generation, which is continually passing away to make room for another, and we are passing with it. Our worldly possessions we very lately had from others, and must very shortly leave to others, and therefore to us they are vanity; they can be no more substantial than that life which is the *substratum* of them, and that is but a *vapour, which appears for a little*

while and then vanishes away. While the stream of mankind is continually flowing, how little enjoyment has one drop of that stream of the pleasant banks between which it glides! We may give God the glory of that constant succession of generations, in which the world has hitherto had its existence, and will have to the end of time, admiring his patience in continuing that sinful species and his power in continuing that dying species. We may be also quickened to do the work of our generation diligently, and serve it faithfully, because it will be over shortly; and, in concern for mankind in general, we should consult the welfare of succeeding generations; but as to our own happiness, let us not expect it within such narrow limits, but in an eternal rest and consistency. 2. That when we leave this world we leave the earth behind us, that *abides for ever* where it is, and therefore the things of the earth can stand us in no stead in the future state. It is well for mankind in general that the earth endures to the end of time, when it and all the works in it shall be burnt up; but what is that to particular persons, when they remove to the world of spirits? 3. That the condition of man is, in this respect, worse than that even of the inferior creatures: *The earth abides for ever*, but man abides upon the earth but a little while. The sun sets indeed every night, yet it rises again in the morning, as bright and fresh as ever; the winds, though they shift their point, yet in some point or other still they are; the waters that go to the sea above ground come from it again under ground. *But man lies down and rises not*, Job xiv. 7, 12. 4. That all things in this world are movable and mutable, and subject to a continual toil and agitation, constant in nothing but inconstancy, still going, never resting; it was but once that the sun stood still; when it is risen it is hastening to set, and, when it is set, hastening to rise again (v. 5); the winds are ever and anon shifting (v. 6), and the waters in a continual circulation (v. 7), it would be of as bad consequence for them to stagnate as for the blood in the body to do so. And can we expect rest in a world where all things are thus full of labour (v. 8), on a sea that is always ebbing and flowing, and her waves continually working and rolling? 5. That though all things are still in motion, yet they are still where they were; The sun *parts* (as it is in the margin), but it is to the same place; the wind turns till it comes to the same place, and so the waters return to the place whence they came. Thus man, after all the pains he takes to find satisfaction and happiness in the creature, is but where he was, still as far to seek as ever. Man's mind is as restless in its pursuits as the sun, and wind, and rivers, but never satisfied, never contented; the more it has of the world the more it would have; and it would be no sooner filled with the streams of outward prosperity, the brooks of *honey and butter* (Job. xx. 17), than the sea

is with all the rivers that run into it; it is still as it was, a troubled sea that cannot rest. (That all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation, 2 Pet. iii. 4. The earth is where it was; the sun, and winds and rivers, keep the same course that ever they did; and therefore, if they have never yet been sufficient to make a happiness for man, they are never likely to be so, for they can but yield the same comfort that they have yielded. We must therefore look above the sun for satisfaction, and for a new world. 7. That this world is, at the best, a wearisome land: *All is vanity*, for all is *full of labour*. The whole creation is made subject to this vanity ever since man was sentenced to *eat bread in the sweat of his brows*. If we survey the whole creation, we shall see all busy; and have enough to do to mind their own business; none will be a portion or happiness for man; all labour to serve him, but none provide a *help-meet* for him. Man cannot express how full of labour all things are, can neither number the laborious nor measure the labour. 8. That our senses are unsatisfied and the objects of them unsatisfying. He specifies those senses that perform their office with least toil, and are most capable of being pleased: *The eye is not satisfied with seeing*, but is weary of seeing always the same sight, and covets novelty and variety. *The ear is fond*, at first, of a pleasant song or tune, but soon nauseates it, and must have another; both are surfeited, but neither satiated, and what was most grateful becomes ungrateful. Curiosity is still inquisitive, because still unsatisfied, and the more it is humoured the more nice and peevish it grows, crying, *Give, give*.

9 The thing that hath been, it *is* that which shall be; and that which is done *is* that which shall be done: and *there is no new thing* under the sun. 10 Is there *any* thing whereof it may be said, See, this *is* new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us. 11 *There is* no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be *any* remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after.

Two things we are apt to take a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction in, and value ourselves upon, with reference to our business and enjoyments in the world, as if they helped to save them from vanity. Solomon here shows us our mistake in both.

1. The novelty of the invention, that it is such as was never known before. How grateful is it to think that none ever made such advances in knowledge, and such discoveries by it, as we, that none ever made such improvements of an estate or trade, and had the art of enjoying the gains of it as we have. Their contrivances and compo-

tions are all despised and run down, and we boast of new fashions, new hypotheses, new methods, new expressions, which jostle out the old, and put them down. But this is all a mistake: *The thing that is, and shall be, is the same with that which has been, and that which shall be done will be but the same with that which is done, for there is no new thing under the sun, v. 9.* It is repeated (v. 10) by way of question, *Is there any thing of which it may be said, with wonder, See, this is new; there never was the like?* It is an appeal to observing men, and a challenge to those that cry up modern learning above that of the ancients. Let them name any thing which they take to be new, and though perhaps we cannot make it to appear, nor want of the records of former times, yet we have reason to conclude *that it has been already of old time, which was before us.* What is there in the kingdom of nature of which we may say, *This is new?* *The works were finished from the foundation of the world* (Heb. i. 3): things which appear new to us, as they do to children, are not so in themselves. The heavens were of old; the earth abides for ever; the powers of nature and the links of natural causes are still the same that ever they were. In the kingdom of Providence, though the course and method of it have not much known and certain rules as that of nature, nor does it go always in the same track, yet, in the general, it is still the same thing over and over again. Men's hearts; and the disruptions of them, are still the same; their desires, and pursuits, and complaints, are still the same; and what God does in his dealings with men is according to the scripture, according to the manner, so that it is all repetition. What is surprising to us needs not be so, for there has been the like, the like range advancements and disappointments, the like strange revolutions and sudden turns, sudden turns of affairs; the miseries of human life have always been much the same, and mankind tread a perpetual round, and, as the sun and wind, are but where they were. Now the design of this is. (1.) To show the folly of the children of men in affecting things that are new, in imagining that they have discovered such things, and in boasting and priding themselves in them. We are apt to nauseate old things, and to grow weary of what we have been long used to, as Israel of the manna, and covet, with the Athenians, still to tell and hear of some new thing, and admire this and the other as new, whereas it is all what has been. Tananus the Assyrian, showing the Grecians how all the arts which they valued themselves upon owed their original to those nations which they counted barbarous, thus reasons with them: "For shame, do not call those things *significæ*—inventions, which are but *significæ*—imitations." (2.) To take us off from expecting happiness or satisfaction in the creature. Why should we look for it

there, where never any yet have found it? What reason have we to think that the world should be any kinder to us than it has been to those that have gone before us, since there is nothing in it that is new, and our predecessors have made as much of it as could be made? *Your fathers did eat manna, and yet they are dead.* See John viii. 8, 9; vi. 49. (3.) To quicken us to secure spiritual and eternal blessings. If we would be entertained with new things, we must acquaint ourselves with the things of God, get a new nature; then *old things pass away, and all things become new.* 2 Cor. v. 17. The gospel puts a new song into our mouths. In heaven *all is new* (Rev. xxi. 5), all new at first, wholly unlike the present state of things, a new world indeed (Luke xx. 35), and all new to eternity, always fresh, always flourishing. This consideration should make us willing to die, that in this world there is nothing but the same over and over again, and we can expect nothing from it more or better than we have had.

2. The memorableness of the achievement, that it is such as will be known and talked of hereafter. Many think they have found satisfaction enough in this, that their names shall be perpetuated, that posterity will celebrate the actions they have performed, the honours they have won, and the estates they have raised, that *their houses shall continue for ever* (Ps. lix. 11; but herein they deceive themselves. How many former things and persons were there, which in their day looked very great and made a mighty figure, and yet there is no remembrance of them; they are buried in oblivion. Here and there one person or action that was remarkable met with a kind historian, and had the good hap to be recorded, when at the same time there were others, no less remarkable, that were dropped: and therefore we may conclude that *neither shall there be any remembrance of things to come*, but that which we hope to be remembered by will be either lost or slighted.

12 I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem. 13 And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith. 14 I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. 15 That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered. 16 I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea,

my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. 17 And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. 18 For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.

Solomon, having asserted in general that *all is vanity*, and having given some general proofs of it, now takes the most effectual method to evince the truth of it, 1. By his own experience; he tried them all, and found them vanity. 2. By an induction of particulars; and here he begins with that which bids fairest of all to be the happiness of a reasonable creature, and that is knowledge and learning; if this be vanity, every thing else must needs be so. Now as to this,

I. Solomon tells us here what trial he had made of it, and that with such advantages that, if true satisfaction could have been found in it, he would have found it. - 1. His high station gave him an opportunity of improving himself in all parts of learning, and particularly in politics and the conduct of human affairs, v. 12. He that is the *preacher of this doctrine was king over Israel*, whom all their neighbours admired as a *wise and understanding people*, Deut. iv. 6. He had his royal seat in *Jerusalem*, which then deserved, better than Athens ever did, to be called *the eye of the world*. The heart of a king is unsearchable; he has reaches of his own, and a *divine sentence is often in his lips*. It is his honour, it is his business, to search out every matter. Solomon's great wealth and honour put him into a capacity of making his court the centre of learning and the rendezvous of learned men, of furnishing himself with the best of books, and either conversing or corresponding with all the wise and knowing part of mankind then in being, who made application to him to learn of him, by which he could not but improve himself; for it is in knowledge as it is in trade, all the profit is by barter and exchange; if we have that to say which will instruct others, they will have that to say which will instruct us. Some observe how slightly Solomon speaks of his dignity and honour. He does not say, *I the preacher am king*, but *I was king*, no matter what I am. He speaks of it as a thing past, because worldly honours are transitory. 2. He applied himself to the improvement of these advantages, and the opportunities he had of getting wisdom, which, though ever so great, will not make a man wise unless he give his mind to it. Solomon gave his heart to seek and search out all things to be known by wisdom, v. 13. He made it his business to acquaint himself with *all the things that are done under the sun*, that are done by the providence of God or by the art and prudence of man. He set himself to get

all the insight he could into philosophy and mathematics, into husbandry and trade, merchandise and mechanics, into the history of former ages and the present state of other kingdoms, their laws, customs, and policies into men's different tempers, capacities, and projects, and the methods of managing them; he set himself not only to seek, but to search to pry into, that which is most intricate, and which requires the closest application of mind and the most vigorous and constant prosecution. Though he was a prince, he made himself a drudge to learning, was not discouraged by its knots, nor took up short of its depths. And this he did, not merely to gratify his own genius, but to qualify himself for the service of God and his generation, and to make an experiment how far the enlargement of the knowledge would go towards the settlement and repose of the mind. 3. He made a very great progress in his studies, wonderfully improved all the parts of learning, and carried his discoveries much further than any that had been before him. He did not condemn learning, as many do, because they cannot conquer it and will not be at the pains to make themselves masters of it; no, what he aimed at he compassed; he saw all the works that were done under the sun (v. 14), works of nature in the upper and lower world, all within this vortex (to use the modern gibberish) which has the sun for its centre, works of art, the product of men's wit, in a personal or social capacity. He had as much satisfaction in the success of his searches as ever any man had; he communed with his own heart concerning his attainments in knowledge, with as much pleasure as ever any rich merchant had in taking account of his stock. He could say, "*Lo, I have magnified and increased wisdom, have not only gotten more of it myself, but have done more to propagate it and bring it into reputation, than any, than all that have been before me in Jerusalem.*" Note, It becomes great men to be studious, and delight themselves most in intellectual pleasures. Where God gives great advantages of getting knowledge he expects improvements accordingly. It is happy with a people when their princes and noblemen study to excel others as much in wisdom and useful knowledge as they do in honour and estate; and they may do that service to the commonwealth of learning by applying themselves to the studies that are proper for them which meaner persons cannot do. Solomon must be acknowledged a competent judge of this matter, for he had not only got his head full of notions, but his heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge, of the power and benefit of knowledge, as well as the amusement and entertainment of it; what he knew he had digested, and knew how to make use of. *Wisdom entered into his heart*, and so became pleasant to his soul, Prov. ii. 10, 11; xxii. 18. 4. He applied his studies especially to that part of

arning which is most serviceable to the product of human life, and consequently is the most valuable (v. 17): "*I gave my heart to know the rules and dictates of wisdom, and now I might obtain it; and to know madness and folly, how I might prevent and cure it, to know the snares and insinuations of it, that I might avoid them, and guard against them, and discover its fallacies.*" So industrious was Solomon to improve himself in knowledge that he gained instruction both by the wisdom of prudent men and by the madness of foolish men, by the field of the foolish, as well as of the diligent.

11. He tells us what was the result of this trial, to confirm what he had said, that *all is vanity*.

1. He found that his searches after knowledge were very toilsome, and a weariness not only to the flesh, but to the mind (v. 13): *this sore travail*, this difficulty that there is in searching after truth and finding it, *God has given to the sons of men to be afflicted therewith*, as a punishment for our first parents' coveting forbidden knowledge. As bread for the body, so that for the soul, must be got and eaten in the sweat of our face, whereas both would have been had without labour if Adam had not sinned.

2. He found that the more he saw of the works done under the sun the more he saw of their vanity; nay, and the sight often occasioned him *vexation of spirit* (v. 14): "*I have seen all the works of a world full of business, have observed what the children of men are doing; and behold, whatever men think of their own works, I see all is vanity and vexation of spirit.*" He had before pronounced of *vanity* (v. 2), needless and unprofitable, and that which does us no good; here he adds, It is all *vexation of spirit*, troublesome and prejudicial, and that which does us hurt. *is feeding upon wind*; so some read it, Jos. xii. 1. (1.) The works themselves which we see done are *vanity and vexation* to those that are employed in them. There is so much vanity in the contrivance of our worldly business, so much toil in the prosecution of it, and so much trouble in the disappointments we meet with in it, that we may well say, It is *vexation of spirit*. (2.) The sight of them is *vanity and vexation of spirit* to the wise observer of them. The more we see of the world the more we see to make us uneasy, and, with Heraclitus, to look upon all with sleeping eyes. Solomon especially perceived that the knowledge of *wisdom and folly* was *vexation of spirit*, v. 17. It vexed him to see any that had wisdom not use it, and many that had folly not strive against it. It vexed him when he knew wisdom to see how far it stood from the children of men, and, when he saw folly, to see how fast it was bound in their hearts.

3. He found that when he had got some knowledge he could neither gain that satisfaction to himself nor do that good to others that it which he expected, v. 15. It would

not avail, (1.) To redress the many grievances of human life: "After all, I find that *that which is crooked* will be crooked still and *cannot be made straight.*" Our knowledge is itself intricate and perplexed; we must go far about and fetch a great compass to come at it. Solomon thought to find out a nearer way to it, but he could not. The paths of learning are as much a labyrinth as ever they were. The minds and manners of men are crooked and perverse. Solomon thought, with his wisdom and power together, thoroughly to reform his kingdom, and make that straight which he found crooked; but he was disappointed. All the philosophy and politics in the world will not restore the corrupt nature of man to its primitive rectitude: we find the insufficiency of them both in others and in ourselves. Learning will not alter men's natural tempers, nor cure them of their sinful distempers; nor will it change the constitution of things in this world; a vale of tears it is and so it will be when all is done. (2.) To make up the many deficiencies in the comfort of human life: *That which is wanting* there *cannot be numbered*, or counted out to us from the treasures of human learning, but what *is wanting* will still be so. All our enjoyments here, when we have done our utmost to bring them to perfection, are still lame and defective, and it cannot be helped; as they are, so they are likely to be. *That which is wanting* in our knowledge is so much that it *cannot be numbered*. The more we know the more we see of our own ignorance. *Who can understand his errors, his defects?*

4. Upon the whole, therefore, he concluded that great scholars do but make themselves great mourners; *for in much wisdom is much grief*, v. 18. There must be a great deal of pains taken to get it, and a great deal of care not to forget it; the more we know the more we see there is to be known, and consequently we perceive with greater clearness that our work is without end, and the more we see of our former mistakes and blunders, which occasions *much grief*. The more we see of men's different sentiments and opinions (and it is that which a great deal of our learning is conversant about) the more at a loss we are, it may be, which is in the right. Those *that increase knowledge* have so much the more quick and sensible perception of the calamities of this world, and for one discovery they make that is pleasing, perhaps, they make ten that are displeasing, and so they *increase sorrow*. Let us not therefore be driven off from the pursuit of any useful knowledge, but put on patience to break through the sorrow of it; but let us despair of finding true happiness in this knowledge, and expect it only in the knowledge of God and the careful discharge of our duty to him. *He that increases in heavenly wisdom, and in an experimental acquaintance with the principles, powers, and*

pleasures of the spiritual and divine life, *increases* joy, such as will shortly be consummated in everlasting joy.

CHAP. II.

Solomon having pronounced all vanity, and particularly knowledge and learning, which he was so far from giving himself joy of that he found the increase of it did but increase his sorrow, in this chapter he goes on to show what reason he has to be tired of this world, and with what little reason most men are fond of it. I. He shows that there is no true happiness and satisfaction to be had in mirth and pleasure, and the delights of sense, ver. 1—11. II. He reconsiders the pretensions of wisdom, and allows it to be excellent and useful, and yet sees it clogged with such diminutions of its worth that it proves insufficient to make a man happy, ver. 12—16. III. He enquires how far the business and wealth of this world will go towards making men happy, and concludes, from his own experience, that, to those who set their hearts upon it, "it is vanity and vexation of spirit;" (ver. 17—23), and that, if there be any good in it, it is only to those that sit loose to it, ver. 24—26.

I SAID in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity. 2 I said of laughter, *It is mad*: and of mirth, What doeth it? 3 I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what *was* that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life. 4 I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: 5 I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all *kind of* fruits: 6 I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: 7 I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: 8 I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. 9 So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. 10 And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour. 11 Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all *was* vanity and vexation of spirit, and *there was* no profit under the sun.

Solomon here, in pursuit of the *summum bonum*—the felicity of man, adjourns out of his study, his library, his laboratory, his council-chamber, where he had in vain sought for it, into the park and the playhouse, his garden and his summer-house; he exchanges the company of the philosophers and grave senators for that of the wits and gallants, and the beaux-esprits, of his court, to try if he could find true satisfaction and happiness among them. Here, he takes a great step downward, from the noble pleasures of the intellect to the brutal ones of sense; yet, he resolve to make a thorough trial, he must knock at this door, because here a great part of mankind imagine they have found that which he was in quest of.

I. He resolved to try what mirth would do and the pleasures of wit, whether he should be happy if he constantly entertained himself and others with merry stories and jests, banter and drollery; if he should furnish himself with all the pretty ingenious turns and repartees he could invent or pick up, fit to be laughed over, and all the bulls and blunders, and foolish things, he could hear of, fit to be ridiculed and laughed at, so that he might be always in a merry humour. 1. This experiment made (v. 1): "Finding that in much wisdom is much grief, and that those who are serious are apt to be melancholy, I said in my heart" (to my heart), "Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth; I will try if that will give thee satisfaction." Neither the temper of his mind nor his outward condition had any thing in them to keep him from being merry, but both agreed, as did all other advantages, to further it; therefore he resolved to take a lease this way, and said, "Enjoy pleasure, and take thy fill of it; cast away care, and resolve to be merry." So man may be, and yet have none of these fine things which he here got to entertain himself with; many that are poor are very merry, beggars in a barn are so to a proverb. Mirth is the entertainment of the fancy, and, though it comes short of the solid delights of the rational powers, yet it is to be preferred before those that are merely carnal and sensual. Some distinguish man from the brutes, not only as *animal rationale*—a rational animal, but as *animal risibile*—a laughing animal; therefore he that said to his soul, *Take thine ease, eat and drink*, added, *And be merry*, for it was in order to that that he would eat and drink. "Try therefore," says Solomon, "to laugh and be fat, to laugh and be happy." 2. The judgment he passed upon this experiment: *Behold, this also is vanity*, like all the rest; it yields no true satisfaction, v. 2. *said of laughter, It is mad*, or, *Thou art mad*, and therefore I will have nothing to do with thee; and of mirth (of all sports and recreations, and whatever pretends to be diverting) *What doeth it? or, What doest thou?* Innocent mirth, soberly, seasonably, and moderately used, is a good thing, fits for bus-

ness, and helps to soften the toils and chagrins of human life; but, when it is excessive and immoderate, it is foolish and fruitless. (1.) It does no good: *What doeth it?* *Cui bono*—*Of what use is it?* It will not avail to quiet a guilty conscience; no, nor to ease a sorrowful spirit; nothing is more ungrateful than *singing songs to a heavy heart*. It will not satisfy the soul, nor ever yield it true content. It is but a palliative cure to the grievances of this present time. Great laughter commonly ends in a sigh. (2.) It does a great deal of hurt: *It is mad*, that is, it makes men mad, it transports men into many indecencies, which are a reproach to their reason and religion. They are mad that indulge themselves in it, for it estranges the heart from God and divine things, and insensibly robs out the power of religion. Those that love to be merry forget to be serious, and, while they take the timbrel and harp, they say to the Almighty, *Depart from us*, Job xxi. 2, 14. We may, as Solomon, *prove ourselves, with mirth*, and judge of the state of our souls by this: How do we stand affected to it? Can we be merry and wise? Can we use it as sauce, and not as food? But we need not try, as Solomon did, whether it will make a happiness for us, for we may take this word for it, *It is mad; and What does?* Laughter and pleasure (says Sir William Temple) come from very different affections of the mind; for, as men have no disposition to laugh at things they are most pleased with, so they are very little pleased with many things they laugh at.

II. Finding himself not happy in that which pleased his fancy, he resolved next to try that which would please the palate, v. 3. Since the knowledge of the creature would not satisfy, he would see what the liberal use of it would do: *I sought in my heart to give myself unto wine*, that is, to good meat and good drink. Many give themselves to these without consulting their hearts at all, not looking any further than merely the gratification of the sensual appetite; but Solomon applied himself to it rationally, and as a man, critically, and only to make an experiment. Observe, 1. He did not allow himself any liberty in the use of the delights of sense till he had tried himself with his severe studies. Till the increase of wisdom proved an increase of sorrow, he never thought of giving himself to wine. When we have spent ourselves in doing good we may then most comfortably refresh ourselves with the gifts of God's bounty. Then the delights of sense are rightly used when they are used as we use cordials, only when we need them; as Timothy drank wine for his health's sake, 1 Tim. v. 23. *I thought to draw my flesh with wine* (so the margin reads it) or to wine. Those that have addicted themselves to drinking did at first put force upon themselves; they drew their flesh to it, and with it; but they should remember to what miseries they hereby draw

themselves. 2. He then looked upon it as folly, and it was with reluctance that he gave himself to it; as St. Paul, when he commended himself, called it a *weakness*, and desired to be borne with in his *foolishness*, 2 Cor. xi. 1. He sought to *lay hold on folly*, to see the utmost that that folly would do towards making men happy; but he had like to have carried the jest (as we say) too far. He resolved that the folly should not take hold of him, not get the mastery of him, but he would lay hold on it, and keep it at a distance; yet he found it too hard for him. 3. He took care at the same time to *acquaint himself with wisdom*, to manage himself wisely in the use of his pleasures, so that they should not do him any prejudice nor disfit him to be a competent judge of them. When he *drew his flesh with wine he led his heart with wisdom* (so the word is), kept up his pursuits after knowledge, did not make a sot of himself, nor become a slave to his pleasures, but his studies and his feasts were foils to each other, and he tried whether both mixed together would give him that satisfaction which he could not find in either separately. This Solomon proposed to himself, but he found it *vanity*; for those that think to give themselves to wine, and yet to acquaint their hearts with wisdom, will perhaps deceive themselves as much as those do that think to serve both God and mammon. *Wine is a mocker*; it is a great cheat; and it will be impossible for any man to say that thus far he will give himself to it and no further. 4. That which he aimed at was not to gratify his appetite, but to find out man's happiness, and this, because it pretended to be so, must be tried among the rest. Observe the description he gives of man's happiness—it is *that good for the sons of men which they should do under the heaven all their days*. (1.) That which we are to enquire after is not so much the good we must have (we may leave that to God), but the good we must do; that ought to be our care. *Good Master, what good thing shall I do?* Our happiness consists not in being idle, but in doing aright, in being well employed. If we do *that which is good*, no doubt we shall have comfort and *praise of the same*. (2.) It is good to be done *under the heaven*, while we are here in this world, while it is day, while our doing time lasts. This is our state of work and service; it is in the other world that we must expect the retribution. Thither our works will follow us. (3.) It is to be done *all the days of our life*. The good we are to do we must persevere in the doing of to the end, while our doing time lasts, the *number of the days of our life* (so it is in the margin); the days of our life are numbered to us by him in whose hand our times are and they are all to be spent as he directs. But that any man should give himself to wine, in hopes to find out in that the best way of living in this world, was an absurdity which Solomon here, in the reflection, condemns him-

self for. Is it possible that this should be the good that men should do? No; it is plainly very bad.

III. Perceiving quickly that it was folly to give himself to wine, he next tried the most costly entertainments and amusements of princes and great men. He had a vast income; the revenue of his crown was very great, and he laid it out so as might most please his own humour and make him look great.

1. He gave himself much to building, both in the city and in the country; and, having been at such vast expense in the beginning of his reign to build a house for God, he was the more excusable if afterwards he pleased his own fancy in building for himself; he began his work at the right end (Matt. vi. 33), not as the people (Hag. i. 4), that *ceiled their own houses* while God's lay waste, and it prospered accordingly. In building, he had the pleasure of employing the poor and doing good to posterity. We read of Solomon's buildings (1 Kings ix. 15—19), and they were all *great works*, such as became his purse, and spirit, and great dignity. See his mistake; he enquired after the *good works* he should do (v. 3), and, in pursuit of the enquiry, applied himself to *great works*. Good works indeed are truly great, but many are reputed great works which are far from being good, wondrous works which are not gracious, Matt. vii. 22.

2. He took to love a garden, which is to some as bewitching as building. He *planted himself vineyards*, which the soil and climate of the land of Canaan favoured; he *made himself fine gardens and orchards* (v. 5), and perhaps the art of gardening was no way inferior then to what it is now. He had not only forests of timber-trees, but *trees of all kinds of fruit*, which he himself had planted; and, if any worldly business would yield a man happiness, surely it must be that which Adam was employed in while he was in innocence.

3. He laid out a great deal of money in water-works, ponds, and canals, not for sport and diversion, but for use, to *water the wood that brings forth trees* (v. 6); he not only planted, but watered, and then left it to God to give the increase. *Springs of water* are great blessings (Josh. xv. 19); but where nature has provided them art must direct them, to make them serviceable, Prov. xxi. 1.

4. He increased his family. When he proposed to himself to do *great works* he must employ many hands, and therefore procured *servants and maidens*, which were bought with his money, and of those he *had servants born in his house*, v. 7. Thus his retinue was enlarged and his court appeared more magnificent. See Ezra ii. 58.

5. He did not neglect country business, but both entertained and enriched himself with that, and was not diverted from it either by his studies or by his pleasures. He *had large possessions of great and small cattle,*

herds and flocks, as his father had before him (1 Chron. xxvii. 29, 31), not forgetting that his father, in the beginning, was a keeper of sheep. Let those that deal in cattle neither despise their employment nor be weary of remembering that Solomon puts his *happiness in the possession of cattle* among his *great works* and his pleasures.

6. He grew very rich, and was not at all impoverished by his building and gardening as many are, who, for that reason only, repent it, and call it *vanity and vexation*. Solomon scattered and yet increased. He filled his exchequer with *silver and gold*, which yet did not stagnate there, but were made to circulate through his kingdom, so that he made *silver to be in Jerusalem as stones* (1 Kings x. 27); nay, he had the *segullah*, the *peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces*, which was, for richness and rarity, more account of than *silver and gold*. The neighbouring kings, and the distant provinces of his own empire, sent him the richest presents that had, to obtain his favour and the instruction of his wisdom.

7. He had every thing that was charming and diverting, all sorts of melody and music, vocal and instrumental, *men-singers and women-singers*, the best voices he could pick up, and all the wind and band-instruments that were then in use. His father had a genius for music, but it should seem he employed more to serve his devotion than the son, who made it more his diversion. These are called *the delights of the sons of men*; for the gratifications of sense are the things that the generality of people set their affections upon, and take the greatest complacency in. The delights of the children of God are of quite another nature, pure, spiritual, and heavenly, and the delights of angels.

8. He enjoyed, more than ever any man did, a composition of rational and sensitive pleasures at the same time. He was, in this respect, *great, and increased more than all that were before him*, that he was wise amidst thousand earthly enjoyments. It was strange and the like was never met with, (1.) That his pleasures did not debauch his judgment and conscience. In the midst of these entertainments *his wisdom remained with him*, v. 9. In the midst of all these childish delights he preserved his spirit manly, kept the possession of his own soul, and maintained the dominion of reason over the appetites of sense; such a vast stock of wisdom had he that was not wasted and impaired, as any other man's would have been, by this course of life. But let none be emboldened hereby to lay the reins on the neck of their appetite, presuming that they may do that and yet retain their wisdom, for they have not such strength of wisdom as Solomon had; nay, and Solomon was deceived; for how did his *wisdom remain with him* when he lost his religion so far as to build altars to strange gods for the humouring of his strange wives? But

thus far his wisdom remained with him that he was master of his pleasures, and not a slave to them, and kept himself capable of making judgment of them. He went over into the enemies' country, not as a deserter, but as a spy, to discover the nakedness of their land. (2.) Let his judgment and conscience gave no check to his pleasures, nor hindered him from extracting the very quintessence of the delights of sense, v. 10. It might be objected against his judgment in this matter that if his wisdom remained with him he could not take the liberty that was necessary to a full experimental acquaintance with it: "Yea," said he, "I took as great a liberty as any man could take, for whatsoever my eyes desired I kept not from them, if it could be compassed by lawful means, though ever so difficult or costly; and as I withheld not any joy from my heart that I had a mind to, so I withheld not my heart from any joy, but, with a non-obstante—with the full exercise of my wisdom, I had high gust of my pleasures, relished and enjoyed them as much as ever any Epicure did;" or was there any thing either in the circumstances of his condition or in the temper of his spirit to sour or embitter them, or give them any alloy. In short, [1.] He had as much pleasure in his business as ever any man had: *My heart rejoiced in all my labour*; so that the toil and fatigue of that were no ramp to his pleasures. [2.] He had no less profit by his business. He met with no disappointment in it to give him any disturbance: *this was my portion of all my labour*; he had this added to all the rest of his pleasures that in them he did not only see, but eat, the labour of his hands; and this was all he had, or indeed it was all he could expect, from his labours. It sweetened his business that he enjoyed the success of it, and it sweetened his enjoyments that they were the product of his business; so that, upon the whole, he was certainly as happy as the world could make him.

9. We have, at length, the judgment he deliberately gave of all this, v. 11. When the Creator had made his great works he reviewed them, and behold, all was very good; every thing pleased him. But when Solomon reviewed all his works that his hands had wrought with the utmost cost and care, and the labour that he had laboured to do in order to make himself easy and happy, nothing answered his expectation; behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit; he had no satisfaction in it, no advantage by it; *there was no profit under the sun*, neither by the employments nor by the enjoyments of this world.

12 And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what can the man do that cometh after the king? even that which hath been already done. 13 Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness. 14 The wise man's

eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all. 15 Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity. 16 For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? as the fool.

Solomon having tried what satisfaction was to be had in learning first, and then in the pleasures of sense, and having also put both together, here compares them one with another and passes a judgment upon them.

I. He sets himself to consider both wisdom and folly. He had considered these before (ch. i. 17); but lest it should be thought he was then too quick in passing a judgment upon them, he here turns himself again to behold them, to see if, upon a second view and second thoughts, he could gain more satisfaction in the search than he had done upon the first. He was sick of his pleasures, and, as nauseating them, he turned from them, that he might again apply himself to speculation; and if, upon this rehearing of the cause, the verdict be still the same, the judgment will surely be decisive; for what can the man do that comes after the king? especially such a king, who had so much of this world to make the experiment upon and so much wisdom to make it with. The baffled trial needs not be repeated. No man can expect to find more satisfaction in the world than Solomon did, nor to gain a greater insight into the principles of morality; when a man has done what he can still it is that which has been already done. Let us learn, 1. Not to indulge ourselves in a fond conceit that we can mend that which has been well done before us. Let us esteem others better than ourselves, and think how unfit we are to attempt the improvement of the performances of better heads and hands than ours, and rather own how much we are beholden to them, John iv. 37, 38. 2. To acquiesce in Solomon's judgment of the things of this world, and not to think of repeating the trial; for we can never think of having such advantages as he had to make the experiment nor of being able to make it with equal application of mind and so little danger to ourselves.

II. He gives the preference to wisdom far before folly. Let none mistake him, as if, when he speaks of the vanity of human literature, he designed only to amuse men with a paradox, or were about to write (as a great wit once did) *Encomium moriæ—A panegyric in praise of folly*. No, he is maintaining sa-

cred truths, and therefore is careful to guard against being misunderstood. I soon saw (says he) that there is an excellency in wisdom more than in folly, as much as there is in light above darkness. The pleasures of wisdom, though they suffice not to make men happy, yet vastly transcend the pleasures of wine. Wisdom enlightens the soul with surprising discoveries and necessary directions for the right government of itself; but sensuality (for that seems to be especially the folly here meant) clouds and eclipses the mind, and is as darkness to it; it puts out men's eyes, makes them to stumble in the way and wander out of it. Or, though wisdom and knowledge will not make a man happy (St. Paul shows a more excellent way than gifts, and that is grace), yet it is much better to have them than to be without them, in respect of our present safety, comfort, and usefulness; for the wise man's eyes are in his head (v. 14), where they should be, ready to discover both the dangers that are to be avoided and the advantages that are to be improved; a wise man has not his reason to seek when he should use it, but looks about him and is quick-sighted, knows both where to step and where to stop; whereas the fool walks in darkness, and is ever and anon either at a loss, or at a plunge, either bewildered, that he knows not which way to go, or embarrassed, that he cannot go forward. A man that is discreet and considerate has the command of his business, and acts decently and safely, as those that walk in the day; but he that is rash, and ignorant, and sottish, is continually making blunders, running upon one precipice or other: his projects, his bargains, are all foolish, and ruin his affairs. Therefore get wisdom, get understanding.

III. Yet he maintains that, in respect of lasting happiness and satisfaction, the wisdom of this world gives a man very little advantage; for, 1. Wise men and fools fare alike. "It is true the wise man has very much the advantage of the fool in respect of foresight and insight, and yet the greatest probabilities do so often come short of success that I myself perceived, by my own experience, that one event happens to them all (v. 14); those that are most cautious of their health are as soon sick as those that are most careless of it, and the most suspicious are imposed upon." David had observed that wise men die, and are involved in the same common calamity with the fool and the brutish person, Ps. xlix. 12. See ch. ix. 11. Nay, it has of old been observed that Fortune favours fools, and that half-witted men often thrive most, while the greatest projectors forecast worst for themselves. The same sickness, the same sword, devours wise men and fools. Solomon applies this mortifying observation to himself (v. 15), that though he was a wise man, he might not glory in his wisdom; I said to my heart, when it began to be proud or secure, As it happens to the fool,

so it happens to me, even to me; for thusaphatically it is expressed in the origin "So, as for me, it happens to me. Am I rich? So is many a Nabal that fares as sumptuously as I do. Is a foolish man sick, does he go to the grave? So do I, even I; and neither my wisdom nor my wisdom will be my security. Why was I then more wise? Why should I take so much pains to get wisdom, when to this life, it will stand me in so little stead? Then I said in my heart that this also is vanity." Some make this a correction of what was said before, like that (Ps. lxxvii. 10), said, This is my infirmity; it is my folly, I think that wise men and fools are upon a level; but really they seem to be so, in respect of the event, and therefore it is rather a confirmation of what he had before said: That a man may be a profound philosopher and politician and yet not be a happy man. 2. Wise men and fools are forgotten alike (v. 16): There is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool. It is promised to the righteous that they shall be had in everlasting remembrance, and their memory shall be blessed, and they shall shortly shine as the stars; but there is no such promise made concerning the wisdom of this world, that that shall perpetuate men's names, for those names only are perpetuated that are written in heaven, and otherwise the names of this world's wise men are written with those of its fools in the dust. That which now is in the days to come shall be forgotten. What was much talked of in one generation is, in the next, as if it had never been. New persons and new things jostle out the very remembrance of the old, which in a little time are looked upon with contempt and at length quite buried in oblivion. Where is the wise? Where is the prudent of this world? 1 Cor. i. 20. And he that upon this account that he asks, How does the wise man? As the fool. Between the death of a godly and a wicked man there is a great difference, but not between the death of a wise man and a fool; the fool is buried and forgotten (ch. viii. 10), and no one remembers the poor man that by his wisdom delivered a city (ch. ix. 15); so that to both the grave is a land of forgetfulness; and wise and learned men, when they have been awhile in the world of sight, grow out of mind, a new generation arises that knew them not.

17 Therefore I hated life; because of the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all vanity and vexation of spirit. 18 Yea, I hated all my labour which I have taken under the sun: because I shall leave it unto the man that shall come after me. 19 And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, a

herein I have showed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity. Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun. 21 For there is a man whose labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it *for* his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil. 22 For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun? 23 For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity. 24 *There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour.* This also I saw, that it came from the hand of God. 25 For who can eat, or who else can hasten *reunto*, more than I? 26 For God giveth to a man that is good in his right wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather to and to heap up, that he may give to *him that is good* before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.

Business is a thing that wise men have pleasure in. They are in their element when they are in their business, and complain if they be out of business. They may sometimes be tired with their business, but they are not weary of it, nor willing to leave it off. There therefore one would expect to have found the good that men should do, but Solomon tried this too; after a contemplative and a voluptuous life, he betook himself to an active life, and found no more satisfaction in it than in the other; still it is all *vain and vexation of spirit*, of which he gives account in these verses, where observe, I. What the business was which he made trial of; it was business *under the sun* (v. 17, 20), about the things of this world, subluxury things, the riches, honours, and pleasures of this present time; it was the business of a king. There is business *above the sun*, perpetual business, which is perpetual blessedness; what we do in conformity to that business (doing *God's will as it is done in heaven*) and in pursuance of that blessedness, will turn to a good account; we shall have no reason to hate that labour, nor to despair of it. But it is *labour under the sun*, labour for the *meat that perishes* (John vi. 27; Isa. lv. 2), that Solomon here speaks of

with so little satisfaction. It was the better sort of business, not that of the *hewers of wood and drawers of water* (it is not so strange if men hate all that labour), but it was *in wisdom, and knowledge, and equity*, v. 21. It was rational business, which related to the government of his kingdom and the advancement of its interests. It was labour managed by the dictates of wisdom, of natural and acquired knowledge, and the directions of justice. It was labour at the council-board and in the courts of justice. It was labour wherein he *showed himself wise* (v. 19), which as much excels the labour wherein men only show themselves strong as the endowments of the mind, by which we are allied to angels, do those of the body, which we have in common with the brutes. That which many people have in their eye more than any thing else, in the prosecution of their worldly business, is to *show themselves wise*, to get the reputation of ingenious men and men of sense and application.

II. His falling out with this business. He soon grew weary of it. 1. He *hated all his labour*, because he did not meet with that satisfaction in it which he expected. After he had had his fine houses, and gardens, and water-works, awhile, he began to nauseate them, and look upon them with contempt, as children, who are eager for a toy and fond of it at first, but, when they have played with it awhile, are weary of it, and throw it away, and must have another. This expresses not a gracious hatred of these things, which is our duty, to love them less than God and religion (Luke xiv. 26), nor a sinful hatred of them, which is our folly, to be weary of the place God has assigned us and the work of it, but a natural hatred of them, arising from a surfeit upon them and a sense of disappointment in them. 2. He *caused his heart to despair of all his labour* (v. 20); he took pains to possess himself with a deep sense of the vanity of worldly business, that it would not bring in the advantage and satisfaction he had formerly flattered himself with the hopes of. Our hearts are very loth to quit their expectations of great things from the creature; we must go about, must fetch a compass, in arguing with them, to convince them that there is not that in the things of this world which we are apt to promise ourselves from them. Have we so often labored and sunk into this earth for some rich mine of satisfaction, and found not the least sign or token of it, but been always frustrated in the search, and shall we not at length set our hearts at rest and despair of ever finding it? 3. He came to that, at length, that he *hated life itself* (v. 17), because it is subject to so many toils and troubles, and a constant series of disappointments. God had given Solomon such largeness of heart, and such vast capacities of mind, that he experienced more than other men of the unsatisfying nature of all the things of this life and

their insufficiency to make him happy. Life itself, that is so precious to a man, and such a blessing to a good man, may become a burden to a man of business.

III. The reasons of this quarrel with his life and labours. Two things made him weary of them :—

1. That his business was so great a toil to himself: *The work that he had wrought under the sun was grievous unto him, v. 17.* His thoughts and cares about it, and that close and constant application of mind which was requisite to it, were a burden and fatigue to him, especially when he grew old. It is the effect of a curse on that we are to work upon. Our business is said to be *the work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord had cursed* (Gen. v. 29) and of the weakening of the faculties we are to work with, and of the sentence pronounced on us, that in *the sweat of our face we must eat bread.* Our labour is called *the vexation of our heart* (v. 22); it is to most a force upon themselves, so natural is it to us to love our ease. A man of business is described to be uneasy both in his *going out* and his *coming in*, v. 23. (1.) He is deprived of his pleasure by day, for *all his days are sorrow*, not only sorrowful, but sorrow itself, nay, many sorrows and various; his travail, or labour, all day, is grief. Men of business ever and anon meet with that which vexes them, and is an occasion of anger or sorrow to them. Those that are apt to fret find that the more dealings they have in the world the oftener they are made to fret. The world is a *vale of tears*, even to those that have much of it. Those that *labour* are said to be *heavy-laden*, and are therefore called to come to Christ for rest, Matt. xi. 28. (2.) He is disturbed in his repose *by night.* When he is overcome with the hurries of the day, and hopes to find relief when he lays his head on his pillow, he is disappointed there; *cares hold his eyes waking*, or, if he sleep, yet his heart wakes, and that *takes no rest in the night.* See what fools those are that make themselves drudges to the world, and do not make God their rest; night and day they cannot but be uneasy. So that, upon the whole matter, it is *all vanity*, v. 17. *This is vanity* in particular (v. 19, 23), nay, it is *vanity and a great evil*, v. 21. It is a great affront to God and a great injury to themselves, therefore a *great evil*; it is a vain thing to *rise up early and sit up late* in pursuit of this world's goods, which were never designed to be our chief good.

2. That the gains of his business must all be left to others. Prospect of advantage is the spring of action and the spur of industry; therefore men labour, because they hope to get by it; if the hope fail, the labour flags; and therefore Solomon quarrelled with all the works, the great works, he had made, because they would not be of any lasting advantage to himself. (1.) He must leave them.

He could not at death take them away with him, nor any share of them, nor should he return any more to them (Job vii. 10), nor would the remembrance of them do him any good, Luke xvi. 25: *But I must leave all the man that shall be after me*, to the generation that comes up in the room of that which is passing away. As there were many before us, who built the houses that we live in, and into whose purchases and labours we have entered, so there shall be many after us, who shall live in the houses that we build, and enjoy the fruit of our purchases and labour. Never was land lost for want of an heir. To a gracious soul this is no uneasiness at all; why should we grudge others their turn in the enjoyments of this world, and not rather be pleased that, when we are gone, those that come after us shall fare the better for our wisdom and industry? But to a worldly mind, that seeks for its own happiness in this creature, it is a great vexation to think of leaving the beloved self behind, at this uncertainty. (2.) He must leave them to those that would never have taken so much pain for them, and will thereby excuse himself from taking any pains. He that raised this estate did it by *labouring in wisdom, and knowledge, and equity*; but he that enjoys it and spends it (it may be) *has not laboured therein* (v. 21), and, more than that, never will. The bee toils to maintain the drone. Nay, it proves a snare to him: it is left *for his portion*, which he rests in, and takes up with; and miserable he is in being put off with it for a portion. Whereas, if an estate had not come to him thus easily, who knows but he might have been both industrious and religious? Yet we ought not to perplex ourselves about this, since it may prove otherwise, that what is well got may come to one that will use it well and do good with it. (3.) He knows not whom he must leave it to (for God makes heirs), or at least what he will prove to whom he leaves it, whether a wise man or a fool, a wise man that will make it more or a fool that will bring it to nothing; yet he shall have *ruled over all my labour*, and foolishly undo that which his father wisely did. It is probable that Solomon wrote this very feelingly, being afraid what Rehoboam would prove. St. Jerome, in his commentary on this passage, applies this to the good books which Solomon wrote, in which he had shown himself wise, but he knew not into whose hands they would fall, perhaps into the hands of a fool who, according to the perverseness of his heart, makes a bad use of what was well written. So that, upon the whole matter, he asks (v. 22), *What has man of all his labour*? What has he to himself and to his own use? What has he that will go with him into another world?

IV. The best use which is therefore to be made of the wealth of this world, and that is to use it cheerfully, to take the comfort of it

and do good with it. With this he concludes the chapter, v. 24—26. There is no true happiness to be found in these things. They are *vanity*, and, if happiness be expected from them, the disappointment will be *vexation of spirit*. But he will put us in a way to make the best of them, and to avoid the inconveniences he had observed. We must neither over-toil ourselves, so as, in pursuit of more, to rob ourselves of the comfort of what we have, nor must we over-board for hereafter, nor lose our own enjoyment of what we have, to lay it up for those that shall come after us, but serve ourselves out of it first. Observe,

1. What that good is which is here recommended to us; and which is the utmost pleasure and profit we can expect or extract from the business and profit of this world, and the furthest we can go to rescue it from its *vanity* and the *vexation* that is in it. (1.) We must do our duty with them, and be more in care how to use an estate well, for the ends for which we were entrusted with it, than how to raise or increase an estate. This is intimated v. 26, where *those* only are said to have the comfort of this life who are good in *God's sight*, and again, *good before God*, truly good, as Noah, whom *God saw righteous before him*. We must set God always before us, and give diligence in every thing to approve ourselves to him. The Chaldee-paraphrase says, *A man should make his soul to enjoy good by keeping the commandments of God and walking in the ways that are right before him*, and (v. 25) by *obeying the words of the law, and being in awe about the day of the great judgment that is to come*. (2.) We must take the comfort of them. These things will not make a happiness for the soul; all the good we can have out of them is for the body, and if we make use of them for the comfortable support of that, so that it may be fit to serve the soul and able to keep pace with it in the service of God, then they turn to a good account. *There is therefore nothing better for a man, as to these things, than to allow himself a sober cheerful use of them, according as his rank and condition are, to have meat and drink out of them for himself, his family, his friends, and so delight his senses and make his soul enjoy good, all the good that is to be had out of them; do not lose that, in pursuit of that good which is not to be had out of them.* But observe, He would not have us to give up business, and take our ease, that we may eat and drink; no, we must enjoy good in our labour; we must use these things, not to excuse us from, but to make us diligent and cheerful in, our worldly business. (3.) We must *acknowledge God*; we must see that it is *from the hand of God*, that is, [1.] the good things themselves that we enjoy are so, not only the products of his creating power, but the gifts of his providential bounty to us. And then they are truly pleasant to us when we take them from the hand of God as a Father, when we eye his wisdom giving

us that which is fittest for us, and acquiesce in it, and taste his love and goodness, relish them, and are thankful for them. [2.] A heart to enjoy them is so; this is the gift of God's grace. Unless he give us wisdom to make a right use of what he has, in his providence, bestowed upon us, and withal peace of conscience, that we may discern God's favour in the world's smiles, we cannot make our souls enjoy any good in them.

2. Why we should have this in our eye, in the management of ourselves as to this world, and look up to God for it. (1.) Because Solomon himself, with all his possessions, could aim at no more and desire no better (v. 25): *"Who can hasten to this more than I?"* This is that which I was ambitious of: I wished for no more; and those that have but little, in comparison with what I have, may attain to this, to be content with what they have and enjoy the good of it." Yet Solomon could not obtain it by his own wisdom, without the special grace of God, and therefore directs us to expect it from the hand of God and pray to him for it. (2.) Because riches are a blessing or a curse to a man according as he has or has not a heart to make good use of them. [1.] God makes them a reward to a good man, if with them he give him *wisdom, and knowledge, and joy*, to enjoy them cheerfully himself and to communicate them charitably to others. To those who are *good in God's sight*, who are of a good spirit, honest and sincere, pay a deference to their God and have a tender concern for all mankind, *God will give wisdom and knowledge in this world, and joy with the righteous in the world to come*; so the Chaldee. Or he will give that wisdom and knowledge in things natural, moral, political, and divine, which will be a constant joy and pleasure to them. [2.] He makes them a punishment to a bad man if he denies him a heart to take the comfort of them, for they do but tantalize him and tyrannize over him: *To the sinner God gives travail*, by leaving him to himself and his own foolish counsels, *to gather and to heap up* that, which, as to himself, will not only burden him like *thick clay* (Hab. ii. 6), but be a *witness against him and eat his flesh as it were fire* (Jam. v. 3); while God designs, by an overruling providence, to give it to him that is *good before him*; for the *wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just, and gathered for him that will pity the poor*. Note, First, *Godliness, with contentment, is great gain*; and those only have true joy that are *good in God's sight*, and that have it from him and in him. Secondly, *Ungodliness* is commonly punished with discontent and an insatiable covetousness, which are sins that are their own punishment. Thirdly, When God gives abundance to wicked men it is with design to force them to a resignation in favour of his own children, when they are of age and ready for it, as the Canaanites kept possession of the good land till the time appointed for Israel's entering upon it. [3.]

The burden of the song is still the same: *This is also vanity and vexation of spirit.* It is vanity, at the best, even to the good man; when he has all that the sinner has scraped together it will not make him happy without something else; but it is *vexation of spirit* to the sinner to see what he had laid up enjoyed by him that is *good in God's sight*, and therefore evil in his. So that, take it which way you will, the conclusion is firm, *All is vanity and vexation of spirit.*

CHAP. III.

Solomon having shown the vanity of studies, pleasures, and business, and made it to appear that happiness is not to be found in the schools of the learned, nor in the gardens of Epicurus, nor upon the exchange, he proceeds, in this chapter, further to prove his doctrine, and the inference he had drawn from it, That therefore we should cheerfully content ourselves with, and make use of, what God has given us, by showing, I. The mutability of all human affairs, ver. 1—10. II. The immutability of the divine counsels concerning them and the unsearchableness of those counsels, ver. 11—15. III. The vanity of worldly honour and power, which are abused for the support of oppression and persecution if men be not governed by the fear of God in the use of them, ver. 16. For a check to proud oppressors, and to show them their vanity, he reminds them, 1. That they will be called to account for it in the other world, ver. 17. 2. That their condition, in reference to this world (for of that he speaks), is no better than that of the brutes, ver. 18—21. And therefore he concludes that it is our wisdom to make use of what power we have for our own comfort, and not to oppress others with it.

TO every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: 2 A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up *that which is planted*; 3 A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; 4 A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; 5 A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; 6 A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; 7 A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; 8 A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace. 9 What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth? 10 I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it.

The scope of these verses is to show, 1. That we live in a world of changes, that the several events of time, and conditions of human life, are vastly different from one another, and yet occur promiscuously, and we are continually passing and repassing between them, as in the revolutions of every day and every year. In the *wheel of nature* (Jam. iii. 6) sometimes one spoke is uppermost and by and by the contrary; there is a constant ebbing and flowing, waxing and waning; from one extreme to the other does the *fashion of this world change*, ever did, and ever

will. 2. That every change concerning us with the time and season of it, is unalterably fixed and determined by a supreme power; and we must take things as they come, for is not in our power to change what is appointed for us. And this comes in here as reason why, when we are in prosperity, we should be easy, and yet not secure—not to be secure because we live in a world of changes and therefore have no reason to say *To-morrow shall be as this day* (the low valleys join to the highest mountains), and yet to be easy, and, as he had advised (ch. 24), *to enjoy the good of our labour*, in humble dependence upon God and his providence, neither lifted up with hopes, nor cast down with fears, but with evenness of mind expecting every event. Here we have,

I. A general proposition laid down: *Every thing there is a season, v. 1.* 1. Those things which seem most contrary the one to the other will, in the revolution of affairs, each take their turn and come into play. *This day will give place to the night and the night again to the day. Is it summer? It will be winter. Is it winter? Stay a while, and it will be summer.* Every purpose has its time. The clearest sky will be clouded, *Post gaudium luctus—Joy succeeds sorrow*; and the most clouded sky will clear up, *Post nubila Phœbus—The sun will burst from behind the cloud.* Those things which to us seem most casual and contingent are, in the counsel and foreknowledge of God, punctually determined, and the very hour of them is fixed, and can no other be anticipated nor adjourned a moment.

II. The proof and illustration of it by the induction of particulars, twenty-eight in number, according to the days of the moon's revolution, which is always increasing or decreasing between its full and change. Some of these changes are purely the act of God; others depend more upon the will of man, but all are determined by the divine counsel. Every thing *under heaven* is thus changeable; but in heaven there is an unchangeable state and an unchangeable counsel concerning these things. 1. *There is a time to be born and a time to die.* These are determined by the divine counsel; and, as we were born, so we must die, at the time appointed, Acts xvii. 2. Some observe that here is *a time to be born and a time to die*, but no time to live; that so short that it is not worth mentioning; soon as we are born we begin to die. But, there is *a time to be born and a time to die*, there will be a time to rise again, a set time when those that lie in the grave shall be remembered, Job xiv. 13. 2. *A time for God to plant a nation*, as that of Israel in Canaan, and, in order to that, *to pluck up the several nations that were planted there*, to make room for them; and at length there was a time when God spoke concerning Israel too, *to pluck up and to destroy*, when the measure of their iniquity was full, Jer. xviii. 7, 9. *There is a time for men to plant*, a time of the year

time of their lives; but, when *that which is planted has grown fruitless and useless, is time to pluck it up.* 3. *A time to kill,* when the judgments of God are abroad in a land and lay all waste; but, when he returns ways of mercy, then is *a time to heal what has torn* (Hos. vi. 1, 2), to comfort a people after the time that he has afflicted them, xc. 15. There is a time when it is the dominion of rulers to use severe methods, but there is a time when it is as much their wisdom to take a more gentle course, and to apply themselves to lenitives, not corrosives. *A time to break down* a family, an estate, a kingdom, when it has ripened itself for destruction; but God will find *a time*, if they turn and repent, to rebuild what he has broken down; there is *a time*, a set time, for *the Lord to build up Zion*, Ps. cii. 13, 16. There is *a time* for men to *break up* house, and break off trade, and so to *break down*, which is a time that are busy in *building up* both must select and prepare for. 5. *A time* when God's providence calls to *weep and mourn*, and when his wisdom and grace will comply with the same, and will *weep and mourn*, as in times of common calamity and danger, and then it is very absurd to *laugh, and dance*, and make merry (Isa. xxii. 12, 13; Ezek. xxi. 10); but on, on the other hand, there is a time when God calls to cheerfulness, *a time to laugh and dance*, and then he expects we should *serve with joyfulness and gladness of heart*. The time of mourning and weeping is not first, before that of laughter and dancing; for we must first *sow in tears* and then *reap in joy*. 6. *A time to cast away stones*, breaking down and demolishing fortifications, when God gives peace in the borders, there is no more occasion for them; but there is *a time to gather stones together*, for making of strong-holds, v. 5. *A time* for towers to fall, as that in Siloam (Luke xiv. 4), and for the temple itself to be so ordered as that *not one stone should be left upon another*; but also a time for towers and towers too to be erected, when national affairs prosper. 7. *A time to embrace* a friend when we find him faithful, but *a time to refrain from embracing* when we find he is unfair or unfaithful, and that we have cause to suspect; it is then our prudence to be shy and to stand at a distance. It is commonly applied to unjugal embraces, and explained by 1 Cor. vii. 3—5; Joel ii. 16. 8. *A time to get, get money, get preferment, get good bargains* of a good interest, when opportunity smiles, and when a wise man will seek (so the word) when he is setting out in the world and a growing family, when he is in his prime, when he prospers and has a run of business, it is time for him to be busy and make money when the sun shines; There is *a time to get wisdom, and knowledge, and grace*, when a man has a price put into his hand; then let him expect there will come a time when, when all he has will be little enough

to serve his turn. Nay, there will come *a time to lose*, when what has been soon got will be soon scattered and cannot be held fast. 9. *A time to keep*, when we have use for what we have got, and can keep it without running the hazard of a good conscience; but there may come *a time to cast away*, when love to God may oblige us to cast away what we have, because we must deny Christ and wrong our consciences if we keep it (Matt. x. 37, 38), and rather to make shipwreck of all than of the faith; nay, when love to ourselves may oblige us to cast it away, when it is for the saving of our lives, as it was when Jonah's mariners heaved their cargo into the sea. 10. *A time to rend* the garments, as upon occasion of some great grief, *and a time to sew* them again, in token that the grief is over. *A time* to undo what we have done and a time to do again what we have undone. Jerome applies this to the rending of the Jewish church and the sewing and making up of the gospel church thereupon. 11. *A time* when it becomes us, and is our wisdom and duty, *to keep silence*, when it is an *evil time* (Amos v. 13), when our speaking would be the *casting of pearl before swine*, or when we are in danger of speaking amiss (Ps. xxxix. 2); but there is also *a time to speak* for the glory of God and the edification of others, when silence would be the betraying of a righteous cause, and when with the mouth confession is to be made to salvation; and it is a great part of Christian prudence to know when to speak and when to hold our peace. 12. *A time to love*, and to show ourselves friendly, to be free and cheerful, and it is a pleasant time; but there may come *a time to hate*, when we shall see cause to break off all familiarity with some that we have been fond of, and to be upon the reserve, as having found reason for a suspicion, which love is loth to admit. 13. *A time of war*, when God draws the sword for judgment and gives it commission to devour, when men draw the sword for justice and the maintaining of their rights, when there is in the nations a disposition to war; but we may hope for *a time of peace*, when the sword of the Lord shall be sheathed and he shall *make wars to cease* (Ps. xlv. 9), when the end of the war is obtained, and when there is on all sides a disposition to peace. War shall not last always, nor is there any peace to be called lasting on this side the everlasting peace. Thus in all these changes God has set the one over against the other, that we may rejoice as though we rejoiced not and weep as though we wept not.

III. The inferences drawn from this observation. If our present state be subject to such vicissitude, 1. Then we must not expect our portion in it, for the good things of it are of no certainty, no continuance (v. 9): *What profit has he that works?* What can a man promise himself from planting and building, when that which he thinks is brought to perfection may so soon, and will so surely, be

plucked up and broken down? All our pains and care will not alter either the mutable nature of the things themselves or the immutable counsel of God concerning them. 2. Then we must look upon ourselves as upon our probation in it. There is indeed no profit *in that wherein we labour*; the thing itself, when we have it, will do us little good; but, if we make a right use of the disposals of Providence about it, there will be profit in that (v. 10): *I have seen the travail which God has given to the sons of men, not to make up a happiness by it, but to be exercised in it, to have various graces exercised by the variety of events, to have their dependence upon God tried by every change, and to be trained up to it, and taught both how to want and how to abound*, Phil. iv. 12. Note, (1.) There is a great deal of toil and trouble to be seen among the children of men. Labour and sorrow fill the world. (2.) This toil and this trouble are what God has allotted us. He never intended this world for our rest, and therefore never appointed us to take our ease in it. (3.) To many it proves a gift. God gives it to men, as the physician gives a medicine to his patient, to do him good. This travail is given to us to make us weary of the world and desirous of the remaining rest. It is given to us that we may be kept in action, and may always have something to do; for we were none of us sent into the world to be idle. Every change cuts us out some new work, which we should be more solicitous about, than about the event.

11 He hath made every *thing* beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end. 12 I know that *there is* no good in them, but for *a man* to rejoice, and to do good in his life. 13 And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God. 14 I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that *men* should fear before him. 15 That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past.

We have seen what changes there are in the world, and must not expect to find the world more sure to us than it has been to others. Now here Solomon shows the hand of God in all those changes; it is he that has made every creature to be that to us which it is, and therefore we must have our eye always upon him.

I. We must make the best of *that which* and must believe it best for the present, accommodate ourselves to it: *He has made every thing beautiful in his time* (v. 11), therefore, while its time lasts, we must be reconciled to it: nay, we must please ourselves with the beauty of it. Note, 1. Every thing is as God has made it; it is really appointed it to be, not as it appears to us. That which to us seems most unpleasant, yet, in its proper time, altogether becoming. Cold is as becoming in winter as heat in summer; and the night, in its turn, black beauty, as the day, in its turn, bright one. 3. There is a wonderful harmony in the divine Providence and all its disposals so that the events of it, when they come to be considered in their relations and tendencies together with the seasons of them, will appear very beautiful, to the glory of God and comfort of those that trust in him. Though we see not the complete beauty of Providence yet we shall see it, and a glorious sight it will be, when the mystery of God shall be finished. Then every thing shall appear to have been done in the most proper time and it will be the wonder of eternity, Deut. xxxii. Ezek. i. 18.

II. We must wait with patience for the full discovery of that which to us seems intricate and perplexed, acknowledging that *we cannot find out the work that God makes from the beginning to the end*, and therefore must judge nothing before the time. We are to believe that God has made all beautiful. Every thing is done well, as in creation, in providence, and we shall see it when the end comes, but till then we are incompetent judges of it. While the picture is in drawing, and the house in building, we see the beauty of either; but when the artist has put his last hand to them, and given them their finishing strokes, then all appears good. We see but the middle of God's works, not from the beginning of them (though we should see how admirably the plan is laid in the divine counsels), nor to the end of them, which crowns the action (then we should see the product to be glorious); we must wait till the veil be rent, and arraign God's proceedings nor pretend to pass a judgment on them. *Secret things belong not to us.* Those words, *He has made the world in their hearts*, are differently understood. 1. Some make them to be a reason why we may know more of God's works than we do; so Mr. Pemble: "God has left himself without witness of his righteousness, equal, and beautiful ordering of things, he has set it forth, to be observed in the book of the world, and this he has set in men's hearts, given man a large desire, and a powerful good measure, to comprehend and understand the history of nature, with the course of human affairs, so that, if men did but apply themselves to the exact observation of things, they might in most of them perceive an

irable order and contrivance." 2. Others make them to be a reason why we do not know so much of God's works as we might; bishop Reynolds: "We have the world so much in our hearts, are so taken up with thoughts and cares of worldly things, and are so exercised in our travail concerning them, that we have neither time nor spirit to see God's hand in them." The world has not only gained possession of the heart, but has formed prejudices there against the beauty of God's works.

III. We must be pleased with our lot in this world, and cheerfully acquiesce in the disposal of God concerning us, and accommodate ourselves to it. *There is no certain, lasting, good in these things; what good there is in them we are here told, v. 12, 13.* We must make a good use of them, 1. For the benefit of others. All the *good* there is *in them* is to do good with them, to our families, to our neighbours, to the poor, to the public, to its civil and religious interests. What have we but our beings, capacities, and estates for, but to use some way serviceable to our generation? We mistake if we think we were born for ourselves. No; it is our business *to do good*; it is in doing good that there is the truest pleasure, and what is so laid out is best laid out and will turn to the best account. Observe, It is *to do good in this life*, which is short and uncertain; we have but a little time to be doing good in, and therefore had need redeem time. It is *in this life*, where we are in a state of trial and probation for another life. Every man's life is his opportunity of doing that which will make for him eternally. 2. For our own comfort. Let us make ourselves easy, *rejoice, and enjoy the fruit of our labour, as it is the gift of God, and so enjoy God in it, and taste his love, and turn him thanks, and make him the centre of our joy, eat and drink to his glory, and be merry with joyfulness of heart, in the abundance of all things.* If all things in this world be so uncertain, it is a foolish thing for men sordidly to spare for the present, that they may hoard up all for hereafter; it is better to live cheerfully and usefully upon what we have, and let to-morrow take thought for the things of itself. Grace and wisdom do this *is the gift of God*, and it is a good gift, which crowns the gifts of his providential bounty.

IV. We must be entirely satisfied in all the disposals of the divine Providence, both to personal and public concerns, and bring our minds to them, because God, in all, performs the thing that is appointed for us, according to the counsel of his will; and we are here told, 1. That that counsel cannot be altered, and therefore it is our wisdom to make a virtue of necessity, by submitting to

It must be as God wills: *I know* (and every one knows it that knows any thing of God) *that whatsoever God does it shall be for ever, v. 14.* He is in one mind, and who can turn

him? His measures are never broken, nor is he ever put upon new counsels, but what he has purposed shall be effected, and all the world cannot defeat nor disannul it. It behoves us therefore to say, "Let it be as God wills," for, how cross soever it may be to our designs and interests, God's will is his wisdom. 2. That that counsel needs not to be altered, for there is nothing amiss in it, nothing that can be amended. If we could see it altogether at one view, we should see it so perfect that *nothing can be put to it*, for there is no deficiency in it, *nor any thing taken from it*, for there is nothing in it unnecessary, or that can be spared. As the word of God, so the works of God are every one of them perfect in its kind, and it is presumption for us either to add to them or to diminish from them, Deut. iv. 2. It is therefore as much our interest, as our duty, to bring our wills to the will of God.

V. We must study to answer God's end in all his providences, which is in general to make us religious. *God does all that men should fear before him*, to convince them that there is a God above them that has a sovereign dominion over them, at whose disposal they are and all their ways, and in whose hands their times are and all events concerning them, and that therefore they ought to have their eyes ever towards him, to worship and adore him, to acknowledge him in all their ways, to be careful in every thing to please him, and afraid of offending him in any thing. God thus changes his disposals, and yet is unchangeable in his counsels, not to perplex us, much less to drive us to despair, but to teach us our duty to him and engage us to do it. That which God designs in the government of the world is the support and advancement of religion among men.

VI. Whatever changes we see or feel in this world, we must acknowledge the inviolable steadiness of God's government. The sun rises and sets, the moon increases and decreases, and yet both are where they were, and their revolutions are in the same method from the beginning according to the ordinances of heaven; so it is with the events of Providence (v. 15): *That which has been is now.* God has not of late begun to use this method. No; things were always as mutable and uncertain as they are now, and so they will be: *That which is to be has already been*; and therefore we speak inconsiderately when we say, "Surely the world was never so bad as it is now," or, "None ever met with such disappointments as we meet with," or, "The times will never mend;" they may mend with us, and after a time to mourn there may come a time to rejoice, but that will still be liable to the common character, to the common fate. The world, as it has been, is and will be constant in inconstancy; for *God requires that which is past*, that is, repeats what he has formerly done and deals with us no other-

considered, the world would be every way better; but most men live as if they were to be here always, or as if when they die there were an end of them; and it is not strange that those live like beasts who think they shall die like beasts, but on such the noble faculties of reason are perfectly lost and thrown away.

3. An inference drawn from it (v. 22): *There is nothing better*, as to this world, nothing better to be had out of our wealth and honour, *than that a man should rejoice in his own works*, that is, (1.) Keep a clear conscience, and never admit iniquity into the place of righteousness. *Let every man prove his own work*, and approve himself to God in it, *so shall he have rejoicing in himself alone*, Gal. vi. 4. Let him not get nor keep any thing but what he can rejoice in. See 2 Cor. i. 12. (2.) Live a cheerful life. If God have prospered the work of our hands unto us, let us rejoice in it, and take the comfort of it, and not make it a burden to ourselves and leave others the joy of it; *for that is our portion*, not the portion of our souls (miserable are those that have their portion in this life, Ps. xvii. 14, and fools are those that choose it and take up with it, Luke xii. 19), but it is the portion of the body; that only which we enjoy is ours out of this world; it is taking what is to be had and making the best of it, and the reason is because none can give us a sight of *what shall be after us*, either who shall have our estates or what use they will make of them. When we are gone it is likely we shall not see what is after us; there is no correspondence that we know of between the other world and this, Job xiv. 21. Those in the other world will be wholly taken up with that world, so that they will not care for seeing what is done in this; and while we are here we cannot foresee *what shall be after us*, either as to our families or the public. *It is not for us to know the times and seasons that shall be after us*, which, as it should be a restraint to our cares about this world, so it should be a reason for our concern about another. Since death is a final farewell to this life, let us look before us to another life.

CHAP. IV.

Solomon, having shown the vanity of this world in the temptation which those in power feel to oppress and trample upon their subjects, here further shows, I. The temptation which the oppressed feel to discontent and impatience, ver. 1—3. II. The temptation which those that love their ease feel to take their ease and neglect business, for fear of being envied, ver. 4—6. III. The folly of hoarding up abundance of worldly wealth, ver. 7, 8. IV. A remedy against that folly, in being made sensible of the benefit of society and mutual assistance, ver. 9—12. V. The mutability even of royal dignity, not only through the folly of the prince himself (ver. 13, 14), but through the fickleness of the people, let the prince be ever so discreet, ver. 15, 16. It is not the prerogative even of kings themselves to be exempted from the vanity and vexation that attend these things; let none else then expect it.

SO I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of *such as were* oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors *there was* power; but

they had no comforter. 2 Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive. 3 Yea, better is he that is dead, than he that is alive, both they, which hath not yet seen the evil work that is done under the sun.

Solomon had a large soul (1 Kings iv. 30) and it appeared by this, among other things, that he had a very tender concern for the miserable part of mankind and took cognizance of the afflictions of the afflicted. He had taken the oppressors to task (ch. iii. 17) and put them in mind of the judgment that was to come, to be a curb to their insolence; and here he observes the oppressed. This he does no doubt, as a prince, to do them justice and *avenge them of their adversaries*, for he *feared God and regarded men*; but here he does it as a preacher, and shows,

I. The troubles of their condition (v. 1). Of these he speaks very feelingly and with compassion. It grieved him, 1. To see misery prevailing against right, to see so much *oppression done under the sun*, to see servants and labourers, and poor workmen, oppressed by their masters, who take advantage of the necessity to impose what terms they please upon them, debtors oppressed by cruel creditors and creditors too by fraudulent debtors, tenants oppressed by hard landlords, orphans by treacherous guardians, and, worst of all, subjects oppressed by arbitrary princes and unjust judges. Such *oppressions are done under the sun*; above the sun righteousness reigns for ever. Wise men will consider these oppressions, and contrive to do something for the relief of those that are oppressed. *Blessed is he that considers the poor*. To see how those that were wronged laid heart the wrongs that were done them, *he beheld the tears of such as were* oppressed, and perhaps could not forbear weeping with them. The world is a place of weepers; look what way we will, we have a melancholy scene presented to us, the *tears of those that are* oppressed with one trouble or other. They find it is to no purpose to complain, and therefore mourn in secret (as Job, ch. xvi. 20; xxi. 28); but *Blessed are those that mourn*.

To see how unable they were to help themselves: *On the side of their oppressors there was power*, when they had done wrong, stand to it and make good what they had done, so that the poor were borne down by a strong hand and had no way to obtain redress. It is sad to see power misplaced, and that which was given men to enable them to do good perverted to support them in doing wrong. 4. To see how they and their calamities were slighted by all about them. They wept and needed comfort, but there was no one to do that friendly office: *They had no comforter*; their oppressors were powerful and threatening, and therefore *they had no* comforter.

porter; those that should have comforted them durst not, for fear of displeasing the oppressors and being made their companions or offering to be their comforters. It is sad to see so little humanity among men.

II. The temptations of their condition. Being thus hardly used, they are tempted to hate and despise life, and to envy those that are dead and in their graves, and to wish they had never been born (v. 2, 3); and Solomon is ready to agree with them, for it serves to prove that *all is vanity and vexation*, since life itself is often so; and if we disregard it, in comparison with the favour and election of God (as St. Paul, Acts xx. 24, Phil. i. 23), it is our praise, but, if (as here) only for the sake of the miseries that attend it is our infirmity, and we judge therein after the flesh, as Job and Elijah did. 1. He here thinks those happy who have ended this miserable life, have done their part and quitted the stage; "*I praised the dead that are already dead, slain outright, or that had a speedy passage through the world, made a short cut over the ocean of life, dead already, before they had well begun to live; I was eased with their lot, and, had it been in their own choice, should have praised their wisdom for but looking into the world and then returning, as not liking it. I concluded that it is better with them than with the living that are yet alive, and that is all, dragging the long and heavy chain of life, and wearing out its tedious minutes.*" This may be compared not with Job iii. 20, 21, but with Rev. xiv. 13, where, in times of persecution and such Solomon is here describing), it is not the passion of man, but the Spirit of God, that says, *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth.* Note, The condition of the saints that are dead, and gone to rest with God, is upon many accounts better and more desirable than the condition of living saints that are yet continued in their work and warfare. 2. He thinks those happy who never began this miserable life; nay, they are happiest of all: *He that has not been happier than both they.* Better never to have been born than be born to see the evil work that is done under the sun, to see so much wickedness committed, so much wrong done, and not only to be in no capacity to mend the matter, but to suffer ill for doing well. A good man, how calamitous a condition soever he is in in this world, cannot have cause to wish he had never been born, since he is glorifying the Lord even in the press, and will be happy at last, for ever happy. He ought any to wish so while they are alive, for while there is life there is hope; a man is never undone till he is in hell.

4 Again, I considered all travail, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour. This is also vanity and vexation of spirit. The fool doeth his hands together,

and eateth his own flesh. *is a handful with quietness the hands full with travail* tion of spirit.

Here Solomon returns to the old and consideration of the vanity and of spirit that attend the business of this which he had spoken of before, ch. ii. 1.

I. If a man be acute, and dexterous, and successful in his business, he gets the ill-will of his neighbours, v. 4. Though he takes a great deal of pains, and goes through all travail, does not get his estate easily, but it costs him a great deal of hard labour, nor does he get it dishonestly, he wrongs no man, defrauds no man, but by every right work, by applying himself to his own proper business, and managing it by all the rules of equity and fair-dealing, yet for this he is envied of his neighbour, and the more for the reputation he has got by his honesty. This shows, 1. What little conscience most men have, that they will bear a grudge to a neighbour, give him an ill word and do him an ill turn, only because he is more ingenious and industrious than themselves, and has more of the blessing of heaven. Cain envied Abel, Esau Jacob, and Saul David, and all for their right works. This is downright diabolism. 2. What little comfort wise and useful men must expect to have in this world. Let them behave themselves ever so cautiously, they cannot escape being envied; and who can stand before envy? Prov. xxvii. 4. Those that excel in virtue will always be an eye-sore to those that exceed in vice, which should not discourage us from any right work, but drive us to expect the praise of it, not from men, but from God, and not to count upon satisfaction and happiness in the creature; for, if right works prove vanity and vexation of spirit, no works under the sun can prove otherwise. But for every right work a man shall be accepted of his God, and then he needs not mind though he be envied of his neighbour, only it may make him love the world the less.

II. If a man be stupid, and dull, and blundering in his business, he does ill for himself (v. 5): *The fool that goes about his work as if his hands were muffled and folded together, that does every thing awkwardly, the sluggard (for he is a fool) that loves his ease and folds his hands together to keep them warm, because they refuse to labour, he eats his own flesh, is a cannibal to himself, brings himself into such a poor condition that he has nothing to eat but his own flesh, into such a desperate condition that he is ready to eat his own flesh for vexation.* He has a dog's life—hunger and ease. Because he sees active men that thrive in the world envied, he runs into the other extreme; and, lest he should be envied for his right works, he does every thing wrong, and does not deserve to be pitied. Note, Idleness is a sin that is its own punishment. The following words (v. 6), *Better is a handful with quiet-*

*h the hands full with travail and spirit, may be taken either, 1. As J's argument for the excuse of his idleness. He folds his hands and abuses and misapplies a good for his justification, as if, because a *th quietness is better than abundance of strife*, therefore a little with idleness is *er than abundance with honest labour*: *us wise in his own conceit* is he, Prov xxvi. 16. But, 2. I rather take it as Solomon's advice to keep the mean between that *travail* which will make *a man envied* and that slothfulness which will make *a man eat his own flesh*. Let us by honest industry lay hold on the handful, that we may not want necessities, but not grasp at both the hands full, which will but create us vexation of spirit. Moderate pains and moderate gains will do best. A man may have but a handful of the world, and yet may enjoy it and himself with a great deal of *quietness*, with content of mind, peace of conscience, and the love and good-will of his neighbours, while many that have both their hands full, have more than heart could wish, have a great deal of travail and vexation with it. Those that cannot live on a little, it is to be feared, would not live as they should if they had ever so much.*

7 Then I returned, and I saw vanity under the sun. 8 There is one *alone*, and *there is* not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother: yet *is there* no end of all his labour; neither is his eye satisfied with riches; neither *saieth he*, For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? This is also vanity, yea, it is a sore travail. 9 Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. 10 For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him *that is* alone when he falleth; for *he hath* not another to help him up. 11 Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm *alone*? 12 And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a three-fold cord is not quickly broken.

Here Solomon fastens upon another instance of the vanity of this world, that frequently the more men have of it the more they would have; and on this they are so intent that they have no enjoyment of what they have. Now Solomon here shows,

I. That selfishness is the cause of this evil (v. 7, 8): *There is one alone*, that minds none but himself, cares for nobody, but would, if he could, be placed alone in the midst of the earth; *there is not a second*, nor does he desire there should be one mouth he thinks enough in a house, and grudges every thing

that goes beside him. See how this covetmuckworm is here described. 1. He makes himself a mere slave to his business. *Thou he has no charge, neither child nor brother* none to take care of but himself, none to hang upon him, or draw from him, no parents, relations, nor dares he marry, for fear of expense of a family, *yet is there no end of labour*; he is at it night and day, early and late, and will scarcely allow necessary rest to himself and those he employs. He does not confine himself within the bounds of his calling, but is for having a hand in any thing that he can get by. See Ps. cxxvii. 2. He never thinks he has enough: *His is not satisfied with riches*. Covetousness is called *the lust of the eye* (1 John ii. 16) because the beholding of it with his eyes is that the worldling seems to covet, Eccl. 11. He has enough for his back (as bishop Reynolds observes), for his belly, for calling, for his family, for his living decent in the world, but he has not enough for his eyes. Though he can but see it, can count his money, and not find in his heart to use it, yet he is not easy because he has not more to regale his eyes with. 3. He denies himself the comfort of what he has: *bereaves his soul of good*. If our souls be bereaved of good, it is we ourselves that bereave them. Others may bereave us of outward good, but cannot rob us of our grace and comforts, our spiritual good things; it is our own fault if we do not enjoy ourselves. Yet many are so set upon the world that, in pursuit of it, they bereave their souls of good here and for ever, make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience, bereave themselves not only of the favour of God and eternal life, but of the pleasures of this world and this present life. Worldly people, pretending to be wise for themselves, are really enemies to themselves. 4. He has no excuse for doing this: *He has neither child nor brother*, none that he is bound to, on whom he may lay out what he has to his satisfaction while he lives, none that he has a kindness for, for whom he may lay it up to satisfaction and to whom he may leave it when he dies, none that are poor or dear to him. 5. He has not consideration enough to show himself the folly of this. He neglects this question to himself, "*For whom I labour* thus? Do I labour, as I should, for the glory of God, and that I may have to give to those that need? Do I consider that I labour but for the body that I am labouring, a corruptible body; it is for others, and I know not for whom—perhaps for a fool, that will squander it as fast as I have gathered it—perhaps for a foe, that will be ungrateful for my memory?" Note, It is wisdom for those that take pains about this world to consider what they take all this pains for, and whether it be really worth while to bereave themselves of good that they may bestow it on a stranger. If men do not consider this, it is vanity, and

a sore travail : they shame and vex themselves to no purpose.

II. That sociableness is the cure of this evil. Men are thus sordid because they are all for themselves. Now Solomon shows here, by divers instances, that it is not good for man to be alone (Gen. ii. 18) ; he designs hereby to recommend to us both marriage and friendship, two things which covetous misers decline, because of the charge of them ; but such are the comfort and advantage of them both, if prudently contracted, that they will very well quit cost. Man, in paradise itself, could not be happy without a mate, and therefore is no sooner made than matched.

1. Solomon lays this down for a truth, *That two are better than one*, and more happy jointly than either of them could be separately, more pleased in one another than they could be in themselves only, mutually serviceable to each other's welfare, and by a united strength more likely to do good to others : *They have a good reward of their labour* ; whatever service they do, it is returned to them another way. He that serves himself only has himself only for his paymaster, and commonly proves more unjust and ungrateful to himself than his friend, if he should serve him, would be to him ; witness him that labours endlessly and yet be-
reaves his soul of good ; he has no reward of his labour. But he that is kind to another has a good reward ; the pleasure and advantage of holy love will be an abundant recompence for all the work and labour of love. Hence Solomon infers the mischief of solitude : *Woe to him that is alone*. He lies exposed to many temptations which good company and friendship would prevent and help him to guard against ; he wants that advantage which a man has by the countenance of his friend, as iron has of being sharpened by iron. A monastic life then was surely never intended for a state of perfection, nor should those be reckoned the greatest lovers of God who cannot find in their hearts to love any one else. 2. He proves it by divers instances

of the benefit of friendship and good conversation. (1.) Occasional succour in an exigency. It is good for two to travel together, for if one happen to fall, and perhaps so as not to be able to get up himself, the other will be ready to help him up (a friend in need is a friend indeed) ; whereas if one travel alone, and get a fall, he may be lost for want of a little help. If a man fall into sin, his friend will help to restore him with the spirit of meekness ; if he fall into trouble, his friend will help to comfort him and assuage his grief.

(2.) Mutual warmth. As a fellow-traveller is of use (*amicus pro vehiculo—a friend is a good substitute for a carriage*) so is a bed-fellow : *If two lie together, they have heat*. So virtuous and gracious affections are excited by good society, and Christians warm one another by provoking one another to love and to good works. (3.) United strength. If an

enemy find a man alone, he is likely to prevail against him ; with his own single strength he cannot make his part good, but, if he have a second, he may do well enough : *two shall withstand him*. "You shall help me against my enemy, and I will help you against yours ;" according to the agreement between Joab and Abishai (2 Sam. x. 11), and so both are conquerors ; whereas, acting separately, both would have been conquered ; as was said of the ancient Britons, when the Romans invaded them, *Dum singuli pugnant, universi vincuntur—While they fight in detached parties, they sacrifice the general cause*. In our spiritual warfare we may be helpful to one another as well as in our spiritual work ; next to the comfort of communion with God, is that of the communion of saints. He concludes with this proverb, *A threefold cord is not easily broken*, any more than a bundle of arrows, though each single thread, and each single arrow, is. Two together he compares to a threefold cord ; for where two are closely joined in holy love and fellowship, Christ will by his Spirit come to them, and make the third, as he joined himself to the two disciples going to Emmaus, and then there is a threefold cord that can never be broken. *They that dwell in love, dwell in God, and God in them*.

13 Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished. 14 For out of prison he cometh to reign ; whereas also he that is born in his kingdom becometh poor. 15 I considered all the living which walk under the sun, with the second child that shall stand up in his stead. 16 There is no end of all the people, even of all that have been before them : they also that come after shall not rejoice in him. Surely this also is vanity and vexation of spirit.

Solomon was himself a king, and therefore may be allowed to speak more freely than another concerning the vanity of kingly state and dignity, which he shows here to be an uncertain thing ; he had before said so (Prov. xxvii. 24, *The crown doth not endure to every generation*), and his son found it so. Nothing is more slippery than the highest post of honour without wisdom and the people's love.

I. A king is not happy unless he have wisdom, v. 13, 14. He that is truly wise, prudent, and pious, though he be poor in the world, and very young, and upon both accounts despised and little taken notice of, is better, more truly valuable and worthy of respect, is likely to do better for himself and to be a greater blessing to his generation, than a king, than an old king, and therefore venerable both for his gravity and for his dignity,

if he be *foolish*, and knows not how to manage public affairs himself nor *will be admonished* and advised by others—who knows not to be *admonished*, that is, will not suffer any counsel or admonition to be given him (no one about him dares contradict him) or will not hearken to the counsel and admonition that are given him. It is so far from being any part of the honour of kings that it is the greatest dishonour to them that can be not to be *admonished*. Folly and wilfulness commonly go together, and those that most need admonition can worst bear it; but neither age nor titles will secure men respect if they have not true wisdom and virtue to recommend them; while wisdom and virtue will gain men honour even under the disadvantages of youth and poverty. To prove the *wise child better than the foolish king* he shows what each of them comes to, *v. 14.* 1. *A poor man* by his wisdom comes to be preferred, as Joseph, who, when he was but young, was brought out of prison to be the second man in the kingdom, to which story Solomon seems here to refer. Providence sometimes raises the poor out of the dust, to set them among princes, *Ps. cxlii. 7, 8.* Wisdom has wrought not only the liberty of men, but their dignity, raised them from the dunghill, from the dungeon, to the throne. 2. *A king* by his folly and wilfulness comes to be impoverished. Though he was *born in his kingdom*, came to it by inheritance, though he has lived to be old in it and has had time to fill his treasures, yet if he take ill courses, and *will no more be admonished* as he has been, thinking, because he is old, he is past it, he becomes poor; his treasure is exhausted, and perhaps he is forced to resign his crown and retire into privacy.

II. A king is not likely to continue if he have not a confirmed interest in the affections of the people; this is intimated, but somewhat obscurely, in the last two verses. 1. He that is king must have a successor, a second, a child that shall stand up in his stead, his own, suppose, or perhaps that poor and wise child spoken of, *v. 13.* Kings, when they grow old, must have the mortification of seeing those that are to jostle them out and stand up in their stead. 2. It is common with the people to adore the rising sun: All the living who walk under the sun are with the second child, are in his interests, are conversant with him, and make their court to him more than to the father, whom they look upon as going off, and despise because his best days are past. Solomon considered this; he saw this to be the disposition of his own people, which appeared immediately after his death, in their complaints of his government and their affectation of a change. 3. People are never long easy and satisfied: There is no end, no rest, of all the people; they are continually fond of changes, and know not what they would have. 4. This is no new thing, but it has been the way of all that

have been before them; there have been instances of this in every age: even Samuel and David could not always please. 5. As it has been, so it is likely to be still: Those that come after will be of the same spirit, and shall not long rejoice in him whom at first they seemed extremely fond of. To-day, Hosanna—to-morrow, Crucify. 6. It cannot but be a great grief to princes to see themselves thus slighted by those they have studied to oblige and have depended upon; there is no faith in man, no steadfastness. This is vanity and vexation of spirit.

CHAP. V.

Solomon, in this chapter, discourses, 1. Concerning the worship of God, prescribing that as a remedy against all those vanities which he had already observed to be in wisdom, learning, pleasure, honour, power, and business. That we may not be deceived by those things, nor have our spirits vexed with the disappointments we meet with in them, let us make conscience of our duty to God and keep up our communion with him; but, withal, he gives a necessary caution against the vanities which are too often found in religious exercises, which deprive them of their excellency and render them unable to help against their vanities. If our religion be a vain religion, how great is that vanity! Let us therefore take heed of vanity, 1. In hearing the word, and offering sacrifice, *ver. 1.* 2. In prayer, *ver. 2, 3.* In making vows, *ver. 4-6.* 4. In pretending to divine dreams, *ver. 7.* Now, (1.) For a remedy against those vanities, he prescribes the fear of God, *ver. 7.* (2.) To prevent the offence that might arise from the present sufferings of good people, he directs us to look up to God, *ver. 8.* 11. Concerning the wealth of this world and the vanity and vexation that attend it. The fruits of the earth indeed are necessary to the support of life (*ver. 9.*), but as for silver, and gold, and riches, 1. They are unsatisfying, *ver. 10.* 2. They are unprofitable, *ver. 11.* 3. They are disquieting, *ver. 12.* 4. They often prove hurtful and destroying, *ver. 13.* 5. They are perishing, *ver. 14.* 6. They must be left behind when we die, *ver. 15, 16.* 7. If we have not a heart to make use of them, they occasion a great deal of uneasiness, *ver. 17.* And therefore he recommends to us the comfortable use of that which God has given us, with an eye to him that is the giver, as the best way both to answer the end of our having it and to obviate the mischiefs that commonly attend great estates, *ver. 18-20.* So that if we can but learn out of this chapter how to manage the business of religion, and the business of this world (which two take up most of our time), so that both may turn to a good account, and neither our sabbath days nor our week-days may be lost, we shall have reason to say, We have learned two good lessons.

KEEP thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. 2 Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. 3 For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words.

Solomon's design, in driving us off from the world, by showing us its vanity, is to drive us to God and to our duty, that we may not walk in the way of the world, but by religious rules, nor depend upon the wealth of the world, but on religious advantages and therefore,

I. He here sends us to the house of God, to the place of public worship, to the temple, which he himself had built at a vast expense. When he reflected with regret on all his other works (*ch. ii. 4.*), he did not repent of that, but reflected on it with pleasure, yet mentioned it not, lest he should seem to reflect on it

with pride; but he here sends those to it that would know more of the vanity of the world and would find that happiness which is in vain sought for in the creature. David, when he was perplexed, *went into the sanctuary of God*, Ps. lxxiii. 17. Let our disappointments in the creature turn our eyes to the Creator; let us have recourse to the word of God's grace and consult that, to the throne of his grace and solicit that. In the word and prayer there is a balm for every wound.

II. He charges us to behave ourselves well there, that we may not miss of our end in coming thither. Religious exercises are not vain things, but, if we mismanage them, they become vain to us. And therefore,

1. We must address ourselves to them with all possible seriousness and care: "*Keep thy foot, not keep it back from the house of God* (as Prov. xxv. 17), nor go slowly thither, as one unwilling to draw nigh to God, but *look well to thy goings, ponder the path of thy feet*, lest thou take a false step. Address thyself to the worship of God with a solemn pause, and take time to compose thyself for it, not going about it with precipitation, which is called *hasting with the feet*, Prov. xix. 2. Keep thy thoughts from roving and wandering from the work; keep thy affections from running out towards wrong objects, for in the business of God's house there is work enough for the whole man, and all too little to be employed." Some think it alludes to the charge given to Moses and Joshua to *put off their shoes* (Exod. v. 5, Josh. v. 15,) in token of subjection and reverence. *Keep thy feet clean*, Exod. xxx. 19.

2. We must take heed that the sacrifice we bring be not *the sacrifice of fools* (of unwise men, for they are fools and their sacrifice is an abomination to the Lord (Prov. xv. 8), that we bring not *the torn, and the lame, and the sick for sacrifice*, for we are plainly told that it will not be accepted, and therefore it is folly to bring it,—that we rest not in the sign and ceremony, and the outside of the performance, without regarding the sense and meaning of it, for that is the *sacrifice of fools*. Bodily exercise, if that be all, is a jest; none but fools will think thus to please him who is a Spirit and requires the heart, and they will see their folly when they find what a great deal of pains they have taken to no purpose for want of sincerity. They are *fools*, for they consider not that they do evil; they think they are doing God and themselves good service when really they are putting a great affront upon God and a great cheat upon their own souls by their hypocritical devotions. Men may be doing evil when they profess to be doing good, and even when they do not know it, when they do not consider it. *They know not but to do evil*, so some read it. Wicked minds cannot choose but sin, even in the acts of devotion. *They consider not that they do evil*; they do it at a venture, right or wrong, pleasing to God or not, it is all one to them.

3. That we may not bring *the sacrifice of fools*, we must come to God's house with hearts disposed to know and do our duty. We must be *ready to hear*, that is, (1.) We must diligently attend to the word of God read and preached. "*Be swift to hear the exposition which the priests give of the sacrifices, declaring the intent and meaning of them, and do not think it enough to gaze upon what they do, for it must be a reasonable service, otherwise it is the sacrifice of fools.*" (2.) We must resolve to comply with the will of God as it is made known to us. Hearing is often put for obeying, and that is it that is *better than sacrifice*, 1 Sam. xv. 22; Isa. i. 15, 16. We come in a right frame to holy duties when we come with this upon our heart, *Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears. Let the word of the Lord come* (said a good man), and if I had 600 necks I would bow them all to the authority of it.

4. We must be very cautious and considerate in all our approaches and addresses to God (v. 2). *Be not rash with thy mouth*, in making prayers, or protestations, or promises; *let not thy heart be hasty to utter any thing before God*. Note, (1.) When we are in the house of God, in solemn assemblies for religious worship, we are in a special manner before God and in his presence, there where he has promised to meet his people, where his eye is upon us and ours ought to be unto him. (2.) We have something to say, something to utter before God, when we *draw nigh to him* in holy duties; he is one *with whom we have to do*, with whom we have business of vast importance. If we come without an errand, we shall go away without any advantage. (3.) What we *utter before God* must come from the heart, and therefore we must not be *rash with our mouth*, never let our tongue outrun our thoughts in our devotions; the words of our mouth must always be the product of the meditation of our hearts. Thoughts are words to God, and words are but wind if they be not copied from the thoughts. Lip-labour, though ever so well laboured, if that be all, is but lost labour in religion, Matt. xv. 8, 9. (4.) It is not enough that what we say comes from the heart, but it must come from a composed heart, and not from a sudden heat or passion. As the mouth must not be rash, so the heart must not be hasty; we must not only think, but think twice, before we speak, when we are to speak either from God in preaching or to God in prayer, and not utter any thing indecent and undigested, 1 Cor. xiv. 15.

5. We must be sparing of our words in the presence of God, that is, we must be reverent and deliberate, not talk to God as boldly and carelessly as we do to one another, not speak what comes uppermost, not repeat things over and over, as we do to one another, that what we say may be understood and remembered and may make impression; no, when we speak to God we must consider,

(1.) That between him and us there is an infinite distance: *God is in heaven*, where he reigns in glory over us and all the children of men, where he is attended with an innumerable company of holy angels and is *far exalted above all our blessing and praise*. *We are on earth*, the footstool of his throne; we are mean and vile, unlike God, and utterly unworthy to receive any favour from him or to have any communion with him. Therefore we must be very grave, humble, and serious, and be reverent in speaking to him, as we are when we speak to a great man that is much our superior; and, in token of this, *let our words be few*, that they may be *well chosen*, Job ix. 14. This does not condemn all long prayers; were they not good, the Pharisees would not have used them for a pretence; Christ prayed all night; and we are directed to *continue in prayer*. But it condemns careless heartless praying, *vain repetitions* (Matt. vi. 7), repeating *Pater-nosters* by tale. Let us speak to God, and of him, in his own words, words which the scripture teaches; and let our words, words of our own invention, be few, lest, not speaking by rule, we speak amiss. (2.) That the multiplying of words in our devotions will make them the *sacrifices of fools*, v. 3. As confused dreams, frightful and perplexed, and such as disturb the sleep, are an evidence of a hurry of business which fills our head, so many words and hasty ones, used in prayer, are an evidence of folly reigning in the heart, ignorance of and unacquaintedness with both God and ourselves, low thoughts of God, and careless thoughts of our own souls. Even in common conversation *a fool is known by the multitude of words*; those that know least talk most (ch. x. 11), particularly in devotion; there, no doubt, *a prating fool shall fall* (Prov. x. 8, 10), shall fall short of acceptance. Those are fools indeed who think they shall be heard, in prayer, for their much speaking.

4 When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for *he hath no pleasure in fools*: pay that which thou hast vowed. 5 Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. 6 Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands? 7 For in the multitude of dreams and many words *there are also divers vanities*: but fear thou God. 8 If thou seeest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for *he that is higher than the*

highest regardeth; and *there be higher than they*.

Four things we are exhorted to in these verses:—

1. To be conscientious in paying our vows. 1. A vow is a bond upon the soul (Num. xxx. 2), by which we solemnly oblige ourselves, not only, in general, to do that which we are already bound to do, but, in so particular instances, to do that to do which we were not under any antecedent obligation whether it respects honouring God or serving the interests of his kingdom among men. When, under the sense of some affliction (Ps. lxxvi. 14), or in the pursuit of some mercy (Sain. i. 11), thou hast vowed such a vow *unto God*, know that *thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord and thou canst not go back*; therefore, (1.) Pay it; perform what thou hast promised; bring to God what thou hast dedicated and devoted to him: *Pay that which thou hast vowed*; pay it in full and keep not back any part of the price; pay it in kind do not alter it or change it, so the law was Lev. xxvii. 10. Have we vowed to *give our own selves unto the Lord*? Let us then be as good as our word, act in his service, to his glory, and not sacrilegiously alienate ourselves. (2.) *Defer not to pay it*. If it be in the power of thy hands to pay it to-day, leave it not till to-morrow; do not beg a day, nor put it off to a more convenient season. Delay the sense of the obligation slacken and cools, and is in danger of wearing off we thereby discover a lothness and backwardness to perform our vow; and *qui non est hodie cras minus aptus erit—he who is not inclined to-day will be averse to-morrow*. The longer it is put off the more difficult it will be to bring ourselves to it; death may not only prevent the payment, but fetch thee to judgment, under the guilt of a broken vow Ps. lxxvi. 11.

2. Two reasons are here given why we should speedily and cheerfully pay our vows.—(1.) Because otherwise we affront God; we play the fool with him, as if we designed to put a trick upon him; and *God has no pleasure in fools*. More is implied than is expressed; the meaning is, He greatly abhors such fools and such foolish dealings. *Has he need of fools?* No; *Be not deceived, God is not mocked*, but will surely and severely reckon with those that thus play fast and loose with him. (2.) Because otherwise we wrong ourselves, we lose the benefit of the making of the vow, nay, we incur the penalty for the breach of it; so that it would have been better a great deal *not to have vowed* more safe and more to our advantage, than to *vow and not to pay*. Not to have vowed would have been but an omission, but to *vow and not pay* incurs the guilt of treachery and perjury; it is *lying to God*, Acts v. 4.

II. To be cautious in making our vows. This is necessary in order to our being con-

scientific in performing them, v. 6. 1. We must take heed that we never vow any thing that is sinful, or that may be an occasion of sin, for such a vow is ill-made and must be broken. *Suffer not thy mouth, by such a vow, to cause thy flesh to sin*, as Herod's rash promise caused him to cut off the head of John the Baptist. 2. We must not vow that which, through the frailty of the flesh, we have reason to fear we shall not be able to perform, as those that vow a single life and yet know not how to keep their vow. Hereby, (1.) They shame themselves; for they are forced to say before the angel, *It was an error*, that either they did not mean or did not consider what they said; and, take it which way you will, it is bad enough. "When thou hast made a vow, do not seek to evade it, nor find out excuses to get clear of the obligation of it; say not before the priest, who is called the angel or messenger of the Lord of hosts, that, upon second thoughts, thou hast changed thy mind, and desirest to be absolved from the obligation of thy vow; but stick to it, and do not seek a hole to creep out at." Some by the angel understand the guardian angel which they suppose to attend every man and to inspect what he does. Others understand it of Christ, the Angel of the covenant, who is present with his people in their assemblies, who searches the heart, and cannot be imposed upon; *provoke him not, for God's name is in him*, and he is represented as strict and jealous, Exod. xxiii. 20, 21. (2.) They expose themselves to the wrath of God, for he is angry at the voice of those that thus lie unto him with their mouth and flatter him with their tongue, and is displeased at their dissimulation, and destroys the works of their hands, that is, blasts their enterprises, and defeats those purposes which, when they made these vows, they were seeking to God for the success of. If we treacherously cancel the words of our mouths, and revoke our vows, God will justly overthrow our projects, and walk contrary, and at all adventures, with those that thus walk contrary, and at all adventures with him. It is a snare to a man, after vows, to make enquiry.

III. To keep up the fear of God, v. 7. Many, of old, pretended to know the mind of God by dreams, and were so full of them that they almost made God's people forget his name by their dreams (Jer. xxiii. 25, 26); and many now perplex themselves with their frightful or odd dreams, or with other people's dreams, as if they foreboded this or the other disaster. Those that heed dreams shall have a multitude of them to fill their heads with; but in them all there are divers vanities, there are in many words, and the more if we regard them. "They are but like the idle impertinent chat of children and fools, and therefore never heed them; forget them; instead of repeating them lay no stress upon them, draw no disquieting conclusions from them, but fear thou God; have an eye to

his sovereign dominion, set him before thee, keep thyself in his love, and be afraid of offending him, and then thou wilt not disturb thyself with foolish dreams." The way not to be dismayed at the signs of heaven, nor afraid of the idols of the heathen, is to fear God as King of nations, Jer. x. 2, 5, 7.

IV. With that to keep down the fear of man, v. 8. "Set God before thee, and then, if thou seest the oppression of the poor, thou wilt not marvel at the matter, nor find fault with divine Providence, nor think the worse of the institution of magistracy, when thou seest the ends of it thus perverted, nor of religion, when thou seest it will not secure men from suffering wrong. Observe here, 1. A melancholy sight on earth, and such as cannot but trouble every good man that has a sense of justice and a concern for mankind, to see the oppression of the poor because they are poor and cannot defend themselves, and the violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, oppression under colour of law and backed with power. The kingdom in general may have a good government, and yet it may so happen that a particular province may be committed to a bad man, by whose mal-administration justice may be perverted; so hard it is for the wisest of kings, in giving preferments, to be sure of their men; they can but redress the grievance when it appears. 2. A comfortable sight in heaven. When things look thus dismal we may satisfy ourselves with this, (1.) That, though oppressors be high, God is above them, and in that very thing wherein they deal proudly, Exod. xviii. 11. God is higher than the highest of creatures, than the highest of princes, than the king that is higher than Agag (Num. xxiv. 7), than the highest angels, the thrones and dominions of the upper world. God is the Most High over all the earth, and his glory is above the heavens; before him princes are worms, the brightest but glow-worms. (2.) That, though oppressors besecure, God has his eye upon them, takes notice of, and will reckon for, all their violent perverting of judgment; he regards, not only sees it but observes it, and keeps it on record, to be called over again; his eyes are upon their ways. See Job xxiv. 23. (3.) That there is a world of angels, for there are higher than they, who are employed by the divine justice for protecting the injured and punishing the injurious. Sennacherib valued himself highly upon his potent army, but one angel proved too hard for him and all his forces. Some, by those that are higher than they understand the great council of the nation, the presidents to whom the princes of the provinces are accountable (Dan. vi. 2), the senate that receive complaints against the proconsuls, the courts above to which appeals are made from the inferior courts, which are necessary to the good government of a kingdom. Let it be a check to oppressors that perhaps their superiors on

earth may call them to an account; however, God the Supreme in heaven will.

9 Moreover the profit of the earth is for all: the king *himself* is served by the field. 10 He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this *is* also vanity. 11 When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good *is there* to the owners thereof, saving the beholding *of them* with their eyes? 12 The sleep of a labouring man *is* sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep. 13 There is a sore evil *which* I have seen under the sun, *namely*, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt. 14 But those riches perish by evil travail: and he begetteth a son, and *there is* nothing in his hand. 15 As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand. 16 And this also *is* a sore evil, *that* in all points as he came, so shall he go: and what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind? 17 All his days also he eateth in darkness, and *he hath* much sorrow and wrath with his sickness.

Solomon had shown the vanity of pleasure, gaiety, and fine works, of honour, power, and royal dignity; and there is many a covetous worldling that will agree with him, and speak as slightly as he does of these things; but money, he thinks, is a substantial thing, and if he can but have enough of that he is happy. This is the mistake which Solomon attacks, and attempts to rectify, in these verses; he shows that there is as much vanity in great riches, and the *lust of the eye* about them, as there is in the *lusts of the flesh* and the *pride of life*, and a man can make himself no more happy by hoarding an estate than by spending it.

1. He grants that the products of the earth, for the support and comfort of human life, are valuable things (v. 9): *The profit of the earth is for all*. Man's body, being made of the earth, thence has its maintenance (Job xxviii. 5); and that it has so, and that a *barren land is not made his dwelling* (as he has deserved for being rebellious, Ps. lxxviii. 6), is an instance of God's great bounty to him. There is *profit to be got out of the earth*, and it is *for all*; all need it; it is appointed for all; there is enough for all. It is not only for all men, but for all the inferior creatures;

the same ground brings *grass for the cattle* that brings *herbs for the service of men*. Israel had *bread from heaven*, *angels' food*, but (which is a humbling consideration) the earth is our storehouse and the beasts are fellow-commoners with us. *The king himself is served of the field*, and would be ill served, would be quite starved, without its products. This puts a great honour upon the husbandman, calling, that it is the most necessary of all the support of man's life. The many have the benefit of it; the mighty cannot live without it; it is *for all*; it is for the *king himself*. Those that have an abundance of the fruits of the earth must remember *they are for all*, and therefore must look upon themselves but as stewards of their abundance, out of which they must give to those that need. Dainty meats and soft clothing are only for some, but the *fruit of the earth is for all*. And even those that *suck the abundance of the seas* (Deut. xxxiii. 19) cannot be without the fruit of the earth, while those that have competency of the *fruit of the earth* may despise the *abundance of the seas*.

II. He maintains that the riches that are more than these, that are for hoarding, not for use, are *vain things*, and will not make a man easy or happy. That which our Saviour has said (Luke xii. 15), *that a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses*, is what Solomon here undertakes to prove by various arguments.

1. The more men have the more they would have, v. 10. A man may have but a little silver and be satisfied with it, may know when he has enough and covet no more. *Godliness, with contentment, is great gain*. I have enough, says Jacob; I have all, and abound, says St. Paul: but, (1.) He that *loves silver*, and sets his heart upon it, will never think he has enough, but *enlarges his desire as hell* (Hab. ii. 5), *lays house to house and field to field* (Isa. v. 8), and, like the *daughters of the horse-leech*, still cries, *Give, give*. Natural desires are at rest when that which is desired is obtained, but corrupt desires are insatiable. Nature is content with little, grace with less, but lust with nothing. (2.) He that has silver in abundance, and has it increasing ever so fast upon him, yet does not find that it yields any solid satisfaction to his soul. There are bodily desires which silver itself will not satisfy; if a man be hungry, ingot of silver will do no more to satisfy his hunger than clods of clay. Much less will worldly abundance satisfy spiritual desires; he that has ever so much silver covets more, not only of that, but of something else, some thing of another nature. Those that make themselves drudges to the world are spending their labour for that which satisfies not (Isa. lv. 2), which fills the belly, but will never fill the soul, Ezek. vii. 19.

2. The more men have the more occasion they have for it, and the more they have to do with it, so that it is as broad as it is long

When goods increase, they are increased that eat them, *v. 11.* The more meat the more mouths. Does the estate thrive? And does not the family at the same time grow more numerous and the children grow up to need more? The more men have the better house they must keep, the more servants they must employ, the more guests they must entertain, the more they must give to the poor, and the more they will have hanging on them, for where the carcase is the eagles will be. What we have more than food and raiment we have for others; and then what good is there to the owners themselves, but the pleasure of beholding it with their eyes? And a poor pleasure it is. An empty speculation is all the difference between the owners and the sharers; the owner sees that as his own which those about him enjoy as much of the real benefit of as he; only he has the satisfaction of doing good to others, which indeed is a satisfaction to one who believes what Christ said, that it is more blessed to give than to receive; but to a covetous man, who thinks all lost that goes beside himself, it is a constant vexation to see others eat of his increase.

3. The more men have the more care they have about it, which perplexes them and disturbs their repose, *v. 12.* Refreshing sleep is as much the support and comfort of this life as food is. Now, (1.) Those commonly sleep best that work hard and have but what they work for: *The sleep of the labouring man is sweet*, not only because he has tired himself with his labour, which makes his sleep the more welcome to him and makes him sleep soundly, but because he has little to fill his head with care about and so break his sleep. His sleep is sweet, though he eat but little and have but little to eat, for his weariness rocks him asleep; and, though he eat much, yet he can sleep well, for his labour gets him a good digestion. The sleep of the diligent Christian, and his long sleep, is sweet; for, having spent himself and his time in the service of God, he can cheerfully return to God and repose in him as his rest. (2.) Those that have every thing else often fail to secure a good night's sleep. Either their eyes are held waking or their sleeps are uneasy and do not refresh them; and it is their abundance that breaks their sleep and disturbs it, both the abundance of their care (as that rich man's who, when his ground brought forth plentifully, thought within himself, *What shall I do?* Luke xii. 17) and the abundance of what they eat and drink, which overcharges the heart, makes them sick, and so hinders their repose. Ahasuerus, after a banquet of wine, could not sleep; and perhaps consciousness of guilt, both in getting and using what they have, breaks their sleep as much as any thing. But God gives his beloved sleep.

4. The more men have the more danger they are in both of doing mischief and of having mischief done them (*v. 13*): *There is an evil, a sore evil*, which Solomon himself

had seen under the sun, in this lower world, this theatre of sin and woe—*riches kept for the owners thereof* (who have been industrious to hoard them and keep them safely) *to their hurt*; they would have been better without them. (1.) Their riches *do them hurt*, make them proud, secure, and in love with the world, draw away their hearts from God and duty, and make it very difficult for them to enter into the kingdom of heaven, nay, help to shut them out of it. (2.) They *do hurt with their riches*, which not only put them into a capacity of gratifying their own lusts and living luxuriously, but give them an opportunity of oppressing others and dealing hardly with them. (3.) Often they sustain *hurt by their riches*. They would not be envied, would not be robbed, if they were not rich. It is the fat beast that is led first to the slaughter. A very rich man (as one observes) has sometimes been excepted out of a general pardon, both as to life and estate, merely on account of his vast and overgrown estate; so riches often take away the life of the owners thereof, Prov. i. 19.

5. The more men have the more they have to lose, and perhaps they may lose it all, *v. 14.* Those riches that have been laid up with a great deal of pains, and kept with a great deal of care, *perish by evil travail*, by the very pains and care which they take to secure and increase them. Many a one has ruined his estate by being over-solicitous to advance it and make it more, and has lost all by catching at all. Riches are perishing things, and all our care about them cannot make them otherwise; they *make themselves wings and fly away*. He that thought he should have made his son a gentleman leaves him a beggar; he *begets a son*, and brings him up in the prospect of an estate, but, when he dies, leaves it under a charge of debt as much as it is worth, so that *there is nothing in his hand*. This is a common case; estates that made a great show do not prove what they seemed, but cheat the heir.

6. How much soever men have when they die, they must leave it all behind them (*v. 15, 16*): *As he came forth of his mother's womb naked, so shall he return*; only as his friends, when he came naked into the world, in pity to him, helped him with swaddling-clothes, so, when he goes out, they help him with grave-clothes, and that is all. See Job i. 21; Ps. xlix. 17. This is urged as a reason why we should be content with such things as we have, 1 Tim. vi. 7. In respect of the body we must go as we came; the dust shall return to the earth as it was. But sad is our case if the soul return as it came, for we were born in sin, and if we die in sin, unsanctified, we had better never have been born; and that seems to be the case of the worldling here spoken of, for he is said to *return in all points as he came*, as sinful, as miserable, and much more so. This is a *sore evil*; he thinks it so whose heart is glued to the world, that he

shall take nothing of his labour which he may carry away in his hand; his riches will not go with him into another world nor stand him in any stead there. If we labour in religion, the grace and comfort we get by that labour we may carry away in our hearts, and shall be the better for it to eternity; that is meat that endures. But if we labour only for the world, to fill our hands with that, we cannot take that away with us; we are born with our hands griping, but die with them extended, letting go what we held fast. So that, upon the whole matter, he may well ask, What profit has he that has laboured for the wind?

Note, Those that labour for the world labour for the wind, for that which has more sound than substance, which is uncertain, and always shifting its point, unsatisfying, and often hurtful, which we cannot hold fast, and which, if we take up with it as our portion, will no more feed us than the *wind*, Hos. xii. 1. Men will see that they have *laboured for the wind* when at death they find the profit of their labour is all gone, gone like the wind, they know not whither.

7. Those that have much, if they set their hearts upon it, have not only uncomfortable deaths, but uncomfortable lives too, v. 17. This covetous worldling, that is so bent upon raising an estate, *all his days eats in darkness and much sorrow, and it is his sickness and wrath*; he has not only no pleasure of his estate, nor any enjoyment of it himself, for he *eats the bread of sorrow* (Ps. cxxvii. 2), but a great deal of vexation to see others eat of it. His necessary expenses make him sick, make him fret, and he seems as if he were angry that himself and those about him cannot live without meat. As we read the last clause, it intimates how ill this covetous worldling can bear the common and unavoidable calamities of human life. When he is in health he *eats in darkness*, always dull with care and fear about what he has; but, if he be sick, *he has much sorrow and wrath with his sickness*; he is vexed that his sickness takes him off from his business and hinders him in his pursuits of the world, vexed that all his wealth will not give him any ease or relief, but especially terrified with the apprehensions of death (which his diseases are the harbingers of), of leaving this world and the things of it behind him, which he has set his affections upon, and removing to a world he has made no preparation for. He has not any *sorrow after a godly sort*, does not *sorrow to repentance*, but he has *sorrow and wrath*, is angry at the providence of God, angry at his sickness, angry at all about him, fretful and peevish, which doubles his affliction, which a good man lessens and lightens by patience and joy in his sickness.

18 Behold *that* which I have seen: *it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the*

sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it is his portion. 19 Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; *this is the gift of God.* 20 For he shall not much remember the days of his life; because God answereth *him* in the joy of his heart.

Solomon, from the vanity of riches hoarded up, here infers that the best course we can take is to use well what we have, to serve God with it, to do good with it, and take the comfort of it to ourselves and our families; this he had pressed before, ch. ii. 24; iii. 22. Observe, 1. What it is that is here recommended to us, not to indulge the appetites of the flesh, or to take up with present pleasures or profits for our portion, but soberly and moderately to make use of what Providence has allotted for our comfortable passage through this world. We must not starve ourselves through covetousness, because we cannot afford ourselves food convenient, nor through eagerness in our worldly pursuits, nor through excessive care and grief, but *eat and drink* what is fit for us to keep our bodies in good plight for the serving of our souls in God's service. We must not kill ourselves with *labour*, and then leave others to *enjoy the good* of it, but take the comfort of that which our hands have laboured for, and that not now and then, but *all the days of our life which God gives us*. Life is God's gift, and he has appointed us *the number of the days of our life* (Job. xiv. 5); let us therefore spend those days in *serving the Lord our God with joyfulness and gladness of heart*. We must not do the business of our calling as a drudgery, and make ourselves slaves to it, but we must *rejoice in our labour*, not grasp at more business than we can go through without perplexity and disquiet, but take a pleasure in the calling wherein God has put us, and go on in the business of it with cheerfulness. This is to *rejoice in our labour*, whatever it is, as *Zebulun in his going out and Isaac in his tents*. 2. What is urged to recommend it to us. (1.) That *it is good and comely to do this*. It is well, and it looks well. Those that cheerfully use what God has given them thereby honour the giver, answer the intention of the gift, act rationally and generously, do good in the world, and make what they have turn to the best account, and this is both their credit and their comfort; *it is good and comely*; there is duty and decency in it. (2.) That it is all the good we can have out of the things of this world: *It is our portion*, and in doing thus we take our portion, and make the best of bad. This is our part of our worldly possessions. God must have his part, the poor theirs, and our families theirs, but this is ours: it is all that falls to our lot out

of them. (3.) That a heart to do thus is such a gift of God's grace as crowns all the gifts of his providence. If God has given a man *riches and wealth*, he completes the favour, and makes that a blessing indeed, if withal he gives him power to eat thereof, wisdom and grace to take the good of it and to do good with it. If this is God's gift, we must covet it earnestly as the best gift relating to our enjoyments in this world. (4.) That this is the way to make our own lives easy and to relieve ourselves against the many toils and troubles which our lives on earth are incident to (v. 20): *He shall not much remember the days of his life*, the days of his sorrow and sore travail, his working days, his weeping days. He shall either forget them or remember them as waters that pass away; he shall not much lay to heart his crosses, nor long retain the bitter relish of them, because God answers him in the joy of his heart, balances all the grievances of his labour with the joy of it and recompenses him for it by giving him to eat the labour of his hands. If he does not answer all his desires and expectations, in the letter of them, yet he answers them with that which is more than equivalent, in the joy of his heart. A cheerful spirit is a great blessing; it makes the yoke of our employments easy and the burden of our afflictions light.

CHAP. VI.

In this chapter, I. The royal preacher goes on further to show the vanity of worldly wealth, when men place their happiness in it and are eager and inordinate in laying it up. Riches, in the hands of a man that is wise and generous, are good for something, but in the hands of a sordid, sneaking, covetous miser, they are good for nothing. 1. He takes an account of the possessions and enjoyments which such a man may have. He has wealth (ver. 2), he has children to inherit it (ver. 3), and lives long, ver. 3, 6. 2. He describes his folly in not taking the comfort of it: he has no power to eat of it, lets strangers devour it, is never filled with good, and at last has no burial, ver. 2, 3. 3. He condemns it as an evil, a common evil, vanity, and a disease, ver. 1, 2. 4. He prefers the condition of a still-born child before the condition of such a one, ver. 3. The still-born child's infelicity is only negative (ver. 4, 5), but that of the covetous worldling is positive; he lives a great while to see himself miserable, ver. 6. 5. He shows the vanity of riches as pertaining only to the body, and giving no satisfaction to the mind (ver. 7, 8), and of those boundless desires with which covetous people vex themselves (ver. 9), which, if they be gratified ever so fully, leave a man but a man still, ver. 10. 11. He concludes this discourse of the vanity of the creature with this plain inference from the whole, That it is folly to think of making up a happiness for ourselves in the things of this world, ver. 11, 12. Our satisfaction must be in another life, not in this.

THERE is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men: 2 A man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it: this is vanity, and it is an evil disease. 3 If a man beget a hundred children, and live many years, so that the days of his years be many, and his soul be not filled with good, and also that he have no burial; I say, that an untimely birth is better than he. 4 For he cometh in with

vanity, and departeth in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness. 5 Moreover he hath not seen the sun, nor known any thing: this hath more rest than the other. 6 Yea, though he live a thousand years twice told, yet hath he seen no good: do not all go to one place?

Solomon had shown, in the close of the foregoing chapter, how good it is to make a comfortable use of the gifts of God's providence; now here he shows the evil of the contrary, having and not using, gathering to lay up for I know not what contingent emergencies to come, not to lay out on the most urgent occasions present. This is an evil which Solomon himself saw under the sun, v. 1. A great deal of evil there is under the sun. There is a world above the sun where there is no evil, yet God causes his sun to shine upon the evil as well as upon the good, which is an aggravation of the evil. God has lighted up a candle for his servants to work by, but they bury their talent as slothful and unprofitable, and so waste the light and are unworthy of it. Solomon, as a king, inspected the manners of his subjects, and took notice of this evil as a prejudice to the public, who are damaged not only by men's prodigality on the one hand, but by their penuriousness on the other. As it is with the blood in the natural body, so it is with the wealth of the body politic, if, instead of circulating, it stagnates, it will be of ill consequence. Solomon as a preacher observed the evils that were done that he might reprove them and warn people against them. This evil was, in his days, common, and yet then there was great plenty of silver and gold, which, one would think, should have made people less fond of riches; the times also were peaceable, nor was there any prospect of trouble, which to some is a temptation to hoard. But no providence will of itself, unless the grace of God work with it, cure the corrupt affection that is in the carnal mind to the world and the things of it; nay, when riches increase we are most apt to set our hearts upon them. Now concerning this miser observe,

I. The abundant reason he has to serve God with joyfulness and gladness of heart; how well God has done for him.

1. He has given him riches, wealth, and honour, v. 2. Note, (1.) Riches and wealth commonly gain people honour among men. Though it be but an image, if it be a golden image, all people, nations, and languages, will fall down and worship it. (2.) Riches, wealth, and honour, are God's gifts, the gifts of his providence, and not given, as his rain and sunshine, alike to all, but to some, and not to others, as God sees fit. (3.) Yet they are given to many that do not make a good use of them, to many to whom God does not give wisdom and grace to take the comfort of

them and serve God with them. The gifts of common providence are bestowed on many to whom are denied the gifts of special grace, without which the gifts of providence often do more hurt than good.

2. *He wants nothing for his soul of all that he desires.* Providence has been so liberal to him that he has as much as *heart could wish*, and more, Ps. lxxiii. 7. He does not desire grace for his soul, the better part; all he desires is enough to gratify the sensual appetite, and that he has; his *belly is filled with these hidden treasures*, Ps. xvii. 14.

3. He is supposed to have a numerous family, to *beget a hundred children*, which are the stay and strength of his house and as a *quiver full of arrows* to him, which are the honour and credit of his house, and in whom he has the prospect of having his name built up and having all the immortality this world can give him. *They are full of children* (Ps. xvii. 14), while many of God's people are written childless and stripped of all.

4. To complete his happiness, he is supposed to *live many years*, or rather many *days*, for our life is to be reckoned rather by days than years: *The days of his years are many*, and so healthful is his constitution, and so slowly does age creep upon him, that they are likely to be many more. Nay, he is supposed to *live a thousand years* (which no man, that we know of, ever did), nay, *a thousand years twice told*, a small part of which time, one would think, were enough to convince men, by their own experience, of the folly both of those that expect to find all good in worldly wealth, and of those that expect to find any good in it but in using it.

II. The little heart he has to use this which God gives him, for the ends and purposes for which it was given him. This is his fault and folly that he *renders not again according to the benefit done unto him*, and *serves not the Lord God his benefactor, with joyfulness and gladness of heart, in the abundance of all things*. In the day of prosperity he is not joyful. *Tristis es, et felix?*—*Art thou happy, yet sad?* See his folly: 1. He cannot find in his heart to take the comfort of what he has himself. He has meat before him; he has wherewith to maintain himself and his family comfortably, but he has *not power to eat thereof*. His sordid niggardly temper will not suffer him to lay it out, no, not upon himself, no, not upon that which is most necessary for himself. He has not power to reason himself out of this absurdity, to conquer his covetous humour. He is weak indeed, who has not power to use what God gives him, for *God gives him not that power*, but withholds it from him, to punish him for his other abuses of his wealth. Because he has not the will to serve God with it, God denies him the power to serve himself with it. 2. He suffers those to prey upon him that he is under no obligation to: *A stranger eateth it*. This is the common fate of misers;

they will not trust their own children perhaps, but retainers and hangers-on, that have the art of wheedling, insinuate themselves into them, and find ways of devouring what they have, or getting it to be left to them by their wills. God orders it so that *a stranger eats it*. *Strangers devour his strength*, Hos. vii. 9; Prov. v. 10. This may be well called *vanity, and an evil disease*. What we have in vain if we do not use it; and that temper of mind is certainly a most wretched distemper which keeps us from using it. Our worst diseases are those that arise from the corruption of our own hearts. 3. He deprives himself of the good that he might have had of his worldly possessions, not only forfeits it, but robs himself of it and throws it from him: *His soul is not filled with good*, v. 3. He is still unsatisfied and uneasy. His hands are filled with riches, his barns filled, and his bags filled, but *his soul is not filled with good*, no, not with that good, for it is still craving more. Nay (v. 6), *he has not seen good*; he cannot so much as please his eye, for that is still looking further and looking with envy on those that have more. He has not even the sensible good of an estate. Though he looks not beyond the things that are seen, yet he looks not with any true pleasure even on them. 4. *He has no burial*, none agreeable to his rank, no decent burial, but *the burial of an ass*. Through the sordidness of his temper he will not allow himself a fashionable burial, but forbids it, or the strangers that have eaten him up leave him so poor, at last, that he has not wherewithal, or those to whom he leaves what he has have so little esteem for his memory, and are so greedy of what they are to have from him, that they will not be at the charges of burying him handsomely, which his own children, if he had left it to them, would not have grudged him.

III. The preference which the preacher gives to an untimely birth before him: *An untimely birth*, a child that is carried from the womb to the grave, *is better than he*. Better is the fruit that drops from the tree before it is ripe than that which is left to hang on till it is rotten. Job, in his passion, thinks the condition of *an untimely birth* better than his when he was in adversity (Job iii. 16); but Solomon here pronounces it better than the condition of a worldling in his greatest prosperity, when the world smiles upon him. 1. He grants the condition of *an untimely birth*, upon many accounts, to be very sad (v. 4, 5): *He comes in with vanity* (for, as to this world, he that is born and dies immediately was born in vain), and he *departs in darkness*; little or no notice is taken of him; being an abortive, he has no name, or, if he had, it would soon be forgotten and buried in oblivion; it would be *covered with darkness*, as the body is with the earth. Nay (v. 5), *he has not seen the sun*, but from the darkness of the womb he is

hurried immediately to that of the grave, and, which is worse than not being known to any, he has not known any thing, and therefore has come short of that which is the greatest pleasure and honour of man. Those that live in wilful ignorance, and know nothing to purpose, are no better than *an untimely birth* that *has not seen the sun nor known any thing*. 2. Yet he prefers it before that of a covetous miser. *This untimely birth has more rest than the other, for this has some rest, but the other has none; this has no trouble and disquiet, but the other is in perpetual agitation, and has nothing but trouble, trouble of his own making. The shorter the life is the longer the rest; and the fewer the days, and the less we have to do with this troublesome world, the less trouble we know.*

*'Tis better die a child at four,
Than live, and die so at fourscore.*

The reason he gives why *this has more rest* is because *all go to one place* to rest in, and this is sooner at his rest, v. 6. He that *lives a thousand years* goes to the same place with the child that does not live an hour, ch. iii. 20. The grave is the place we shall all meet in. Whatever differences there may be in men's condition in this world, they must all die, are all under the same sentence, and, to outward appearance, their deaths are alike. The grave is to one, as well as another, a land of silence, of darkness, of separation from the living, and a sleeping-place. It is the common rendezvous of rich and poor, honourable and mean, learned and unlearned; the short-lived and long-lived meet in the grave, only one rides post thither, the other goes by slower conveyance; the dust of both mingles, and lies undistinguished.

7 All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled. 8 For what hath the wise more than the fool? what hath the poor, what knoweth to walk before the living? 9 Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire: this is also vanity and vexation of spirit. 10 That which hath been is named already, and it is known that it is man: neither may he contend with him that is mightier than he.

The preacher here further shows the vanity and folly of heaping up worldly wealth and expecting happiness in it.

I. How much soever we toil about the world, and get out of it, we can have for ourselves no more than a maintenance (v. 7): *All the labour of man is for his mouth, which craves it of him* (Prov. xvi. 26); it is but *food and raiment*; what is more others have, not we; it is all for the mouth. Meats are but for the belly and the belly for meats; there is nothing for the head and heart, nothing to nourish or enrich the soul. A little will serve

to sustain us comfortably and a great deal can do no more.

II. Those that have ever so much are still craving; let a man labour ever so much for his mouth, yet the appetite is not filled. 1. Natural desires are still returning, still pressing; a man may be feasted to-day and yet hungry to-morrow. 2. Worldly sinful desires are insatiable, ch. v. 10. Wealth to a worldling is like drink to one in a dropsy, which does but increase the thirst. Some read the whole verse thus: *Though all a man's labour fall out to his own mind (ori ejus obveniat)—so as to correspond with his views,* (Juv.), just as himself would have it, yet his desire is not satisfied, still he has a mind to something more. 3. The desires of the soul find nothing in the wealth of the world to give them any satisfaction. *The soul is not filled*, so the word is. When God gave Israel their request he sent leanness into their souls, Ps. cvi. 15. He was a fool who, when his barns were full, said, *Soul, take thine ease*.

III. A fool may have as much worldly wealth, and may enjoy as much of the pleasure of it, as a wise man; nay, and perhaps not be so sensible of the vexation of it: *What has the wise more than the fool?* v. 8. Perhaps he has not so good an estate, so good a trade, nor such good preferment as the fool has. Nay, suppose them to be equal in their possessions, what can a wise man, a scholar, a wit, a politician, squeeze out of his estate more than needful supplies? and a half-witted man may do this. A fool can fare as well and relish it, can dress as well, and make as good a figure in any public appearance, as a wise man; so that if there were not pleasures and honour peculiar to the mind, which the wise man has more than the fool, as to this world they would be upon a level.

IV. Even a poor man, who has business, and is discreet, diligent, and dexterous, in the management of it, may get as comfortably through this world as he that is loaded with an overgrown estate. Consider *what the poor has less than the rich*, if he but knows to walk before the living, knows how to conduct himself decently, and do his duty to all, how to get an honest livelihood by his labour, how to spend his time well and improve his opportunities. *What has he?* Why, he is better beloved and more respected among his neighbours, and has a better interest than many a rich man that is griping and haughty. *What has he?* Why he has as much of the comfort of this life, has *food and raiment*, and is *therewith content*, and so is as truly rich as he that has abundance.

V. The enjoyment of what we have cannot but be acknowledged more rational than a greedy grasping at more (v. 9): *Better is the sight of the eyes, making the best of that which is present, than the wandering of the desire*, the uneasy walking of the soul after things at a distance, and the affecting of a

variety of imaginary satisfactions. He is much happier that is always content, though he has ever so little, than he that is always coveting, though he has ever so much. We cannot say, *Better is the sight of the eyes than the fixing of the desire upon God*, and the resting of the soul in him; it is better to live by faith in things to come than to live by sense, which dwells only upon present things; but *better is the sight of the eyes than the roving of the desire after the world*, and the things of it, than which nothing is more uncertain nor more unsatisfying at the best. *This wandering of the desire is vanity and vexation of spirit.* It is vanity at the best; if what is desired, be obtained, it proves not what we promised ourselves from it, but commonly the *wandering desire* is crossed and disappointed, and then it turns to *vexation of spirit*.

VI. Our lot, whatever it is, is that which is appointed us by the counsel of God, which cannot be altered, and it is therefore our wisdom to reconcile ourselves to it and cheerfully to acquiesce in it (v. 10): *That which has been*, or (as some read it) *that which is*, and so likewise that which shall be, is *named already*; it is already determined in the divine foreknowledge, and all our care and pains cannot make it otherwise than as it is fixed. *Jacta est alea—The die is cast.* It is therefore folly to quarrel with that which will be as it is, and wisdom to make a virtue of necessity. We shall have what pleases God, and let that please us.

VII. Whatever we attain to in this world, still we are but men, and the greatest possessions and preferments cannot set us above the common accidents of human life: *That which has been*, and is, that busy animal that makes such a stir and such a noise in the world, is *named already*. He that made him gave him his name, and it is known that it is man; that is his name by which he must know himself, and it is a humbling name, Gen. v. 2. He called their name Adam; and all theirs have the same character, *red earth*. Though a man could make himself master of all the treasures of kings and provinces, yet he is a man still, mean, mutable, and mortal, and may at any time be involved in the calamities that are common to men. It is good for rich and great men to know and consider that they are but men, Ps. ix. 20. *It is known that they are but men*; let them put what face they will upon it, and, like the king of Tyre, *set their heart as the heart of God*, yet the Egyptians are men, and not gods, and it is known that they are so.

VIII. How far soever our desires wander, and how closely soever our endeavours keep pace with them, we cannot strive with the divine Providence, but must submit to the disposals of it, whether we will or no. If it is man, he may not contend with him that is mightier than he. It is presumption to arraign God's proceedings, and to charge him

with folly or iniquity; nor is it to any purpose to complain of him, for he is in one mind and who can turn him? Elihu pacifies Job with this incontestable principle, *That God is greater than man* (Job xxxiii. 12) and therefore man may not contend with him, nor resist his judgments, when they come with correction. A man cannot with the greatest riches make his part good against thearest sickness or death, but must yield to his fate.

11 Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what is man that better? 12 For who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow? for who can tell man what shall be after him under the sun?

Here, 1. Solomon lays down his conclusion which he had undertaken to prove, and that which was fully confirmed by the foregoing discourse: *There be many things that increase vanity*; the life of man is vain, the best, and there are abundance of accidents that concur to make it more so; even that which pretends to increase the wealth and pleasure does but increase the vanity and make it more vexatious. 2. He draws some inferences from it, which serve further to evince the truth of it. (1.) That a man is never the nearer to true happiness for the abundance that he has in this world: *What is man that better for his wealth and pleasure, his honour and preferment?* What remains to man? What residuum has he, what overplus, what real advantage, when he comes to balance his accounts? Nothing that will do him any good or turn to account. (2.) That we do not know what to wish for, because that which we promise ourselves most satisfaction is often proves most vexatious to us: *Who knoweth what is good for a man in this life*, where every thing is vanity, and any thing, even that which we most covet, may prove a calamity to us? Thoughtful people are in care to do every thing for the best, if they knew it; but as it is an instance of the corruption of our hearts that we are apt to desire that as good for us which is really hurtful, as children that cry for knives to cut their fingers with so is it an instance of the vanity of this world that what, according to all probable conjectures, seems to be for the best, often proves otherwise; such is our shortsightedness concerning the issues and events of things, and such broken reeds are all our creature-confidences. We know not how to advise others for the best, nor how to act ourselves, because that which we apprehend likely to be for our welfare may become a trap. (3.) That therefore our life upon earth is what we have no reason to take any great complacency in, or to be confident of the continuance of. It is to be reckoned by days; it is but a vain life, and we spend it as a shadow, so little

here in it substantial, so fleeting, so uncertain, so transitory is it, and so little in it to be fond of or to be depended on. If all the comforts of life be vanity, life itself can have no great reality in it to constitute a happiness for us. (4.) That our expectations from this world are as uncertain and deceitful as our enjoyments are. Since every thing is vanity, *Who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?* He can no more please himself with the hopes of *what shall be after him*, to his children and family, than with the elixir of what is with him, since he can neither foresee himself, nor can any one else pretend to him, *what shall be after him*. Nor shall he have any intelligence sent him of it when he is gone. *His sons come to honour, and he knows it not*. So that, look which way we will, *Vanity of vanity, all is vanity*.

CHAP. VII.

Solomon had given many proofs and instances of the vanity of this world and the things of it; now, in this chapter, 1. He recommends to us some good means proper to be used for the redress of these grievances and the arming of ourselves against the mischief we are in danger of from them, that we may make the best of the bad, as, 1. Care of our reputation, ver. 1. 2. Seriousness, ver. 3—6. 3. Calmness of spirit, ver. 7—10. 4. Prudence in the management of all our affairs, ver. 11, 12. 5. Submission to the will of God in all events, accommodating ourselves to every condition, ver. 13—15. 6. A conscientious avoiding of all dangerous extremes, ver. 16—19. 7. Mildness and tenderness towards those that have been injurious to us, ver. 19—22. In short, the best way to save ourselves from the vexation which the vanity of the world creates us is to keep our temper and to maintain a strict government of our passions. 11. He laments his own iniquity, as that which was more vexatious than any of these vanities, that mystery of iniquity, the having of many wives, by which he was drawn away from God and his duty, ver. 23—29.

A GOOD name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth. 2 *It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart. Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. 4 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. 5 It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools. 6 For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool: this also is vanity.*

In these verses Solomon lays down some great truths which seem paradoxes to the unthinking part, that is, the far greatest part, of mankind.

I. That the honour of virtue is really more valuable and desirable than all the wealth and treasure in this world (v. 1): *A good name is more good ointment* (so it may be read); it is preferable to it, and will be rather chosen by all that are wise. *Good ointment* is here put for all the profits of the earth (among the products of which oil was reckoned one of the most valuable), for all the delights of

sense (for ointment and perfume which rejoice the heart, and it is called the oil of gladness), nay, and for the highest titles of honour with which men are dignified, for kings are anointed. *A good name is better than all riches* (Prov. xxii. 1), that is, a name for wisdom and goodness with those that are wise and good—the memory of the just; this is a good that will bring a more grateful pleasure to the mind, will give a man a larger opportunity of usefulness, and will go further, and last longer, than the most precious box of ointment: for Christ paid Mary for her ointment with a good name, a name in the gospels (Matt. xxvi. 13), and we are sure he always pays with advantage.

II. That, all things considered, our going out of the world is a greater kindness to us than our coming into the world was: *The day of death is preferable to the birth-day*; though, as to others, there was joy when a child was born into the world, and where there is death there is lamentation, yet, as to ourselves, if we have lived so as to merit a good name, the day of our death, which will put a period to our cares, and toils, and sorrows, and remove us to rest, and joy, and eternal satisfaction, is better than the day of our birth, which ushered us into a world of so much sin and trouble, vanity and vexation. We were born to uncertainty, but a good man does not die at uncertainty. *The day of our birth clogged our souls with the burden of the flesh, but the day of our death will set them at liberty from that burden.*

III. That it will do us more good to go to a funeral than to go to a festival (v. 2): *It is better to go to the house of mourning, and there weep with those that weep, than to go to the house of feasting, to a wedding, or a wake, there to rejoice with those that do rejoice.* It will do us more good, and make better impressions upon us. We may lawfully go to both, as there is occasion. Our Saviour both feasted at the wedding of his friend in Cana and wept at the grave of his friend in Bethany; and we may possibly glorify God, and do good, and get good, in the house of feasting; but, considering how apt we are to be vain and frothy, proud and secure, and indulgent of the flesh, it is better for us to go to the house of mourning, not to see the pomp of the funeral, but to share in the sorrow of it, and to learn good lessons, both from the dead, who is going thence to his long home, and from the mourners, who go about the streets.

1. The uses to be gathered from the house of mourning are, (1.) By way of information *That is the end of all men.* It is the end of man as to this world, a final period to his state here; he shall return no more to his house. *It is the end of all men*; all have sinned and therefore death passes upon all. We must thus be left by our friends, as the mourners are, and thus leave, as the dead do. What is the lot of others will be ours; the

cup is going round, and it will come to our turn to pledge it shortly. (2.) By way of admonition: *The living will lay it to his heart.* Will they? It were well if they would. Those that are spiritually alive *will lay it to heart*, and, as for all the survivors, one would think they should; it is their own fault if they do not, for nothing is more easy and natural than by the death of others to be put in mind of our own. Some perhaps *will lay that to heart*, and *consider their latter end*, who would not lay a good sermon to heart.

2. For the further proof of this (v. 4) he makes it the character, (1.) Of a wise man that his *heart is in the house of mourning*; he is much conversant with mournful subjects, and this is both an evidence and a furtherance of his wisdom. *The house of mourning* is the wise man's school, where he has learned many a good lesson, and there, where he is serious, he is in his element. When he is *in the house of mourning* his heart is there to improve the spectacles of mortality that are presented to him; nay, when he is *in the house of feasting*, his heart is *in the house of mourning*, by way of sympathy with those that are in sorrow. (2.) It is the character of a fool that his *heart is in the house of mirth*; his heart is all upon it to be merry and jovial; his whole delight is in sport and gaiety, in merry stories, merry songs, and merry company, merry days and merry nights. If he be at any time *in the house of mourning*, he is under a restraint; his heart at the same time is *in the house of mirth*; this is his folly, and helps to make him more and more foolish.

IV. That gravity and seriousness better become us, and are better for us, than mirth and jollity, v. 3. The common proverb says, "An ounce of mirth is worth a pound of sorrow;" but the preacher teaches us a contrary lesson: *Sorrow is better than laughter*, more agreeable to our present state, where we are daily sinning and suffering ourselves, more or less, and daily seeing the sins and sufferings of others. While we are in a vale of tears, we should conform to the temper of the climate. It is also more for our advantage; for, *by the sadness* that appears in the countenance, *the heart is often made better*. Note, 1. That is best for us which is best for our souls, by which *the heart is made better*, though it be displeasing to sense. 2. Sadness is often a happy means of seriousness, and that affliction which is impairing to the health, estate, and family, may be improving to the mind, and make such impressions upon that as may alter its temper very much for the better, may make it humble and meek, loose from the world, penitent for sin, and careful of duty. *Vexatio dat intellectum*—*Vexation sharpens the intellect.* *Periissem nisi periissem*—*I should have perished if I had not been made wretched.* It will follow, on the contrary, that by the mirth and frolicsomeness of the countenance the heart is made worse, more vain, carnal, sensual, and secure, more in love with

the world and more estranged from God and spiritual things (Job xxi. 12, 14), till it becomes utterly unconcerned in the afflictions of Joseph, as those Amos vi. 5, 6, and the king and Haman, Esth. iii. 15.

V. That it is much better for us to have our corruptions mortified by the rebuke of the wise than to have them gratified by the song of fools, v. 5. Many that would be very well pleased to hear the information of the wise and much more to have their commendation and consolations, yet do not care for hearing their rebukes, that is, care not for being told of their faults, though ever so wisely; but therein they are no friends to themselves, for *reproofs of instruction are the way of life* (Prov. vi. 23), and, though they be not so pleasant as the song of fools, they are more wholesome. To hear, not only with patience but with pleasure, the rebuke of the wise, is a sign and means of wisdom; but to be fond of the song of fools is a sign that the mind is vain and is the way to make it more so. And what an absurd thing is it for a man to dote so much upon such a transient pleasure as the laughter of a fool is, which may fitly be compared to the burning of thorns under a pot, which makes a great noise and a great blaze, for a little while, but is gone presently, scatters its ashes, and contributes scarcely any thing to the production of a boiling heat, for that requires a constant fire! *The laughter of a fool is noisy and flashy*, and is not an instance of true joy. *This is also vanity*; it deceives men to their destruction, for the end of that mirth is heaviness. Our blessed Saviour has read us our doom: *Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh; woe to you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep*, Luke vi. 21, 25.

7 Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad; and a gift destroyeth the heart. 8 Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. 9 Be not hasty thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools. 10 Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.

Solomon had often complained before of the oppressions which he saw under the sun, which gave occasion for many melancholy speculations and were a great discouragement to virtue and piety. Now here,

I. He grants the temptation to be strong (v. 7): *Surely it is often too true that oppression makes a wise man mad.* If a wise man be much and long oppressed, he is very apt to speak and act unlike himself, to lay the reins on the neck of his passions, and break out into indecent complaints against God and

an, or to make use of unlawful dishonourable means of relieving himself. *The righteous*, when the *rod of the wicked resists long their lot*, are in danger of *putting forth their hands to iniquity*, Ps. cxxv. 3. When even wise men have unreasonable hardships laid upon them they have much ado to keep their temper and to keep their place. *It destroys the heart of a gift* (so the latter clause may be read); even the generous heart that is ready to give gifts, and a gracious heart that is endowed with many excellent gifts, is destroyed by being oppressed. We should therefore make great allowances to those that are abused and ill-dealt with, and not be severe in our censures of them, though they do not do so discreetly as they should; we know not what we should do if it were our own case.

II. He argues against it. Let us not fret the power and success of oppressors, nor be envious at them, for, 1. The character of oppressors is very bad, so some understand it. 7. If he that had the reputation of a wise man becomes an oppressor, he becomes a madman; his reason has departed from him; there is no better than a roaring lion and a raging bear, and the gifts, the bribes, he takes, the gains he seems to reap by his oppressions, do but *destroy his heart* and quite extinguish the poor remains of sense and virtue in him, and therefore he is rather to be pitied than envied; let him alone, and he will act so foolishly, and drive so furiously, that in a little time he will ruin himself. 2. The issue, at length, will be good: *Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof*. Faith see what the end will be, and with patience expect it. When proud men begin to oppress their poor honest neighbours they think their power will bear them out in it; they doubt not but to carry the day, and gain the point. But it will prove better in the end than it seemed at the beginning; their power will be broken, their wealth gotten by oppression will be wasted and gone, they will be humbled and brought down, and reckoned with for their injustice, and oppressed innocence will be both relieved and recompensed. *Better is the end of Moses's treaty with Pharaoh*, at proud oppressor, when Israel was brought forth with triumph, *than the beginning of it*, when the tale of bricks was doubled, and every thing looked discouraging.

III. He arms us against it with some necessary directions. If we would not be over-mad by oppression, but preserve the possession of our own souls,

1. We must be clothed with humility; for *proud in spirit* are those that cannot bear to be trampled upon, but grow outrageous, and fret themselves, when they are hardly used. That will break a proud man's heart, which will not break a humble man's. 2. Mortify pride, therefore, and a lowly spirit will easily be reconciled to a low condition.

2. We must put on patience, bearing patience, to submit to the will of God in the affliction, and waiting patience, to expect the issue in God's due time. *The patient in spirit* are here opposed to *the proud in spirit*, for where there is humility there will be patience. Those will be thankful for any thing who own they deserve nothing at God's hand, and the patient are said to be *better than the proud*; they are more easy to themselves, more acceptable to others, and more likely to see a good issue of their troubles.

3. We must govern our passion with wisdom and grace (v. 9): *Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry*; those that are hasty in their expectations, and cannot brook delays, are apt to be angry if they be not immediately gratified. "Be not angry at proud oppressors, or any that are the instruments of your trouble." (1.) "Be not soon angry, not quick in apprehending an affront and resenting it, nor forward to express your resentments of it." (2.) "Be not long angry;" for though anger may come into the bosom of a wise man, and pass through it as a way-faring man, it rests only in the bosom of fools; there it resides, there it remains, there it has the innermost and uppermost place, there it is hugged as that which is dear, and laid in the bosom, and not easily parted with. He therefore that would approve himself so wise as not to give place to the devil, must not let the sun go down upon his wrath, Eph. iv. 26, 27.

4. We must make the best of that which is (v. 10): "Take it not for granted that the former days were better than these, nor enquire what is the cause that they were so, for therein thou dost not enquire wisely, since thou enquirest into the reason of the thing before thou art sure that the thing itself is true; and, besides, thou art so much a stranger to the times past, and such an incompetent judge even of the present times, that thou canst not expect a satisfactory answer to the enquiry, and therefore thou dost not enquire wisely; nay, the supposition is a foolish reflection upon the providence of God in the government of the world." Note, (1.) It is folly to complain of the badness of our own times when we have more reason to complain of the badness of our own hearts (if men's hearts were better, the times would mend) and when we have more reason to be thankful that they are not worse, but that even in the worst of times we enjoy many mercies, which help to make them not only tolerable, but comfortable. (2.) It is folly to cry up the goodness of former times, so as to derogate from the mercy of God to us in our own times; as if former ages had not the same things to complain of that we have, or if perhaps, in some respects, they had not, yet as if God had been unjust and unkind to us in casting our lot in an iron age, compared with the golden ages that went before us; this arises from nothing but fretfulness and discontent, and an aptness to pick

quarrels with God himself. We are not to think there is any universal decay in nature, or degeneracy in morals. God has been always good, and men always bad; and if, in some respects, the times are now worse than they have been, perhaps in other respects they are better.

11 Wisdom is good with an inheritance: and *by it there is profit* to them that see the sun. 12 For wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence: but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it. 13 Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight, which he hath made crooked? 14 In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him. 15 All things have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that longeth his life in his wickedness. 16 Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself? 17 Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time? 18 It is good that thou shouldest take hold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all. 19 Wisdom strengtheneth the wise more than ten mighty men which are in the city. 20 For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not. 21 Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken; lest thou hear thy servant curse thee: 22 For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others.

Solomon, in these verses, recommends wisdom to us as the best antidote against those distempers of mind which we are liable to, by reason of the vanity and vexation of spirit that there are in the things of this world. Here are some of the praises and the precepts of wisdom.

I. The praises of wisdom. Many things are here said in its commendation, to engage us to get and retain wisdom. 1. Wisdom is necessary to the right managing and improving of our worldly possessions: *Wisdom is good with an inheritance*, that is, an inheritance

is good for little without wisdom. Though a man have a great estate, though it come easily to him, by descent from his ancestors, if he have not wisdom to use it for the end for which he has it, he had better have been without it. Wisdom is not only good for the poor, to make them content and easy, but it is good for the rich too, good with riches to keep a man from getting hurt by them, and to enable a man to do good with them. *Wisdom is good of itself*, and makes a man useful; but, if he have a good estate with it, that will put him into a greater capacity of being useful, and with his wealth he may be more serviceable to his generation than he could have been without it; he will also *make friends to himself*, Luke xvi. 9. *Wisdom is as good as an inheritance*, yea, better too (so the margin reads it); it is more our own, more our honour, will make us greater blessings, will remain longer with us, and turn to a better account. 2. It is a great advantage to us throughout the whole course of our passage through this world. *By it there is real profit to those that see the sun*, both to those that have it and to their contemporaries. It is pleasant to see the sun (ch. xi. 7), but that pleasure is not comparable to the pleasure of wisdom. The light of this world is an advantage to us in doing the business of this world (John xi. 9); but to those that have that advantage, unless with it they have wisdom wherewith to manage their business, that advantage is worth little to them. The clearness of the eye of the understanding is of greater use to us than bodily eye-sight. 3. It contributes much more to our safety, and is a shelter to us from the storms of trouble and its scorching heat; *it is a shadow* (so the word is), *as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land*. *Wisdom is a defence*, and money (that is, as money) is a defence. As a rich man makes his wealth so a wise man makes his wisdom, a strong city. *In the shadow of wisdom* (so the word run) *and in the shadow of money* there is safety. He puts wisdom and money together, to confirm what he had said before, that *wisdom is good with an inheritance*. Wisdom is as a wall, and money may serve as a thorn hedge which protects the field. 4. It is joy and true happiness to a man. This is the excellency of knowledge, divine knowledge, not only above money, but above wisdom too. *human wisdom, the wisdom of this world*, that it gives life to those that have it. *The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom*, and that is life; it prolongs life. Men's wealth exposes their lives, but their wisdom protects them. Nay, whereas wealth will not lengthen out the natural life, true wisdom will give spiritual life, the earnest of eternal life; so much better is it to get wisdom than gold. 5. It will put strength into a man, and be his stay and support (v. 19): *Wisdom strengthens the wise*, strengthens their spirits, and makes them bold and resolute, by keeping them always

sure grounds. It strengthens their interest, and gains them friends and reputation. It strengthens them for their services under their sufferings, and against the attacks that are made upon them, *more than ten mighty men*, great commanders, strengthen *the city*. Those that are truly wise and good are taken under God's protection, and are safer there than if ten of the mightiest men in the city, men of the greatest power and interest, should undertake to secure them, and become their patrons.

II. Some of the precepts of wisdom, that is wisdom which will be of so much advantage to us.

1. We must have an eye to God and to his will in every thing that befalls us (*v. 13*): *consider the work of God*. To silence our complaints concerning cross events, let us consider the hand of God in them and not open our mouths against that which is his doing; let us look upon the disposal of our condition and all the circumstances of it as *the work of God*, and consider it as the product of his eternal counsel, which is fulfilled in every thing that befalls us. Consider that every work of God is wise, just, and good, and there is an admirable beauty and harmony in his works, and all will appear at last to have been for the best. Let us therefore give him the glory of all his works concerning us, and study to answer his designs in them. *Consider the work of God* as that which we cannot make any alteration of. *Who can make that straight which he has made crooked?* Who can change the nature of things from what is settled by the God of nature? If he speak trouble, who can make peace? And, if he hedge up the way with thorns, who can get reward? If desolating judgments go forth with commission, who can put a stop to them? Since therefore we cannot mend God's work, we ought to make the best of it.

2. We must accommodate ourselves to the various dispensations of Providence that respect us, and do the work and duty of the day in its day, *v. 14*. Observe, (1.) How the appointments and events of Providence are uninterchanged. In this world, at the same time, some are in prosperity, others are in adversity; the same persons at one time are in great prosperity, at another time in great adversity; nay, one event prosperous, and another grievous, may occur to the same person at the same time. Both come from the hand of God; *out of his mouth both evil and good proceed* (*Isa. xiv. 7*), and *he has set the one over against the other*, so that there is a very short and easy passage between them, and they are a foil to each other. Day and night, summer and winter, are set *the one over against the other*, that in prosperity we may rejoice *as though we rejoiced not*, and in adversity may weep *as though we wept not*, for we may plainly see the one from the other and quickly exchange the one for the other; and it is *to the end that man may find nothing*

after him, that he may not be at any certainty concerning future events or the continuance of the present scene, but may live in a dependence upon Providence and be ready for whatever happens. Or that man may find nothing in the work of God which he can pretend to amend. (2.) How we must comply with the will of God in events of both kinds. Our religion, in general, must be the same in all conditions, but the particular instances and exercises of it must vary, as our outward condition does, that we may *walk after the Lord*. [1.] *In a day of prosperity* (and it is but a day) we must *be joyful*, be in good, be doing good, and getting good, maintain a holy cheerfulness, and *serve the Lord with gladness of heart in the abundance of all things*. "When the world smiles, rejoice in God and praise him, and let the joy of the Lord be thy strength." [2.] *In a day of adversity* (and that is but a day too) *consider*. Times of affliction are proper times for consideration, then God calls to *consider* (*Hag. i. 5*), then, if ever, we are disposed to it, and no good will be gotten by the affliction without it. We cannot answer God's end in afflicting us unless we consider why and wherefore he contends with us. And consideration is necessary also to our comfort and support under our afflictions.

3. We must not be offended at the greatest prosperity of wicked people, nor at the saddest calamities that may befall the godly in this life, *v. 15*. Wisdom will teach us how to construe those dark chapters of Providence so as to reconcile them with the wisdom, holiness, goodness, and faithfulness of God. We must not think it strange; Solomon tells us there were instances of this kind in his time: *All things have I seen in the days of my vanity*; I have taken notice of all that passed, and this has been as surprising and perplexing to me as any thing." Observe, Though Solomon was so wise and great a man, yet he calls the days of his life *the days of his vanity*, for the best days on earth are so, in comparison with the days of eternity. Or perhaps he refers to the days of his apostasy from God (those were indeed the days of his vanity) and reflects upon this as one thing that tempted him to infidelity, or at least to indifference in religion, that he saw *just men perishing in their righteousness*, that the greatest piety would not secure men from the greatest afflictions by the hand of God, nay, and sometimes did expose men to the greatest injuries from the hands of wicked and unreasonable men. Naboth perished in his righteousness, and Abel long before. He had also seen wicked men prolonging their lives in their wickedness; *they live, become old, yea, are mighty in power* (*Job xxi. 7*), yea, and by their fraud and violence they screen themselves from the sword of justice. "Now, in this, consider the work of God, and let it not be a stumbling-block to thee." The calamities of the righteous are preparing them for their future blessedness, and the wicked, while their

days are prolonged, are but ripening for ruin. There is a judgment to come, which will rectify this seeming irregularity, to the glory of God and the full satisfaction of all his people, and we must wait with patience till then.

4. Wisdom will be of use both for caution to saints in their way, and for a check to sinners in their way. (1.) As to saints, it will engage them to proceed and persevere in their righteousness, and yet will be an admonition to them to take heed of running into extremes: *A just man may perish in his righteousness*, but let him not, by his own imprudence and rash zeal, pull trouble upon his own head, and then reflect upon Providence as dealing hardly with him. "*Be not righteous overmuch*, v. 16. In the acts of righteousness govern thyself by the rules of prudence, and be not transported, no, not by a zeal for God, into any intemperate heats or passions, or any practices unbecoming thy character or dangerous to thy interests." Note, There may be over-doing in well-doing. Self-denial and mortification of the flesh are good; but if we prejudice our health by them, and unfit ourselves for the service of God, we are *righteous overmuch*. To reprove those that offend is good, but to cast that pearl before swine, who will turn again and rend us, is to be *righteous overmuch*. "*Make not thyself over-wise*. Be not opinionative, and conceited of thy own abilities. Set not up for a dictator, nor pretend to give law to, and give judgment upon, all about thee. Set not up for a critic, to find fault with every thing that is said and done, nor busy thyself in other men's matters, as if thou knewest every thing and couldst do any thing. *Why shouldst thou destroy thyself*, as fools often do by meddling with strife that belongs not to them? *Why shouldst thou provoke authority*, and run thyself into the briers, by needless contradictions, and by going out of thy sphere to correct what is amiss? *Be wise as serpents*; beware of men." (2.) As to sinners, if it cannot prevail with them to forsake their sins, yet it may restrain them from growing very exorbitant. It is true *there is a wicked man that prolongs his life in his wickedness* (v. 15); but let none say that therefore they may safely be as wicked as they will; no, *be not overmuch wicked* (v. 17); do not run to an excess of riot. Many that will not be wrought upon by the fear of God, and a dread of the torments of hell, to avoid all sin, will yet, if they have ever so little consideration, avoid those sins that ruin their health and estate, and expose them to public justice. And Solomon here makes use of these considerations. "*The magistrate bears not the sword in vain*, has a quick eye and a heavy hand, and is a *terror to evil-doers*; therefore be afraid of coming within his reach, be not so foolish as to lay thyself open to the law, *why shouldst thou die before thy time*?" Solomon, in these two cautions, had probably a special

regard to some of his own subjects that were disaffected to his government and were imitating the revolt which they made immediately after his death. Some, it may be, quarrelled with the sins of their government and made them their pretence; to them he says, *Be not righteous overmuch*. Others were weary of the strictness of the government and the temple-service, and that made them desirous to set up another king; but he frightens both from their seditious practices with the sword of justice, and others likewise from meddling with those that were given to change.

5. Wisdom will direct us in the mean between two extremes, and keep us always in the way of our duty, which we shall find plain and safe way (v. 18): "*It is good to thee, thou shouldst take hold of this*, this wisdom is this care, not to run thyself into snares. *Yea, also from this withdraw not thy hand*; never slacken thy diligence, nor abate thy resolution to maintain a due decorum, and a good government of thyself. Take hold of the bridle by which thy head-strong passions may be held in from hurrying thee into one mischief or other, as *the horse and mule that have no understanding*; and, having taken hold of it, keep thy hold, and withdraw not thy hand from it, for, if thou do, the liberty that thy will take will be as the letting forth of water, and thou wilt not easily recover thy hold again. Be conscientious, and yet be cautious and to this exercise thyself. Govern thyself steadily by the principles of religion, and thou shalt find that *he that fears God shall come forth out of all those straits and difficulties* which those run themselves into that cast off that fear." *The fear of the Lord* is that wisdom which will serve as a clue to extricate us out of the most intricate labyrinth. *Honesty is the best policy*. Those that truly fear God have but one end to serve, and therefore act steadily. God has likewise promised to direct those that fear him, and to order their steps not only in the right way, but out of every dangerous way, Ps. xxxi. 23, 24.

6. Wisdom will teach us how to conduct ourselves in reference to the sins and offences of others, which commonly contribute more than any thing else to the disturbance of repose, which contract both guilt and grief. (1.) Wisdom teaches us not to expect that those we deal with should be faultless; we ourselves are not so, none are so, no, not the best. This *wisdom strengthens the wise* as much as any thing, and arms them against the danger that arises from provocation (v. 19), so that they are not put into any disorder by it. They consider that those that have dealings and conversation with are not incarnate angels, but sinful sons and daughters of Adam: even the best are so, insomuch that *there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not*, v. 20. Solomon had this in his prayer (1 Kings viii. 46),

s proverbs (Prov. xx. 9), and here in his teaching. Note, [1.] It is the character of the best men that they *do good*; for the tree is known by its fruits. [2.] The best men, and those that do most good, yet cannot say that they are perfectly free from sin; even those that are sanctified are not sinless. None that are on this side heaven live without sin. *If I say, We have not sinned, we deceive ourselves.* [3.] We sin even in our doing good; there is something defective, nay, something offensive, in our best performances. That which, for the substance of it, is good, and pleasing to God, is not so well done as it could be, and omissions in duty are sins, as all are omissions of duty. [4.] It is only the best men upon earth that are subject thus to weakness and infirmity; *the spirits of just men, when they have got clear of the body, are made perfect in holiness* (Heb. xii. 23), and in heaven they *do good and sin not*.

[2.] Wisdom teaches us not to be quick-tempered, or quickscented, in apprehending and resenting affronts, but to wink at many of the injuries that are done us, and act as if we did not see them (v. 21): "*Take no heed of all words that are spoken; set not thy heart to them. Vex not thyself at men's foolish reflections upon thee, or suspicions of thee, but be as a deaf man that hears not,*" xxxviii. 13, 14. Be not solicitous or inquisitive to know what people say of thee; if thou speak well of thee, it will feed thy pride, and if ill, it will stir up thy passion. See therefore that thou approve thyself to God and thy own conscience, and then heed not what men say of thee. *Hearkeners, we say, seldom heed of themselves*; if thou heed every word that is spoken, perhaps *thou wilt hear thy own vanity curse thee* when he thinks thou dost not hear him; thou wilt be told that he does, and perhaps told falsely, if thou have thy ears open to tale-bearers, Prov. xxix. 12. Nay, perhaps it is true, and thou mayest stand behind the curtain and hear it thyself, mayest hear thyself not only blamed and despised, but cursed, the worst evil said of thee and charged to thee, and that by a servant, one of the meanest rank, of the abjects, nay, by thy own servant, who should be an advocate for thee, and protect thy good name as well as thy other interests. Perhaps it is a servant thou hast been kind to, and yet he requites thee thus ill, and this will vex thee; thou wilt better not have heard it. Perhaps it is thy own servant thou hast wronged and dealt untruly with, and, though he dares not tell thee he tells others so, and tells God so, and in thy own conscience will join with him in the reproach, which will make it much more uneasy." The good names of the great lie much at the mercy even of the meanest.

And perhaps there is a great deal more said of us than we think there is, and by some from whom we little expected it. But do not consult our own repose, no, nor our credit, though we pretend to be jealous

of it, if we take notice of every word that is spoken diminishingly of us; it is easier to pass by twenty such affronts than to avenge one.

[3.] Wisdom puts us in mind of our own faults (v. 22): "Be not enraged at those that speak ill of thee, or wish ill to thee, *for oftentimes, in that case, if thou retire into thyself, thy own conscience will tell thee that thou thyself hast cursed others*, spoken ill of them and wished ill to them, and thou art paid in thy own coin." Note, When any affront or injury is done us it is reasonable to examine our consciences whether we have not done the same, or as bad, to others; and if, upon reflection, we find we have, we must take that occasion to renew our repentance for it, must justify God, and make use of it to qualify our own resentments. If we be truly angry with ourselves, as we ought to be, for backbiting and censuring others, we shall be the less angry with others for backbiting and censuring us. We must show all meekness towards all men, for we ourselves were sometimes foolish, Tit. iii. 2, 3; Matt. vii. 1, 2; James iii. 1, 2.

23 All this have I proved by wisdom: I said, I will be wise; but it was far from me. 24 That which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out? 25 I applied mine heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things, and to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness: 26 And I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her. 27 Behold, this have I found, saith the preacher, *counting* one by one, to find out the account: 28 Which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not: one man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found. 29 Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.

Solomon had hitherto been proving the vanity of the world and its utter insufficiency to make men happy; now here he comes to show the vileness of sin, and its certain tendency to make men miserable; and this, as the former, he proves from his own experience, and it was a dear-bought experience. He is here, more than any where in all this book, putting on the habit of a penitent. He reviews what he had been discoursing of already, and tells us that what he had said was what he knew and was well assured of, and

what he resolved to stand by: *All this have I proved by wisdom, v. 23.* Now here,

I. He owns and laments the deficiencies of his wisdom. He had wisdom enough to see the vanity of the world and to experience that that would not make a portion for a soul. But, when he came to enquire further, he found himself at a loss; his eye was too dim, his line was too short, and, though he discovered this, there were many other things which he could not prove by wisdom.

1. His searches were industrious. God had given him a capacity for knowledge above any; he set up with a great stock of wisdom; he had the largest opportunities of improving himself that ever any man had; and, (1.) He resolved, if it were possible, to gain his point: *I said, I will be wise.* He earnestly desired it as highly valuable; he fully designed it as that which he looked upon to be attainable; he determined not to sit down short of it, Prov. xviii. 1. Many are not wise because they never said they would be so, being indifferent to it; but Solomon set it up for the mark he aimed at. When he made trial of sensual pleasures, he still thought to *acquaint his heart with wisdom* (ch. ii. 3), and not to be diverted from the pursuits of that; but perhaps he did not find it so easy a thing as he imagined to keep up his correspondence with wisdom, while he addicted himself so much to his pleasures. However, his will was good; he said, *I will be wise.* And that was not all: (2.) He resolved to spare no pains (v. 25): *"I applied my heart; I and my heart turned every way; I left no stone unturned, no means untried, to compass what I had in view. I set myself to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, to accomplish myself in all useful learning, philosophy, and divinity."* If he had not thus closely applied himself to study, it would have been but a jest for him to say, *I will be wise*, for those that will attain the end must take the right way. Solomon was a man of great quickness, and yet, instead of using that (with many) as an excuse for slothfulness, he pressed it upon himself as an inducement to diligence, and the easier he found it to master a good notion the more intent he would be that he might be master of the more good notions. Those that have the best parts should take the greatest pains, as those that have the largest stock should trade most. He applied himself not only to know what lay on the surface, but to search what lay hidden out of the common view and road; nor did he search a little way, and then give it over because he did not presently find what he searched for, but he *sought it out*, went to the bottom of it; nor did he aim to know things only, but the reasons of things, that he might give an account of them.

2. Yet his success was not answerable or satisfying: *"I said, I will be wise, but it was far from me; I could not compass it. After all, This only I know that I know nothing, and the more I know the more I see there is to*

be known, and the more sensible I am of my own ignorance. *That which is far off, exceedingly deep, who can find it out?*" means God himself, his counsels and works; when he searched into these he presently found himself puzzled and runaground. *He could not order his speech by reason of darkness. It is higher than heaven, who he do?* Job xi. 8. Blessed be God, that nothing which we have to do which is plain and easy; *the word is nigh us* (Ps. viii. 9); but there is a great deal which would wish to know which is *far off, and exceedingly deep*, among the secret things which belong not to us. And probably it is a palpable ignorance and error that Solomon bemoans, that his pleasures, and the mirth and amusements of his court, had blinded his eyes and cast a mist before them, so that he could not attain to true wisdom as he signed.

II. He owns and laments the instances of his folly in which he had exceeded, as, in wisdom, he came short. Here is,

1. His enquiry concerning the evil of folly. *He applied his heart to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness.* Observe, (1.) The knowledge of sin is a difficult knowledge, and hard to be attained. Solomon took pains for it. Sin has many disguises with which it palliates itself, as being loth to appear sin, and it is very hard to strip it of these and to see it in its true nature and colours. (2.) It is necessary to repentance for sin that we be acquainted with the evil of it, as it is necessary to the cure of a disease to know its nature, causes, and malignity. St. Paul therefore valued the divine law, because it discovered sin to him, Rom. vii. 7. Solomon, who, in the days of his folly, had set his wits on work to invent pleasures and sharpen them, and was ingenious in making provision for the flesh, now that God had opened his eyes is as industrious to find out the aggravations of sin and so to lay an edge upon his repentance. Ingenious men should be ingenious penitents, and, in study and learning, among the other spoils of a *strong man armed*, should be divided by Lord Jesus. (3.) It well becomes penitents to say the worst they can of sin, for the more we can never speak ill enough of it. Solomon here, for his further humiliation, desired to see more, [1.] Of the sinfulness of sin; that is it which he lays the greatest stress upon in this inquiry, *to know the wickedness of folly*, by which perhaps he meant his own iniquity, the sin of uncleanness, that was commonly called *folly* in Israel. Gen. xxiv. 7; Deut. xxii. 21; Judg. xxi. 2 Sam. xiii. 12. When he indulged himself in it, he made a light matter of it; but now he desires to see the *wickedness* of it, its great *wickedness*, so Joseph speaks of it, Gen. xxxix. 9. Or it may be taken there generally, of all sin. Many extenuate their sins with trifles. They were *folly*; but Solomon sees *wickedness*.

in those follies, an offence to God and wrong to conscience. *This is wickedness*, r. iv. 18; Zech. v. 8. [2.] Of the folly of sin; as there is a wickedness in folly, so there is a folly in wickedness, even foolishness and madness. Wilful sinners are fools and madmen; they act contrary both to right reason and to their true interest.

2. The result of this enquiry.

1.) He now discovered more than ever of the evil of that great sin which he himself had been guilty of, the *loving of many strange men*, 1 Kings xi. 1. This is that which he here most feelingly laments, and in very pathetic expressions. [1.] He found the remembrance of the sin very grievous. O how evilly did it lie upon his conscience! what agony was he in upon the thought of it—wickedness, the foolishness, the madness, that he had been guilty of! *I find it more bitter than death*. As great a terror seized him, in reflection upon it, as if he had been under the arrest of death. Thus do those who have their sins set in order before them, a sound conviction cry out against them; they are bitter as gall, nay, bitter as death, all true penitents. Uncleanliness is a sin that is, in its own nature, more pernicious than death itself. Death may be made honorable and comfortable, but this sin can be no other than shame and pain, Prov. v.

1. [2.] He had found the temptation to sin very dangerous, and that it was extremely difficult, and next to impossible, for one that ventured into the temptation to escape the sin, and for those that had fallen into the sin to recover themselves by repentance. The heart of the adulterous woman is *tricks and nets*; she plays her game to ruin all with as much art and subtlety as ever a Fowler used to take a silly bird. The methods such sinners use are both deceiving and destroying, as snares and nets are. The many souls are enticed into them by the prospect of pleasure, which they greedily catch and promise themselves satisfaction in; but they are taken before they are aware, and taken irrecoverably. Her hands are as snares, with which, under colour of fond embraces, she holds those fast that she has seduced; they are *held in the cords of their own* Prov. v. 22. Lust gets strength by being gratified and its charms are more prevalent.

[3.] He reckoned it a great instance of God's favour to any man if by his grace he kept him from this sin: *He that pleases his Lord shall escape from her*, shall be preserved from being tempted to this sin or from being overcome by the temptation. Those who are kept from this sin must acknowledge God that keeps them, and not any strength or resolution of their own, must acknowledge it a great mercy; and those that could have grace sufficient for them to arm against this sin must be careful to please God in every thing, by keeping his ordinances, Lev. xviii. 30. [4.] He reckoned it a

sin that is as sore a punishment of other sins as a man can fall under in this life: *The sinner shall be taken by her*. First, Those that allow themselves in other sins, by which their minds are blinded and their consciences debauched, are the more easily drawn to this. Secondly, It is just with God to leave them to themselves to fall into it. See Rom. i. 26, 28; Eph. iv. 18, 19. Thus does Solomon, as it were, with horror, bless himself from the sin in which he had plunged himself.

(2.) He now discovered more than ever of the general corruption of man's nature. He traces up that stream to the fountain, as his father had done before him, on a like occasion (Ps. li. 5): *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity*. [1.] He endeavoured to find out the number of his actual transgressions (v. 27): *"Behold, thus have I found, that is, this I hoped to find; I thought I could have understood my errors and have brought in a complete list, at least, of the heads of them; I thought I could have counted them one by one, and have found out the account."* He desired to find them out as a penitent, that he might the more particularly acknowledge them; and, generally, the more particular we are in the confession of sin the more comfort we have in the sense of the pardon; he desired it also as a preacher, that he might the more particularly give warning to others. Note, A sound conviction of one sin will put us upon enquiring into the whole confederacy; and the more we see amiss in ourselves the more diligently we should enquire further into our own faults, that what we see not may be discovered to us, Job xxxiv. 32.

[2.] He soon found himself at a loss, and perceived that they were innumerable (v. 28): *"Which yet my soul seeks; I am still counting, and still desirous to find out the account, but I find not, I cannot count them all, nor find out the account of them to perfection. I still make new and amazing discoveries of the desperate wickedness that there is in my own heart,"* Jer. xvii. 9, 10. *Who can know it? Who can understand his errors? Who can tell how often he offends?* Ps. xix. 12. He finds that if God enters into judgment with him, or he with himself, for all his thoughts, words, and actions, he is not able to answer for one of a thousand, Job ix. 3. This he illustrates by comparing the corruption of his own heart and life with the corruption of the world, where he scarcely found one good man among a thousand; nay, among all the thousand wives and concubines which he had, he did not find one good woman. "Even so," says he, "when I come to recollect and review my own thoughts, words, and actions, and all the passages of my life past, perhaps among those that were mainly I might find one good among a thousand, and that was all; the rest even of those had some corruption or other in them." He found (v. 20) that he had sinned even in doing good. But for those that were effemi-

nate, that passed in the indulgence of his pleasures, they were all naught; in that part of his life there did not appear so much as one of a thousand good. In our hearts and lives there appears little good, at the best, but sometimes none at all. Doubtless this is not intended as a censure of the female sex in general; it is probable that there have been and are more good women than good men (Acts xvii. 4, 12); he merely alludes to his own sad experience. And perhaps there may be this further in it: he does, in his proverbs, warn us against the snares both of the *evil man* and of the *strange woman* (Prov. ii. 12, 16; iv. 14; v. 3); now he had observed the ways of the *evil women* to be more deceitful and dangerous than those of the *evil men*, that it was more difficult to discover their frauds and elude their snares, and therefore he compares sin to an adulteress (Prov. ix, 13), and perceives he can no more find out the deceitfulness of his own heart than he can that of a strange woman, whose ways are movable, that thou canst not know them. [3.] He therefore runs up all the streams of actual transgression to the fountain of original corruption. The source of all the folly and madness that are in the world is in man's apostasy from God and his degeneracy from his primitive rectitude (v. 29): "*Lo, this only have I found*; when I could not find out the particulars, yet the gross account was manifest enough; it is as clear as the sun that man is corrupted and revolted, and is not as he was made." Observe, *First*, How man was made by the wisdom and goodness of God: *God made man upright*; *Adam the first man*, so the Chaldee. God made him, and he made him *upright*, such a one as he should be; being made a rational creature, he was, in all respects, such a one as a rational creature should be, *upright*, without any irregularity; one could find no fault in him; he was *upright*, that is, determined to God only, in opposition to the *many inventions* which he afterwards turned aside to. Man, as he came out of God's hands, was (as we may say) a little picture of his Maker, who is *good and upright*. *Secondly*, How he was marred, and in effect unmade, by his own folly and badness: *They have sought out many inventions*—they, our first parents, or the whole race, all in general and every one in particular. *They have sought out great inventions* (so some), inventions to become great as gods (Gen. iii. 5), or *the inventions of the great ones* (so some), of the angels that fell, the *Magnates*, or *many inventions*. Man, instead of resting in what God had found for him, was for seeking to better himself, like the prodigal that left his father's house to seek his fortune. Instead of being for one, he was for many; instead of being for God's institutions, he was for his own inventions. The law of his creation would not hold him, but he would be at his own disposal and follow his own sentiments

and inclinations. *Vain man would be wiser than his Maker*; he is giddy and settled in his pursuits, and therefore has *many inventions*. Those that forsake God wander endlessly. Men's actual transgressions multiplied. Solomon could not find out how many they are (v. 28); but he found they were *very many*. Many kinds of sins, those often repeated. *They are more than the hairs on our heads*, Ps. xl. 12.

CHAP. VIII.

Solomon, in this chapter, comes to recommend wisdom to be the most powerful antidote against both the temptations and vexations that arise from the vanity of the world. Here the hearken and praise of wisdom, ver. 1. II. Some particular instances of wisdom prescribed to us. 1. We must keep in subjection to the government God has set over us, ver. 2-5. We must get ready for sudden evils, and especially for sudden death, ver. 6-8. 2. We must arm ourselves against the temptation of an oppressive government and not think it strange, ver. 9, 10. The impunity of oppressors makes them more daring, ver. 11, but in the issue it will be well with the righteous as with the wicked (ver. 12, 13), and therefore the present prospect of the wicked and afflictions of the righteous ought not to be a stumbling-block to us, ver. 14. 4. We must cheerfully use gifts of God's providence, ver. 15. 5. We must with a satisfaction acquiesce in the will of God, and not pretend to find the bottom, we must humbly and silently adore the deep of his unsearchable counsels, being assured they are all wise, and good, ver. 16, 17.

WHO is as the wise man? a man who knoweth the interpretation of a thing? a man's wisdom makes his face to shine, and the brightness of his face shall be changed. I counsel thee to keep the king's commandment, and that in regard to the oath of God. 3 Be not hasty to come out of his sight: stand not in an evil thing; for he doeth whatsoever pleases him. 4 Where the word of a king is, there is power: and who may say unto him, What doest thou? 5 Who keepeth the commandment shall find no evil thing: and a wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment.

Here is, I. An encomium of wisdom (v. 1-5), that is, of true piety, guided in all its exercises by prudence and discretion. The wise man is the good man, that knows God glorifies him, knows himself and does well for himself; his wisdom is a great happiness to him, for, 1. It advances him above his neighbours, and makes him more excellent than they: *Who is as the wise man?* No earthly wisdom will make a man an incomparable man. No man without grace, though he be learned, or noble, or rich, is to be compared with a man that has true grace and is therefore accepted of God. 2. It makes him useful among his neighbours, very serviceable to them: *Who but the wise man knows the interpretation of a thing,* that is, understands the times and the events of them, and their critical junctures, so as to direct what Israel ought to do, 1 Chron. xii. 3. It beautifies a man in the eyes of his friends: *It makes his face to shine*, as Moses did when he came down from the mount, and puts honour upon a man and a lustre on

whole conversation, makes him to be regarded and taken notice of, and gains him respect (as Job xxix. 7, &c.); it makes him lovely and amiable, and the darling and blessing of his country. *The strength of his face*, the sourness and severity of his countenance (so some understand the last clause), *shall be changed* by it into that which is sweet and obliging. Even those whose natural temper is rough and morose by wisdom are strangely altered; they become mild and gentle, and learn to look pleasant. 4. It emboldens a man against his adversaries, their tempts and their scorn: *The boldness of his face shall be doubled by wisdom*; it will add very much to his courage in maintaining his integrity when he not only has an honest use to plead, but by his wisdom knows how to manage it and where to find the interpretation of a thing. *He shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with his enemy in the gate.*

II. A particular instance of wisdom pressed upon us, and that is subjection to authority, and a dutiful and peaceable perseverance in our allegiance to the government which Providence has set over us. Observe,

1. How the duty of subjects is here described. (1.) We must be observant of the laws. In all those things wherein the civil power is to interpose, whether legislative or judicial, we ought to submit to its order and institutions: *I counsel thee*; it may as well be supplied, *I charge thee*, not only as a prince but as a preacher: he might do both; I recommend it to thee as a piece of wisdom; I say, whatever those say that are given to change, *keep the king's commandment*; wherever the sovereign power is lodged, be subject to it. *Observe the mouth of a king* (so the phrase is); "say as he says; as he bids thee; let his word be a law, or rather let the law be his word." Some understand the following clause as a limitation to this obedience: "*Keep the king's commandment*, yet so as to have a regard to the oath of God, that is, so as to keep a good conscience and not to violate thy obligations to God, which are prior and superior to thy obligations to the king. *Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's*, but so as to reserve and entire to God the things that are his." (2.) We must not be forward to find fault with the public administration, or quarrel with every thing that is not just according to our mind, nor quit our post of service under the government, and throw it up, upon every discontent (v. 3): "*Be not hasty to go out of his sight*, when he is displeased at thee (v. x. 4), or when thou art displeased at him; not off in a passion, nor entertain such jealousies of him as will tempt thee to renounce the court or forsake the kingdom." Solomon's subjects, as soon as his head was laid low, went directly contrary to this rule, when, upon the rough answer which Rehoboam gave them, they were *hasty to go out*

of his sight, would not take time for second thoughts nor admit proposals of accommodation, but cried, *To your tents, O Israel!* "There may perhaps be a just cause to go out of his sight; but be not hasty to do it; act with great deliberation." (3.) We must not persist in a fault when it is shown us: "*Stand not in an evil thing*; in any offence thou hast given to thy prince humble thyself, and do not justify thyself, for that will make the offence much more offensive. In any ill design thou hast, upon some discontent, conceived against thy prince, do not proceed in it; but *if thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or hast thought evil, lay thy hand upon thy mouth*," Prov. xxx. 32. Note, Though we may by surprise be drawn into an evil thing, yet we must not stand in it, but recede from it as soon as it appears to us to be evil. (4.) We must prudently accommodate ourselves to our opportunities, both for our own relief, if we think ourselves wronged, and for the redress of public grievances: *A wise man's heart discerns both time and judgment* (v. 5); it is the wisdom of subjects, in applying themselves to their princes, to enquire and consider both at what season and in what manner they may do it best and most effectually, to pacify his anger, obtain his favour, or obtain the revocation of any grievous measure prescribed. Esther, in dealing with Ahasuerus, took a deal of pains to discern both time and judgment, and she sped accordingly. This may be taken as a general rule of wisdom, that every thing should be well timed; and our enterprises are then likely to succeed, when we embrace the exact opportunity for them.

2. What arguments are here used to engage us to be subject to the higher powers; they are much the same with those which St. Paul uses, Rom. xiii. 1, &c. (1.) *We must needs be subject, for conscience-sake*, and that is the most powerful principle of subjection. We must be subject because of the oath of God, the oath of allegiance which we have taken to be faithful to the government, the covenant between the king and the people; 2 Chron. xxiii. 16. *David made a covenant, or contract, with the elders of Israel*, though he was king by divine designation, 1 Chron. xi. 3. "*Keep the king's commandments*, for he has sworn to rule thee in the fear of God, and thou hast sworn, in that fear, to be faithful to him." It is called the oath of God because he is a witness to it and will avenge the violation of it. (2.) *For wrath's sake*, because of the sword which the prince bears and the power he is entrusted with, which make him very formidable: *He does whatsoever pleases him*; he has a great authority and a great ability to support that authority (v. 4): *Where the word of a king is giving orders to seize a man, there is power*; there are many that will execute his orders, which makes the wrath of a king, or supreme government, like the roaring of a lion and

like messengers of death. *Who may say unto him, What doest thou?* He that contradicts him does it at his peril. Kings will not bear to have their orders disputed, but expect they should be obeyed. In short, it is dangerous contending with sovereignty, and what many have repented. A subject is an unequal match for a prince. He may command me who has legions at command. (3.) For the sake of our own comfort: *Whoso keeps the commandment, and lives a quiet and peaceable life, shall feel no evil thing*, to which that of the apostle answers (Rom. xiii. 3), *Will thou then not be afraid of the power of the king?* Do that which is good, as becomes a dutiful and loyal subject, and thou shalt ordinarily have praise of the same. He that does no ill shall feel no ill and needs fear none.

6 Because to every purpose there is time and judgment, therefore the misery of man is great upon him. 7 For he knoweth not that which shall be: for who can tell him when it shall be? 8 *There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war; neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it.*

Solomon had said (v. 5) that a wise man's heart discerns time and judgment, that is, a man's wisdom will go a great way, by the blessing of God, in moral prognostications; but here he shows that few have that wisdom, and that even the wisest may yet be surprised by a calamity which they had not any foresight of, and therefore it is our wisdom to expect and prepare for sudden changes. Observe, 1. All the events concerning us, with the exact time of them, are determined and appointed in the counsel and foreknowledge of God, and all in wisdom: *To every purpose there is a time prefixed*, and it is the best time, for it is time and judgment, time appointed both in wisdom and righteousness; the appointment is not chargeable with folly or iniquity. 2. We are very much in the dark concerning future events and the time and season of them: *Man knows not that which shall be himself; and who can tell him when or how it shall be?* v. 7. It cannot either be foreseen by him or foretold him; the stars cannot foretell a man what shall be, nor any of the arts of divination. God has, in wisdom, concealed from us the knowledge of future events, that we may be always ready for changes. 3. It is our great unhappiness and misery that, because we cannot foresee an evil, we know not how to avoid it, or guard against it, and, because we are not aware of the proper successful season of actions, therefore we lose our opportunities and miss our way: *Because to every purpose there is but one way, one method, one proper opportu-*

ity, therefore the misery of man is great upon him; because it is so hard to hit that, and is a thousand to one but he misses it. Most of the miseries men labour under would have been prevented if they could have been foreseen and the happy time discovered to avoid them. Men are miserable because they are not sufficiently sagacious and attentive. Whatever other evils may be avoided, we are all under a fatal necessity of dying, v. 8. When the soul is required it must be resigned, and it is to no purpose to dispute it, either by arms or arguments, by ourselves, or by a friend: *There is no man that has power over his own spirit, to retain it*, when it is summoned to return to God who gave it. It cannot fly any where out of the jurisdiction of death, nor find any place where its writs are not run. It cannot abscond so as to escape death's eye, though it is hidden from the eyes of all living. A man has no power to adjourn the day of his death, nor can he by prayers or bribes obtain a reprieve; no will be taken, no essoine [excuse], protection, or imparlance [conference], allowed. We have not power over the spirit of a friend to retain that; the prince, with all his authority, cannot prolong the life of the most valuable of his subjects, nor the physician with his medicines and methods, nor the soldier with his force, nor the orator with his eloquence, nor the best saint with his intercessions. The stroke of death can by no means be put by when our days are determined at the hour appointed us has come. (2.) Death is an enemy that we must all enter the list with, sooner or later: *There is no discharge in that war*, no dismission from it, either the men of business or of the faint-hearted as there was among the Jews, Deut. xx. 8. While we live we are struggling with death, and we shall never put off the harvest till we put off the body, never obtain a discharge till death has obtained the mastery: the youngest is not released as a fresh-warrior soldier, nor the oldest as *miles emeritus*, a soldier whose merits have entitled him to a discharge. Death is a battle that must be fought: *There is no sending to that war* (so some read it), no substituting another to muster for us; no champion admitted to fight for us; must ourselves engage, and are concerned to provide accordingly, as for a battle. Men's wickedness, by which they often evade or outface the justice of the prince, cannot secure them from the arrest of death, nor the most obstinate sinner harden his heart against those terrors. Though he strengthen himself ever so much in his wickedness (Ecc. lii. 7), death will be too strong for him. The most subtle wickedness cannot outwit death, nor the most impudent wickedness outbrave death. Nay, the wickedness which men glory themselves to will be so far from delivering them from death that it will deliver them to death.

9 All this have I seen, and apply

heart unto every work that is done under the sun: *there is a time wherein one man ruleth over another to his hurt.* 10 And so I saw the wicked tried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy, and they were forgotten in the city where they had done: *this is also vanity.* 11 Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set to them to do evil. 12 Though a sinner do evil a hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him: 13 But they shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong *his* days, *which are* as a shadow; because he reth not before God.

Solomon, in the beginning of the chapter, warned us against having any thing to do with seditious subjects; here, in these verses, he encourages us, in reference to the mischief of tyrannical and oppressive rulers, such as he had complained of before, *ch. iii. iv. 1.*

1. He had observed many such rulers, *v. 1.* In the serious views and reviews he had seen of the children of men and their state he had observed that many a time *one man rules over another to his hurt*; that is, (1.) To the hurt of the ruled (many understand so); whereas they ought to be God's ministers unto their subjects *for their good* (*om. xiii. 14*), to administer justice, and to preserve the public peace and order, they use their power for their hurt, to invade their property, encroach upon their liberty, and to promulgate the acts of injustice. It is sad with people when those that should protect their religion and rights aim at the destruction of them. (2.) To the hurt of the rulers (so we understand it), *to their own hurt*, to the feeling of their pride and covetousness, the gratifying of their passion and revenge, and so to the hastening up of the measure of their sins and hastening and aggravating of their ruin. *Quis agendo repatitur—What hurt men do to others will return, in the end, to their own hurt.*

2. He had observed them to prosper and flourish in the abuse of their power (*v. 10*): *even those wicked rulers come and go from the place of the holy, go in state to and return with pomp from the place of judgment* (which is called *the place of the Holy One* because *the judgment is the Lord's*, Deut. i. 17, and *judges among the gods*, Ps. lxxxii. 1, and *with them in the judgment*, 2 Chron. xix. 17), and they continued all their days in office, and were never reckoned with for their mal-ad-

ministration, but died in honour and were buried magnificently; their commissions were *durante vita—during life*, and not *quamdiu se bene gesserint—during good behaviour*. And they were forgotten in the city where they had so done; their wicked practices were not remembered against them to their reproach and infamy when they were gone. Or, rather, it denotes the vanity of their dignity and power, for that is his remark upon it in the close of the verse: *This is also vanity*. They are proud of their wealth, and power, and honour, because they sit in *the place of the holy*; but all this cannot secure, (1.) Their bodies from being buried in the dust; *I saw* them laid in the grave; and their pomp, though it attended them thither, could not descend after them, Ps. xlix. 17. (2.) Nor their names from being buried in oblivion; for they were forgotten, as if they had never been.

3. He had observed that their prosperity hardened them in their wickedness, *v. 11*. It is true of all sinners in general, and particularly of wicked rulers, that, *because sentence against their evil works is not executed speedily*, they think it will never be executed, and therefore they set the law at defiance and *their hearts are full in them to do evil*; they venture to do so much the more mischief, fetch a greater compass in their wicked designs, and are secure and fearless in it, and commit iniquity with a high hand. Observe, (1.) Sentence is passed against evil works and evil workers by the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, even against the evil works of princes and great men, as well as of inferior persons. (2.) The execution of this sentence is often delayed a great while, and the sinner goes on, not only unpunished, but prosperous and successful. (3.) Impunity hardens sinners in impiety, and the patience of God is shamefully abused by many who, instead of being led by it to repentance, are confirmed by it in their impenitency. (4.) Sinners herein deceive themselves, for, though the sentence be *not executed speedily*, it will be executed the more severely at last. Vengeance comes slowly, but it comes surely, and wrath is in the mean time treasured up against the day of wrath.

4. He foresaw such an end of all these things as would be sufficient to keep us from quarrelling with the divine Providence upon account of them. He supposes a wicked ruler to do an unjust thing *a hundred times*, and that yet his punishment is deferred, and God's patience towards him is *prolonged*, much beyond what was expected, and the days of his power are lengthened out, so that he continues to oppress; yet he intimates that we should not be discouraged. (1.) God's people are certainly a happy people, though they be oppressed: *"It shall be well with those that fear God, I say with all those, and those only, who fear before him."* Note, [1.] It is the character of God's people that they fear God, have an awe of him upon

their hearts and make conscience of their duty to him, and this because they see his eye always upon them and they know it is their concern to approve themselves to him. When they lie at the mercy of proud oppressors they fear God more than they fear them. They do not quarrel with the providence of God, but submit to it. [2.] It is the happiness of *all that fear God*, that in the worst of times *it shall be well with them*; their happiness in God's favour cannot be prejudiced, nor their communion with God interrupted, by their troubles; they are in a good case, for they are kept in a good frame under their troubles, and in the end they shall have a blessed deliverance from and an abundant recompence for their troubles. And therefore "*surely I know*, I know it by the promise of God, and the experience of all the saints, *that*, however it goes with others, *it shall go well with them*." All is well that ends well. (2.) Wicked people are certainly a miserable people; though they prosper, and prevail, for a time, the curse is as sure to them as the blessing is to the righteous: *It shall not be well with the wicked*, as others think it is, who judge by outward appearance, and as they themselves expect it will be; nay, *woe to the wicked*; *it shall be ill with them* (Isa. iii. 10, 11); they shall be reckoned with for all the ill they have done; nothing that befalls them shall be really well for them. *Nihil potest ad malos pervenire quod prosit, imo nihil quod non noceat*—No event can occur to the wicked which will do them good, rather no event which will not do them harm. Seneca. Note, [1.] The wicked man's days are as a shadow, not only uncertain and declining, as all men's days are, but altogether unprofitable. A good man's days have some substance in them; he lives to a good purpose. A wicked man's days are all as a shadow, empty and worthless. [2.] These days shall not be prolonged to what he promised himself; he shall not live out half his days, Ps. lv. 23. Though they may be prolonged (v. 12) beyond what others expected, yet his day shall come to fall. He shall fall short of everlasting life, and then his long life on earth will be worth little. [3.] God's great quarrel with wicked people is for their not fearing before him; that is at the bottom of their wickedness, and cuts them off from all happiness.

14 There is a vanity which is done upon the earth; that there be just *men*, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; again, there be wicked *men*, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous: I said that this also *is* vanity. 15 Then I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry: for that shall

abide with him of his labour the days of his life, which God giveth him under the sun. 16 When I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to see every business that is done upon the earth (for also *there is that* neither day nor night seeth sleep with his eyes:) Then I beheld all the work of (C) that a man cannot find out the value of that is done under the sun: because though a man labour to seek *it* out, yet he shall not find *it*; yea farther, though a wise *man* think to know, yet shall he not be able to find *it*.

Wise and good men have, of old, been perplexed with this difficulty, how the prosperity of the wicked and the troubles of the righteous can be reconciled with the holiness and goodness of the God that governs the world. Concerning this Solomon here gives us advice.

I. He would not have us to be surprised at it, as though some strange thing happened, for he himself saw it in his days, v. 14. He saw *just men to whom it happened according to the work of the wicked*, who, notwithstanding their righteousness, suffered very hard things, and continued long to do so, as if it were to be punished for some great wickedness. 2. He saw *wicked men to whom it happened according to the work of the righteous*, who prospered as remarkably as if they had been rewarded for some good deed, and that from themselves, from God, from men. We see the just troubled and perplexed in their own minds, the wicked easy, fearless, and secure,—the just crossed and afflicted by divine Providence, the wicked prosperous, successful, and smiled upon,—the just, crossed, reproached, and run down, by the higher powers, the wicked applauded and preferred.

II. He would have us to take occasion hence, not to charge God with iniquity, nor to charge the world with vanity. No reason is to be found with God; but, as to the world, *This is vanity upon the earth*, and again, *This is also vanity*, that is, it is a certain evidence that the things of this world are not the things nor were ever designed to make a permanent provision of happiness for us, for, if they had, God would not have allotted so much of the world's wealth to his worst enemies and so much of its troubles to his best friends; there must therefore be another life after this, the joys and griefs of which must be real and substantial, and able to make men truly happy or truly miserable, for this world doth neither.

III. He would have us not to fret and perplex ourselves about it, or make ourselves uneasy, but cheerfully to enjoy what God has given us in the world, to be content with it and make the best of it, though it be but

ter with others, and such as we think very worthy (v. 15): *Then I commended joy, a security and serenity of mind, arising from a confidence in God, and his power, providence, and promise, because a man has better thing under the sun (though a good man has much better things above the sun) than to eat and drink, that is, soberly and thankfully to make use of the things of this world according as his rank is, and to be cheerful, whatever happens, for that shall abide with him of his labour.* That is all the fruit that he has for himself of the pains that he takes in the business of the world; let him therefore take it, and much good may it do him; and let him not deny himself that, out of a foolish discontent because the world does not as he would have it. *That shall abide with him during the days of his life which God gives him under the sun.* Our present life is a life under the sun, but we look for the life of the world to come, which will commence and continue when the sun shall be turned into darkness and shine no more. This present life must be reckoned by days; this life is given us, and the days of it are allotted to us, by the counsel of God, and therefore while it does us good we must accommodate ourselves to the will of God and study to answer the ends of life.

IV. He would not have us undertake to find a reason for that which God does, for his way is in the sea and his path in the great waters, past finding out, and therefore we must be contentedly and piously ignorant of the meaning of God's proceedings in the government of the world, v. 16, 17. Here he shows, 1. That both he himself and many others had very closely studied the point, and searched far into the reasons of the prosperity of the wicked and the afflictions of the righteous. He, for his part, had *applied his heart to know this wisdom, and to see the business that is done*, by the divine Providence, upon the earth, to find out if there were any certain scheme, any constant rule or method; by which the affairs of this lower world were administered, any course of government as sure and steady as the course of nature, so that by what is done now we might as certainly foretell what will be done next as by the moon's rising now we can foretell when it will be full; this he would fain have found out. Others had likewise set themselves to make enquiry with so close an application that they could not find time for sleep, either day or night, nor find in their hearts to sleep, so full of anxiety were they about these things. We think Solomon speaks of himself, that was so eager in prosecuting this great enquiry that he could not sleep for thinking of it.

2. That it was all labour in vain, v. 17. When we look upon all the works of God and his providence, and compare one part with another, we cannot find that there is any such certain method by which the work that is done under the sun is directed; we cannot discover

any key by which to decypher the character, nor by consulting precedents can we know the practice of this court, nor what the judgment will be. [1.] *Though a man be ever so industrious, though he labour to seek it out.* [2.] *Though he be ever so ingenious, though he be a wise man in other things, and can fathom the counsels of kings themselves and trace them by their footsteps.* Nay, [3.] *Though he be very confident of success, though he think to know it, yet he shall not; he cannot find it out.* God's ways are above ours, nor is he tied to his own former ways, but his judgments are a great deep.

CHAP. IX.

Solomon, in this chapter, for a further proof of the vanity of this world, gives us four observations which he had made upon a survey of the state of the children of men in it:—1. He observed that commonly, as to outward things, good and bad men fare much alike, ver. 1–3. 2. That death puts a final period to all our employments and enjoyments in this world (ver. 4–6), whence he infers that it is our wisdom to enjoy the comforts of life and mind the business of life, while it lasts, ver. 7–10. 3. That God's providence often crosses the fairest and most hopeful probabilities of men's endeavour, and great calamities often surprise men ere they are aware, ver. 11, 12. 4. That wisdom often makes men very useful, and yet gains them little respect, for that persons of great merit are slighted, ver. 13–15. And what is there then in this world that should make us fond of it?

FOR all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God: no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them. 2 All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath. 3 This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead.

It has been observed concerning those who have pretended to search for the philosophers' stone that, though they could never find what they sought for, yet in the search they have hit upon many other useful discoveries and experiments. Thus Solomon, when, in the close of the foregoing chapter, he *applied his heart to know the work of God*, and took a great deal of pains to search into it, though he despaired of finding it out, yet he found out that which abundantly recompensed him for the search, and gave him some satisfaction, which he here gives us; for therefore he *considered all this in his heart*, and weighed it deliberately, that he might declare it for the good of others. Note, What we are to declare we should first consider; think twice before we speak once; and what we have con-

sidered we should then declare *I believed, therefore have I spoken.*

The great difficulty which Solomon met with in studying the book of providence was the little difference that is made between good men and bad in the distribution of comforts and crosses, and the disposal of events. This has perplexed the minds of many wise and contemplative men. Solomon discourses of it in these verses, and, though he does not undertake to find out this *work of God*, yet he says that which may prevent its being a stumbling-block to us.

I. Before he describes the temptation in its strength he lays down a great and unquestionable truth, which he resolves to adhere to, and which, if firmly believed, will be sufficient to break the force of the temptation. This has been the way of God's people in grappling with this difficulty. Job, before he discourses of this matter, lays down the doctrine of God's omniscience (Job xxiv. 1), Jeremiah the doctrine of his righteousness (Jer. xii. 1), another prophet that of his holiness (Hab. i. 13), the psalmist that of his goodness and peculiar favour to his own people (Ps. lxxiii. 1), and that is it which Solomon here fastens upon and resolves to abide by, that, though good and evil seem to be dispensed promiscuously, yet God has a particular care of and concern for his own people: *The righteous and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God*, under his special protection and guidance; all their affairs are managed by him for their good; all their wise and righteous actions are *in his hand*, to be recompensed in the other world, though not in this. They seem as if they were given up *into the hand of their enemies*, but it is not so. Men have *no power against them but what is given them from above*. The events that affect them do not come to pass by chance, but all according to the will and counsel of God, which will turn that to be for them which seemed to be most against them. Let this make us easy, whatever happens, that all God's saints are in his hand, Deut. xxxiii. 3; John x. 29; Ps. xxxi. 15.

II. He lays this down for a rule, that the love and hatred of God are not to be measured and judged of by men's outward condition. If prosperity were a certain sign of God's love, and affliction of his hatred, then it might justly be an offence to us to see the wicked and godly fare alike. But the matter is not so: *No man knows either love or hatred by all that is before him in this world*, by those things that are the objects of sense. These we may know by that which is within us; if we love God with all our heart, thereby we may know that he loves us, as we may know likewise that we are under his wrath if we be governed by that carnal mind which is enmity to him. These will be known by that which shall be hereafter, by men's everlasting state; it is certain that men are happy or miserable according as they are under the love or hatred of God, but not ac-

cording as they are under the smiles or frowns of the world; and therefore if God love righteous man (as certainly he does) he is happy, though the world frown upon him; and he hates a wicked man (as certainly he does) he is miserable, though the world smile upon him. Then the offence of this promiscuous distribution of events has ceased.

III. Having laid down these principles, acknowledges that *all things come alike to us*, so it has been formerly, and therefore we need not think it strange if it be so now, if it be so with us and our families. Some make it and all that follows to v. 13, to be the perverse reasoning of the atheists against the doctrine of God's providence; but I rather take it to be Solomon's concession, which might the more freely make when he has fixed those truths which are sufficient to guard against any ill use that may be made of what he grants. Observe here (v. 2),

1. The great difference that there is between the characters of the righteous and wicked, which, in several instances, are the one over-against the other, to show that though *all things come alike to all*, yet there does not in the least confound the eternal distinction between moral good and evil, that remains immutable. (1.) The righteous are *clean*, have *clean hands* and *pure hearts*; the wicked are *unclean*, under the dominion of unclean lusts, *pure* perhaps in their eyes, but not *cleansed from their filth*; God will certainly put a difference between the *clean* and the *unclean*, the *precious* and the *vile*, in the other world, though he does not seem to do so in this. (2.) The righteous *sacrifice*, that is, they make conscience of worshipping God according to his will, both in inward and outward worship; the wicked *sacrifice not*, that is, they live in the neglect of God's worship and grudge to part with anything for his honour. *What is the Almighty that they should serve him?* (3.) The righteous are *good*, good in God's sight, they do good in the world; the wicked are *sinner*s, violating the laws of God and man, and provoking to both. (4.) The wicked man *swears*, no veneration for the name of God, but profanes it by swearing rashly and falsely; the righteous man *fears an oath*, swears, but is sworn, and then with great reverence he fears to take an oath, because it is a sole appeal to God as a witness and judge; fears, when he has taken an oath, to break, because God is righteous who takes vengeance.

2. The little difference there is between conditions of the righteous and the wicked in this world: *There is one event to both*. David rich? So is Nabab. Is Joseph favoured by his prince? So is Haman. Is Ahab killed in a battle? So is Josiah. Are the bad carried to Babylon? So are the good, xxiv. 1. There is a vast difference between the original, the design, and the nature, of the same event to the one and to the other; effects and issues of it are likewise va-

different; the same providence to the one is *savour of life unto life*, to the other of *death unto death*, though, to outward appearance, it is the same.

IV. He owns this to be a very great grievance to those that are wise and good: "*This is an evil, the greatest perplexity, among all things that are done under the sun* (v. 3); nothing has given me more disturbance than this, that there is one event unto all. It hardens theists, and strengthens the hands of evil-doers; for therefore it is that the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil and fully set in them to do evil, *ch. viii. 11*. When they see that there is one event to the righteous and the wicked, they wickedly infer thence that it is all one to God whether they are righteous or wicked, and therefore they stick at nothing to gratify their lusts.

V. For the further clearing of this great difficulty, as he began this discourse with the doctrine of the happiness of the righteous whatever they may suffer, they and their works are in the hands of God, and therefore in good hands, they could not be in better), so he concludes with the doctrine of the misery of the wicked; however they may prosper, *madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead*. Envy not the prosperity of evil-doers, for, 1. They are now madmen, and all the delights they seem to be possessed with are but like the pleasant dreams and fancies of a distracted man. They are mad upon their idols (*Jer. l. 38*), are mad against God's people, *Acts xxvi. 11*. When he prodigal repented, it is said, *He came to himself* (*Luke xv. 17*), which intimates that he had been beside himself before. 2. They will shortly be dead men. They make a mighty noise and bustle while they live, but, after awhile, they go to the dead, and there is an end of all their pomp and power; they will then be reckoned with for all their madness and outrage in sin. Though, on this side death, the righteous and the wicked seem alike, on the other side death there will be a vast difference between them.

4 For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion. 5 For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. 6 Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun. 7 Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works. 8 Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack

no ointment. 9 Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun. 10 Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

Solomon, in a fret, had praised the dead more than the living (*ch. iv. 2*); but here, considering the advantages of life to prepare for death and make sure the hope of a better life, he seems to be of another mind.

I. He shows the advantages which the living have above those that are dead, *v. 4—6*. 1. While there is life there is hope. *Dum spiro, spero—While I breathe, I hope*. It is the privilege of the living that they are joined to the living, in relation, commerce, and conversation, and, while they are so, there is hope. If a man's condition be, upon any account, bad, there is hope it will be amended. If the heart be full of evil, and madness be in it, yet while there is life there is hope that by the grace of God there may be a blessed change wrought; but after men go to the dead (*v. 3*) it is too late then; he that is then filthy will be filthy still, for ever filthy. If men be thrown aside as useless, yet, while they are joined to the living, there is hope that they may yet again take root and bear fruit; he that is alive is, or may be, good for something; but he that is dead, as to this world, is not capable of being any further serviceable. Therefore a living dog is better than a dead lion; the meanest beggar alive has that comfort of this world and does that service to it which the greatest prince, when he is dead, is utterly incapable of. 2. While there is life there is an opportunity of preparing for death: The living know that which the dead have no knowledge of, particularly they know that they shall die, and are, or may be, thereby influenced to prepare for that great change which will come certainly, and may come suddenly. Note, The living cannot but know that they shall die, that they must needs die. They know they are under a sentence of death; they are already taken into custody by its messengers, and feel themselves declining. This is a needful useful knowledge; for what is our business, while we live, but to get ready to die? The living know they shall die; it is a thing yet to come, and therefore provision may be made for it. The dead know they are dead, and it is too late; they are on the other side the great gulf fixed. 3. When life is gone all this world is gone with it, as to us. (1.) There is an end of all our acquaintance with this world and the things of it: The dead know not any thing of that which, while they lived, they were in-

timately conversant with. It does not appear that they know any thing of what is done by those they leave behind. Abraham is ignorant of us; they are removed into darkness, Job x. 22. (2.) There is an end of all our enjoyments in this world: *They have no more a reward for their toils about the world, but all they got must be left to others; they have a reward for their holy actions, but not for their worldly ones. The meats and the belly will be destroyed together, John vi. 27; 1 Cor. vi. 13. It is explained v. 6. Neither have they any more a portion for ever, none of that which they imagined would be a portion for ever, of that which is done and got under the sun. The things of this world will not be a portion for the soul because they will not be a portion for ever; those that choose them, and have them for their good things, have only a portion in this life, Ps. xvii. 14. The world can only be an annuity for life, not a portion for ever.* (3.) There is an end of their name. There are but few whose names survive them long; the grave is a land of forgetfulness, *for the memory of those that are laid there is soon forgotten; their place knows them no more, nor the lands they called by their own names.* (4.) There is an end of their affections, their friendships and enmities: *Their love, and their hatred, and their envy have now perished; the good things they loved, the evil things they hated, the prosperity of others, which they envied, are now all at an end with them. Death parts those that loved one another, and puts an end to their friendship, and those that hated one another too, and puts an end to their quarrels. Actio moritur cum personâ—The person and his actions die together.* There we shall be never the better for our friends (their love can do us no kindness), nor ever the worse for our enemies—their hatred and envy can do us no damage. *There the wicked cease from troubling. Those things which now so affect us and fill us, which we are so concerned about and so jealous of, will there be at an end.*

II. Hence he infers that it is our wisdom to make the best use of life that we can while it does last, and manage wisely what remains of it.

1. Let us relish the comforts of life while we live, and cheerfully take our share of the enjoyments of it. Solomon, having been himself ensnared by the abuse of sensitive delights, warns others of the danger, not by a total prohibition of them, but by directing to the sober and moderate use of them; we may use the world, but must not abuse it, take what is to be had out of it, and expect no more. Here we have,

(1.) The particular instances of this cheerfulness prescribed: "Thou art drooping and melancholy, *go thy way, like a fool as thou art, and get into a better temper of mind.*" [1.] "Let thy spirit be easy and pleasant; then let there be joy and a merry heart within," a good heart (so the word is), which distinguishes this from carnal mirth and sensual

pleasure, which are the evil of the heart, but a symptom and a cause of much evil there. We must enjoy ourselves, enjoy our friends, enjoy our God, and be careful to keep a good conscience, that nothing may disturb us these enjoyments. We must serve God with gladness, in the use of what he gives us, and be liberal in communicating it to others, and not suffer ourselves to be oppressed with ordinate care and grief about the world. We must eat our bread as Israelites, *not in mourning* (Deut. xxvi. 14), as Christians, *with gladness and liberality of heart*, Acts ii. See Deut. xxviii. 47. [2.] "Make use of the comforts and enjoyments which God has given thee: *Eat thy bread, drink thy wine, thine, not another's, not the bread of deceit, nor the wine of violence, but that which honestly got, else thou canst not eat it with any comfort nor expect a blessing upon it, thy bread and thy wine, such as are agreeable to thy place and station, not extravagant above it nor sordidly below it; lay out what God has given thee for the ends for which thou art entrusted with it, as being but steward.*" [3.] "Evidence thy cheerfulness (v. 8): *Let thy garments be always white.* Conserve a proportion in thy expenses; reduce not thy food in order to gratify thy pride, nor thy clothing in order to gratify thy voluptuousness. Be neat, wear clean linen, and be not slovenly." Or, "Let thy garments be white in token of joy and cheerfulness," which was expressed by *white raiment* (Rev. iii. 4); "as a further token of joy, let thy head lack ointment that is fit for it." Our Saviour admitted this piece of pleasure at a feast (Matt. xxvi. 7), and David observes it among the gifts of God's bounty to him. Ps. xxiii. *Thou anointest my head with oil.* Not that we must place our happiness in any of the delights of sense, or set our hearts upon them, but what God has given us we must make comfortable a use of as we can afford, under the limitations of sobriety and wisdom, and not forgetting the poor. [4.] "Make thyself agreeable to thy relations: *Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest.* Do not engross thy delights, making much of thyself only, and not caring what becomes of those about thee, but let them share with thee and make them easy too. Have a wife; for even in paradise *it was not good for man to be alone.* Keep to thy wife, to one, and do not multiply wives" (Solomon had found the mischief that); "keep to her only, and have nothing to do with any other." How can a man live joyfully with one with whom he does not love honestly? "Love thy wife; and the wife whom thou lovest thou wilt be likely to live joyfully with." When we do the duty of relation we may expect the comfort of them. See Prov. v. 19. "Live with thy wife, and delight in her society. *Live joyfully with her, and be most cheerful when thou art with her.* Take pleasure in thy family, thy vine and thy olive plants."

(2.) The qualifications necessary to this cheerfulness: "Rejoice and have a merry heart, if God now accepts thy works. If thou be reconciled to God, and recommended to him, then thou hast reason to be cheerful, otherwise not." *Rejoice not, O Israel! for thou art as other people, for thou hast gone a mourning from thy God, Hos. ix. 1.* Our first duty must be to make our peace with God, and obtain his favour, to do that which he will accept of, and then, *Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy.* Note, Those whose works God has accepted have reason to be cheerful and ought to be so. "Now that thou eatest the bread of thy sacrifices with joy, and partakest of the wine of thy drink-offerings with merry heart, now God accepts thy works." By religious services, when performed with joy, are pleasing to God; he loves to have his servants sing at their work, it promotes him a good Master.

(3.) The reasons for it. "Live joyfully, O man, as long as thou livest," [1.] "It is all little enough to make thy passage through this world easy and comfortable: *The days of thy life* are the days of *thy vanity*; there is nothing here but trouble and disappointment. Thou wilt have time enough for sorrow and grief when thou canst not help it, and therefore *live joyfully* while thou canst, and perplex not thyself with thoughts and cares about to-morrow; *Accident to the day is the evil thereof.* Let a precious serenity of mind be a powerful antidote against the vanity of the world." [2.] "It is all thou canst get from this world: *What is thy portion in the things of this life?* Thou hast God, and another life, thou shalt have a better portion, and a better recompence for thy labours in religion; but for thy pains *which thou takest* about the things under the sun, this is all thou canst expect, and therefore do not deny this to thyself."

[3.] Let us apply ourselves to the business of life while life lasts, and so use the enjoyments of it as by them to be fitted for the employments: "Therefore *eat with joy and a merry heart*, not that thy soul may take its ease" Luke xii. 19), but that thy soul may take the more pains and the joy of the Lord may increase its strength and oil to its wheels," v. 10. *Whatever thy hand finds to do do it with thy might.* Observe here, (1.) There is not only something to be had, but something to be done, in this life, and the chief good we are to enquire after is the good we should do, 1. cl. ii. 3. This is the world of service; what is to come is the world of recompence. This is the world of probation and preparation for eternity; we are here upon business, and upon our good behaviour. (2.) Opportunity is to direct and quicken duty. That to be done which our hand finds to do, which occasion calls for; and an active hand will always find something to do that will be to a good account. What must be done, of necessity, our hand will here find a place in it for the doing of, Prov. xvii. 16.

(3.) What good we have an opportunity of doing we must do while we have the opportunity, and do it with our might, with care, vigour, and resolution, whatever difficulties and discouragements we may meet with in it. Harvest-days are busy days; and we must make hay while the sun shines. Serving God and working out our salvation must be done with *all that is within us*, and all little enough. (4.) There is good reason why we should work the works of him that sent us while it is day, because the night comes, wherein no man can work, John ix. 4. We must up and be doing now with all possible diligence, because our doing-time will be done shortly and we know not how soon. But this we know that, if the work of life be not done when our time is done, we are undone for ever: "There is no work to be done, nor device to do it, no knowledge for speculation, nor wisdom for practice, in the grave whither thou goest." We are all going towards the grave; every day brings us a step nearer to it; when we are in the grave it will be too late to mend the errors of life, too late to repent and make our peace with God, too late to lay up any thing in store for eternal life; it must be done now or never. The grave is a land of darkness and silence, and therefore there is no doing any thing for our souls there; it must be done now or never, John xii. 35.

11 I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all. 12 For man also knoweth not his time:

as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.

The preacher here, for a further proof of the vanity of the world, and to convince us that all our works are in the hand of God, and not in our own hand, shows the uncertainty and contingency of future events, and how often they contradict the prospects we have of them. He had exhorted us (v. 10) to do what we have to do with all our might; but here he reminds us that, when we have done all, we must leave the issue with God, and not be confident of the success.

surrenders herself to no one so as to ensure him success, however numerous his undertakings. Seneca. The issue of affairs is often unaccountably cross to every one's expectation, that the highest may not presume, nor the lowest despair, but all may live in a humble dependence upon God, from whom every man's judgment proceeds.

1. He gives instances of disappointment, even where means and instruments were most encouraging and promised fair. (1.) One would think that the lightest of foot should, in running, win the prize; and yet *the race is not always to the swift*; some accident happens to retard them, or they are too secure, and therefore remiss, and let those that are slower get the start of them. (2.) One would think that, in fighting, the most numerous and powerful army should be always victorious, and, in single combat, that the bold and mighty champion should win the laurel; but *the battle is not always to the strong*; a host of Philistines was once put to flight by Jonathan and his man; *one of you shall chase a thousand*; the goodness of the cause has often carried the day against the most formidable power. (3.) One would think that men of sense should always be men of substance, and that those who know how to live in the world should not only have a plentiful maintenance, but get great estates; and yet it does not always prove so; even *bread is not always to the wise, much less riches always to men of understanding*. Many ingenious men, and men of business, who were likely to thrive in the world, have strangely gone backward and come to nothing. (4.) One would think that those who understand men, and have the art of management, should always get preferment and obtain the smiles of great men; but many ingenious men have been disappointed, and have spent their days in obscurity, nay, have fallen into disgrace, and perhaps have ruined themselves by those very methods by which they hoped to raise themselves, for *favour is not always to men of skill*, but fools are favoured and wise men frowned upon.

2. He resolves all these disappointments into an over-ruling power and providence, the disposals of which to us seem casual, and we call them *chance*, but really they are according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, here called *time*, in the language of this book, *ch. iii. 1*; Ps. xxxi. 15. *Time and chance happen to them all*. A sovereign Providence breaks men's measures, and blasts their hopes, and teaches them that the way of man is not in himself, but subject to the divine will. We must use means, but not trust to them; if we succeed, we must give God the praise (Ps. xlv. 3); if we be crossed, we must acquiesce in his will and take our lot.

II. We are often surprised with the evils we were in little fear of (*v. 12*): *Man knows not his time*, the time of his calamity, his fall, his death, which, in scripture, is called *our day and our hour*. 1. We know not what

troubles are before us, which will take up our business, and take us out of the world; *what time and chance will happen to us, what one day, or a night, may bring forth*. *It is not for us to know the times*, no, not our own time, when or how we shall die. God has, in wisdom, kept us in the dark, that we may be always ready. 2. Perhaps we may meet with trouble in that very thing where we promise ourselves the greatest satisfaction and advantage; as the fishes and the birds are drawn into the snare and net by the bait laid to allure them, which they greedily catch at, so are the sons of men often snared in *evil time*, when it falls suddenly upon them before they are aware. And these things *come alike to all*. Men often find their happiness where they sought their bliss, and catch their death where they thought to find a prize. Let us therefore never be secure, but always ready for changes, that, though they may be sudden, they may be no surprise or terror to us.

13 This wisdom have I seen above all under the sun, and it seemed great unto me: 14 There was a little city and few men within it; and the king came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwark against it: 15 Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man. 16 Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless the poor man and his wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard. 17 The words of wise men are heard in quiet more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools. 18 Wisdom is better than weapon of war: but one sinner destroyed much good.

Solomon still recommends wisdom to us as necessary to the preserving of our peace and the perfecting of our business, notwithstanding the vanities and crosses which in human affairs are subject to. He had said (*v. 11*) *Bread is not always to the wise*; yet he would not therefore be thought either to disparage or to discourage, wisdom, no, he still retains his principle, that *wisdom excels folly as much as light excels darkness* (*ch. ii. 13*), and we ought to love and embrace it, and be governed by it, for the sake of its own intrinsic worth, and the capacity it gives us of being serviceable to others, though we ourselves should not get wealth and preferment by it. 'This wisdom, that is, this which he here describes, wisdom which enables a man to serve his country out of pure affection to its interests, when he himself gains no advantage by it, no, not so much as thanks for his pains

the reputation of it, this is the wisdom which Solomon says, *seemed great unto him*, 3. A public spirit, in a private sphere, wisdom which those who understand things differ cannot but look upon as very magnificent.

Solomon here gives an instance, which probably was a case in fact, in some neighbouring country, of a *poor man* who with his wisdom did great service in a time of public press and danger (v. 14): *There was a little* (no great prize, whoever was master of there were but *few men within it*, to defeat, and men, if men of fortitude, are the fortifications of a city; here were *few* and, because few, feeble, fearful, and ready to give up their city as not tenable. Against this little city a *great king* came with numerous army, and besieged it, either in rage, or covetousness to possess it, or in revenge for some affront given him, to chastise and destroy it. Thinking it stronger than it, *he built great bulwarks against it*, from which to batter it, and doubted not but in little time to make himself master of it. At a great deal of unjust vexation do ambitious princes give to their harmless neighbours! This *great king* needed not fear this city: why then should he frighten it? It would be little profit to him; why then should he put himself to such a great expense to take it? But as unreasonably and insatiably as little people sometimes are to lay waste to a house, and field to field, great kings are to lay city to city, and province to province, *that they may be placed alone in the land*, Isa. v. 8. Did victory and success attend the strong? No; there was found in this city, among the few men that were in it, a *poor wise man*—a wise man, and yet poor, not preferred to any place of profit or honour in the city; places of trust were not given to men according to their merit, and reward for them, else such a wise man as would not have been a poor man. Now, being wise, he served the city, though he was poor. In their distress they found him (Judg. xi. 7) and begged his advice and assistance; and *he by his wisdom delivered the city*, either by prudent instructions given to the besieged, directing them to some unthought-of stratagem for their own security, or a prudent treaty with the besiegers, as was done at Abel, 2 Sam. xx. 16. He did not upbraid them with the contempt they had put upon him, in leaving him out of their council, nor tell them he was poor and had nothing to lose, and therefore cared not what befell the city; but he did his best for it, and was blessed with success. Note, Private interests and personal resentments must always be sacrificed to the public good and for the common welfare is considered. 2. Being poor, he was slighted by the city, though he was wise and had been an instrument to save them all from ruin: *No man remembered that same poor man*; his good

services were not taken notice of, no recompence was made him, no marks of honour were put upon him, but he lived in as much poverty and obscurity as he had done before. *Riches were not to this man of understanding, nor favour to this man of skill*. Many who have well-merited of their prince and country have been ill-paid; such an ungrateful world do we live in. It is well that useful men have a God to trust to, who will be their bountiful rewarder; for, among men, great services are often envied and rewarded with evil for good.

II. From this instance he draws some useful inferences, looks upon it and receives instruction. 1. Hence he observes the great usefulness and excellency of wisdom, and what a blessing it makes men to their country: *Wisdom is better than strength*, v. 16. A prudent mind, which is the honour of a man, is to be preferred before a robust body, in which many of the brute creatures excel man. A man may by his wisdom effect that which he could never compass by his strength, and may overcome those by out-witting them who are able to overpower him. Nay, *wisdom is better than weapons of war*, offensive or defensive, v. 18. *Wisdom*, that is, religion and piety (for the wise man is here opposed to a sinner), is better than all military endowments or accoutrements, for it will engage God for us, and then we are safe in the greatest perils and successful in the greatest enterprises. *If God be for us, who can be against us* or stand before us? 2. Hence he observes the commanding force and power of wisdom, though it labour under external disadvantages (v. 17): *The words of wise men are heard in quiet*; what they speak, being rational and to the purpose, being spoken calmly and with deliberation (though, not being rich and in authority, they dare not speak aloud nor with any great assurance), will be hearkened to and regarded, will gain respect, nay, will gain the point, and sway with men more than the imperious clamour of him that *rules among fools*, who, like fools, chose him to be their ruler, for his noise and blustering, and, like fools, think he must by those methods carry the day with every body else. A few close arguments are worth a great many big words; and those will strike sail to fair reasoning who will answer those that hector and insult according to their folly. *How forcible are right words!* What is spoken wisely should be spoken calmly, and then it will be heard in quiet and calmly considered. But passion will lessen the force even of reason, instead of adding any force to it. 3. Hence he observes that wise and good men, notwithstanding this, must often content themselves with the satisfaction of having done good, or at least attempted it, and offered at it, when they cannot do the good they would do nor have the praise they should have. Wisdom capacitates a man to serve his neighbours, and he offers his service; but, alas! if he be poor his wisdom is despised, and his words

are not heard, v. 16. Many a man is buried alive in poverty and obscurity who, if he had but fit encouragement given him, might be a great blessing to the world; many a pearl is lost in its shell. But there is a day coming when wisdom and goodness shall be in honour, and the *righteous shall shine forth*.

4. From what he had observed of the great good which one wise and virtuous man may do he infers what a great deal of mischief one wicked man may do, and what a great deal of good he may be the hindrance of: *One sinner destroyeth much good*. (1.) As to himself, a sinful condition is a wasteful condition. How many of the good gifts both of nature and Providence does one sinner destroy and make waste of—good sense, good parts, good learning, a good disposition, a good estate, good meat, good drink, and abundance of God's good creatures, all made use of in the service of sin, and so destroyed and lost, and the end of giving them frustrated and perverted! He who destroys his own soul destroys much good. (2.) As to others, what a great deal of mischief may one wicked man do in a town or country! One sinner, who makes it his business to debauch others, may defeat and frustrate the intentions of a great many good laws and a great deal of good preaching, and draw many into his pernicious ways; one sinner may be the ruin of a town, as one Achan troubled the whole camp of Israel. The wise man who delivered the city would have had his due respect and recompence for it but that some one sinner hindered it, and invidiously diminished the service. And many a good project, well laid for the public welfare, has been destroyed by some one subtle adversary to it. The wisdom of some would have healed the nation, but, through the wickedness of a few, it would not be healed. See who are a kingdom's friends and enemies, if one saint does much good, and one sinner destroys much good.

CHAP. X.

This chapter seems to be like Solomon's proverbs, a collection of wise sayings and observations, rather than a part of his sermon; but the preacher studied to be sententious, and "set in order many proverbs," to be brought in in his preaching. Yet the general scope of all the observations in this chapter is to recommend wisdom to us, and its precepts and rules, as of great use for the right ordering of our conversation and to caution us against folly. 1. He recommends wisdom to private persons, who are in an inferior station. 1. It is our wisdom to preserve our reputation, in managing our affairs dexterously, ver. 1.—3. 2. To be submissive to our superiors if at any time we have offended them, ver. 4. 3. To live quiet and peaceable lives, and not to meddle with those that are factious and seditious, and are endeavouring to disturb the government and the public repose, the folly and danger of which disloyal and turbulent practices he shows, ver. 8—11. 4. To govern our tongues well, ver. 12—15. 5. To be diligent in our business and provide well for our families, ver. 18, 19. 6. Not to speak ill of our rulers, no, not in secret, ver. 20. 11. He recommends wisdom to rulers; let them not think that, because their subjects must be quiet under them, therefore they may do what they please; no, but, 1. Let them be careful whom they prefer to places of trust and power, ver. 5—7. 2. Let them manage themselves discreetly, be generous and not childish, temperate and not luxurious, ver. 16, 17. Happy the nation when princes and people make conscience of their duty according to these rules.

DEAD flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: *so doth a little folly*

him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour. 2 A wise man's heart is at his right hand; but a fool's heart is at his left. 3 Yea also, when he that is a fool walketh by the way, his wisdom faileth him, and he saith to every one *that he is a fool*.

In these verses Solomon shows,

I. What great need wise men have to heed of being guilty of any instance of folly for a little folly is a great blemish to him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour, and is as hurtful to his good name as dead flies are to a sweet perfume, not only spoiling the sweetness of it, but making it to send forth a stinking savour. Note, 1. True wisdom is true honour, and will gain a man a reputation, which is like a box of precious ointment, pleasing and very valuable. 2. A reputation that is got with difficulty, and a great deal of wisdom, may be easily lost, and by a little folly, because envy fasteneth upon eminency, and makes the worst of mistakes and miscarriages of those who are cried up for wisdom, and improves them to their disadvantage; so that the folly which in another would not be taken notice of, in them is severely censured. Those who make a great profession of religion have need to walk very circumspectly, to abstain from appearances of evil, and approaches to vanity, it, because many eyes are upon them, and watch for their halting; their character will soon sullied, and they have a great deal of reputation to lose.

II. What a deal of advantage a wise man has above a fool in the management of business (v. 2): *A wise man's heart is at his right hand*, so that he goes about his business with dexterity, turns his hand readily to it, goes through it with despatch; his counsel and courage are ready to him, whenever he has occasion for them. But *a fool's heart is at his left hand*; it is always to seek what he has any thing to do that is of importance, and therefore he goes awkwardly about, like a man that is left-handed; he is soon at a loss and at his wits' end.

III. How apt fools are at every turn to proclaim their own folly, and expose themselves; he that is either witless or graceless, either silly or wicked, if he be ever so bold from under the check, and left to himself, he but *walk by the way*, soon shows what he is; his wisdom fails him, and, by some propriety or other, he says to every one *meets that he is a fool* (v. 3), that is, he covers his folly as plainly as if he had them so. He cannot conceal it, and he is ashamed of it. Sin is the reproach of sinners wherever they go.

4 If the spirit of the ruler rise against thee, leave not thy place; yielding pacifieth great offences.

There is an evil *which* I have seen under the sun, as an error *which* proceedeth from the ruler: 6 Folly is set in great dignity, and the rich sit in low place.

I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth. 8 He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh a hedge, a serpent shall bite him. Whoso removeth stones shall be hurt therewith; and he that cleaveth good shall be endangered thereby. 10 If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength: but wisdom is profitable to direct. 11 Surely the serpent will bite without enchantment; and a babbler is no better.

The scope of these verses is to keep subjects loyal and dutiful to the government. In Solomon's reign the people were very rich, and lived in prosperity, which perhaps made them proud and petulant, and when the taxes were high, though they had enough to pay them with, it is probable that many conducted themselves insolently towards the government and threatened to rebel. To such Solomon here gives some necessary cautions.

I. Let not subjects carry on a quarrel with their prince upon any private personal distaste (v. 4): "*If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, if upon some misinformation given him, or some mismanagement of thine, he is displeased at thee, and threaten thee, let leave not thy place, forget not the duty of a subject, revolt not from thy allegiance, do not, in a passion, quit thy post in his service and throw up thy commission, as despairing ever to regain his favour. No, wait awhile, and thou wilt find he is not implacable, but that yielding pacifies great offences.*" Solomon speaks for himself, and for every wise and good man that is a master, or a magistrate, that he could easily forgive those, upon their submission, whom yet, upon their provocation, he had been very angry with. It is safer and better to yield to an angry prince than to contend with him.

II. Let not subjects commence a quarrel with their prince, though the public administration be not in every thing as they would have it. He grants *there is an evil often seen under the sun*, and it is a king's evil, an evil which the king only can cure, for *it is an error which proceeds from the ruler* (v. 5); it is a mistake which rulers, consulting their personal affections more than the public interests, are too often guilty of, that men are not preferred according to their merit, but *folly is set in great dignity*, men of shattered brains, and broken fortunes, are put in places of power and trust, while the rich men of good sense and good estates, whose interest would oblige

them to be true to the public, and whose abundance would be likely to set them above temptations to bribery and extortion, yet sit in low places, and can get no preferment (v. 6), either the ruler knows not how to value them or the terms of preferment are such as they cannot in conscience comply with. It is ill with a people when vicious men are advanced and men of worth are kept under hatches. This is illustrated v. 7. "*I have seen servants upon horses*, men not so much of mean extraction and education (if that were all, it were the more excusable, nay, there is many a wise servant who with good reason *has rule over a son that causes shame*), but of sordid, servile, mercenary dispositions. I have seen these riding in pomp and state as princes, while princes, men of noble birth and qualities, fit to rule a kingdom, have been forced to *walk as servants upon the earth*, poor and despised. Thus God, in his providence, punishes a wicked people; but, as far as it is the ruler's act and deed, it is certainly his error, and a great evil, a grievance to the subject and very provoking; but it is *an error under the sun*, which will certainly be rectified above the sun, and when it shall shine no more, for in heaven it is only wisdom and holiness that are set in great dignity. But, if the prince be guilty of his error, yet let not the subjects *leave their place*, nor rise up against the government, nor form any project for the alteration of it; nor let the prince carry on the humour too far, nor set such servants, such beggars, on horseback, as will ride furiously over the ancient land-marks of the constitution, and threaten the subversion of it.

1. Let neither prince nor people violently attempt any changes, nor make a forcible entry upon a national settlement, for they will both find it of dangerous consequence, which he shows here by four similitudes, the scope of which is to give us a caution not to meddle to our own hurt. Let not princes invade the rights and liberties of their subjects; let not subjects mutiny and rebel against their princes; for, (1.) *He that digs a pit for another, it is ten to one but he falls into it himself*, and his violent dealing returns upon his own head. If princes become tyrants, or subjects become rebels, all histories will tell both what is likely to be their fate and that it is at their utmost peril, and it were better for both to be content within their own bounds. (2.) *Whoso breaks a hedge, an old hedge, that has long been a land-mark, let him expect that a serpent, or adder, such as harbour in rotten hedges, will bite him; some viper or other will fasten upon his hand*, Acts xxviii. 3. God, by his ordinance, as by a hedge, has inclosed the prerogatives and powers of princes; their persons are under his special protection; those therefore that form any treasonable designs against their peace, their crown, and dignity, are but twisting halters for themselves. (3.) *Whose*

removes stones, to pull down a wall, or building, does—but pluck them upon himself; he shall be hurt therewith, and will wish that he had let them alone. Those that go about to alter a well-modelled well-settled government, under colour of redressing some grievances and correcting some faults in it, will quickly perceive not only that it is easier to find fault than to mend, to demolish that which is good than to build up that which is better, but that they thrust their own fingers into the fire and overwhelm themselves in the ruin they occasion. (4.) *He that cleaves the wood*, especially if, as it follows, he has sorry tools (*v. 10*), *shall be endangered thereby*; the chips, or his own axe-head, will fly in his face. If we meet with knotty pieces of timber, men of perverse and ungovernable spirits, and we think to master them by force and violence, and hew them to pieces, they may not only prove too hard for us, but the attempt may turn to our own damage.

2. Rather let both prince and people act towards each other with prudence, mildness, and good temper: *Wisdom is profitable to direct the ruler how to manage a people that are inclined to be turbulent*, so as neither, on the one hand, by a supine negligence to embolden and encourage them, nor, on the other hand, by rigour and severity to exasperate and provoke them to any seditious practices. It is likewise profitable to direct the subjects how to act towards a prince that is inclined to bear hard upon them, so as not to alienate his affections from them, but to win upon him by humble remonstrances (not insolent demands, such as the people made upon Rehoboam), by patient submissions and peaceable expedients. The same rule is to be observed in all relations, for the preserving of the comfort of them. Let wisdom direct to gentle methods and forbear violent ones. (1.) Wisdom will teach us to whet the tool we are to make use of, rather than, by leaving it blunt, oblige ourselves to exert so much the *more strength*, *v. 10*. We might save ourselves a great deal of labour, and prevent a great deal of danger, if we did whet before we cut, that is, consider and premeditate what is fit to be said and done in every difficult case, that we may accommodate ourselves to it and may do our work smoothly and easily both to others and to ourselves. Wisdom will direct how to sharpen and put an edge upon both ourselves and those we employ, not to *work deceitfully* (Ps. lii. 2), but to work cleanly and cleverly. The mower loses no time when he is whetting his scythe. (2.) Wisdom will teach us to enchant the serpent we are to contend with, rather than think to out-hiss it (*v. 11*): *The serpent will bite* if he be not by singing and music charmed and enchanted, against which therefore he *stops his ears* (Ps. lviii. 4, 5); *and a babbler is no better* to all those who enter the lists with him, who therefore must not think by dint of words to out-talk him,

but by prudent management to enchant him. *He that is lord of the tongue* (so the phrase is), a ruler that has liberty of speech and may say what he will, it is as dangerous dealing with him as with a serpent uncharmed; but if you use the enchantment of a mild and humble submission, you may be safe and out of danger; herein *wisdom*, the meekness of wisdom, is *profitable to direct*. By *long forbearing is a prince persuaded*, Prov. x. 15. Jacob enchanted Esau with a present, and Abigail David. To those that may say any thing it is wisdom to say nothing that provoking.

12 The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself. 13 The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness: and the end of his talk is mischievous madness. 14 A fool also is full of words: a man cannot tell what shall be; and what shall be after him, who can tell him? 15 The labour of the foolish wearieth even one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city.

Solomon, having shown the benefit of wisdom, and of what great advantage it is to us in the management of our affairs, here shows the mischief of folly and how it exposes men, which perhaps comes in as a reflection upon those rulers who *set folly in great dignity*.

I. Fools talk a great deal to no purpose and they show their folly as much by the multitude, impertinence, and mischievousness of their words, as by any thing; whereas *the words of a wise man's mouth are gracious*, and grace, manifest grace in his heart and minister grace to the hearers, are good, and such as become him, and do good to all about him, *the lips of a fool* not only expose him to reproach and make him ridiculous, but *will swallow up himself* and bring him to ruin, by provoking the government to take cognizance of his seditious talk and call him to an account for it. Adonijah foolishly *spoke against his own life*, 1 Kings ii. 23. Many a man has been sunk by having *his own tongue for upon him*, Ps. lxi. 8. See what a fool's talk is. 1. It takes rise from his own weakness and wickedness: *The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness*, the foolishness bound up in his heart, that is the corrupt spring out of which all these polluted streams flow, the evil treasure out of which evil things are brought. As soon as he begins to speak you may perceive his folly; at the very first he talks idly, and passionately, and like himself. 2. It rises up to fury, and tends to the hurt and injury of others: *The end of his talk*, the end it comes to, *is madness*. He presently talk himself into an indecent heat and break out into the wild extravagancies of a distracted man. The end he aims at is mis

of; as, at first, he appeared to have little government of himself, so, at last, it appears he has a great deal of malice to his neighbours; that root of bitterness bears gall and wormwood. Note, It is not strange if those begin foolishly end madly; for an unruled tongue, the more liberty is allowed, grows the more violent. 3. It is all the more over and over (v. 14). *A fool also is full of words*, a passionate fool especially, who runs on endlessly and never knows when to leave off. He will have the last word, though it be but the same with that which he said the first. What is wanting in the weight and strength of his words he endeavours in number to make up in the number of them; and they must be repeated, because otherwise there is nothing in them to make them remembered. Note, Many who are empty of sense are full of words; and the least solid are the loudest and noisiest. The following words may be taken either, (1.) As checking him for his inglorious boasting in the multitude of his words, what he will do and what he will have, considering that which every body knows, *that a man cannot tell what shall be in his time, while he lives* (Prov. xxvii. 1), much less can one tell *what shall be after him*, when he is dead and gone. Would we duly consider our own ignorance of, and uncertainty about, future events, it would cut off a great many of the idle words we foolishly multiply. (2.) As mocking him for his tautologies. *He is full of words*, for if he do but speak the same trite and common thing, *a man cannot tell what shall be*, because he loves to hear himself talk, he will say it again, *what shall be after him who can tell him?* like Battus of Ovid:

Sub illis
Montibus (inquit) erant, et erant sub montibus illis—
Under those mountains were they,
They were under those mountains, I say—

These vain repetitions are called *Battologies*, Matt. vi. 7.

1. Fools toil a great deal to no purpose (v. 15); *The labour of the foolish*, to accomplish their designs, *wearies every one of them*. They weary themselves in that labour which is very foolish and absurd. All their labour is for the world and the body, and the one that perishes, and in this labour they diminish their strength, and exhaust their spirits, and *weary themselves for very vanity*, Job ii. 13; Isa. lv. 2. They choose that service which is perfect drudgery rather than that which is perfect liberty. 2. That labour which is necessary, and would be profitable, might be gone through with ease, wears them out, because they go about it awkwardly and foolishly, and so make their business a burden to them, which, if they applied themselves prudently, would be a pleasure to them. They complain of the labours of religion as burdens, which they would have no reason to complain of if the exercises of Christianity were always under the direction of

Christian prudence. The foolish tire themselves in endless pursuits, and never bring any thing to pass, *because they know not how to go to the city*, that is, because they have not capacity to apprehend the plainest thing, such as the entrance into a great city is, where one would think it were impossible for a man to miss his road. Men's imprudent management of their business robs them both of the comfort and of the benefit of it. But it is the excellency of the way to the heavenly city that it is a high-way, in which the *way-faring men, though fools, shall not err* (Isa. xxxv. 8); yet sinful folly makes men miss that way.

16 Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child, and thy princes eat in the morning! 17 Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness! 18 By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through. 19 A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry: but money answereth all things. 20 Curse not the king, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.

Solomon here observes,

I. How much the happiness of a land depends upon the character of its rulers; it is well or ill with the people according as the princes are good or bad. 1. The people cannot be happy when their princes are childish and voluptuous (v. 16): *Woe unto thee, O land!* even the land of Canaan itself, though otherwise the glory of all lands, when *thy king is a child*, not so much in age (Solomon himself was young when his kingdom was happy in him) as in understanding; when the prince is weak and foolish as a child, fickle and fond of changes, fretful and humoursome, easily imposed upon, and hardly brought to business, it is ill with the people. The body staggers if the head be giddy. Perhaps Solomon wrote this with a foresight of his son Rehoboam's ill conduct (2 Chron. xiii. 7); he was a child all the days of his life and his family and kingdom fared the worse for it. Nor is it much better with a people when their princes *eat in the morning*, that is, make a god of their belly and make themselves slaves to their appetites. A king himself be a child, yet if his privy-counsellors are wise and apply themselves to what may do the better; but themselves to their pleasures and dissatisfactions of

the public business, which they disfit themselves for by eating and drinking in a morning, when judges are epicures, and do not eat to live, but live to eat, what good can a nation expect! 2. The people cannot but be happy when their rulers are generous and active, sober and temperate, and men of business, v. 17. The land is then blessed, (1., When the sovereign is governed by principles of honour, *when the king is the son of nobles*, actuated and animated by a noble spirit, which scorns to do any thing base and unbecoming so high a character, which is solicitous for the public welfare, and prefers that before any private interests. Wisdom, virtue, and the fear of God, beneficence, and a readiness to do good to all mankind, these ennoble the royal blood. 2. When the subordinate magistrates are more in care to discharge their trusts than to gratify their appetites; when they *eat in due season*, that is, when they have despatched their business, and got them an appetite. God gives the creatures *their meat in due season* (Ps. cxlv. 15); let us not take ours unseasonably, lest we lose the comfort of seeing God give it to us. Magistrates should *eat for strength*, that their bodies may be fitted to serve their souls in the service of God and their country, *and not for drunkenness*, to make themselves unfit to do any thing either for God or man, and particularly to *sit in judgment*, for they will *err through wine* (Isa. xxviii. 7), will *drink and forget the law*, Prov. xxxi. 5. It is well with a people when their princes are examples of temperance, when those that have most to spend upon themselves know how to deny themselves.

II. Of what ill consequence slothfulness is both to private and public affairs (v. 18): *By much slothfulness and idleness of the hands*, the neglect of business, and the love of ease and pleasure, *the building decays, drops through first, and by degrees drops down*. If it be not kept well covered, and care be not taken to repair the breaches, as any happen, it will rain in, and the timber will rot, and the house will become unfit to dwell in. It is so with the family and the affairs of it; if men cannot find in their hearts to take pains in their callings, to tend their shops and look after their own business, they will soon run in debt and go behind-hand, and, instead of making what they have more for their children, will make it less. It is so with the public; if the king be *a child* and will take no care, if the *princes eat in the morning* and will take no pains, the affairs of the nation suffer loss, and its interests are prejudiced, its honour is sullied, its power is weakened, its borders are

reached upon, the course of justice is obstructed, the treasure is exhausted, and all its ways are out of course, and all this slothfulness and self-seeking of the king and the repairers of its ways, the paths to dwell in,

ally all are,

both princes and people, to get money, because that serves for all purposes, v. 19. It seems to prefer money before mirth: *A feast is made for laughter*, not merely for eating, but chiefly for pleasant conversation and the society of friends, not the laughter of fools, which is madness, but that of wise men, by which they fit themselves for business and severe studies. Spiritual feasts are made of spiritual laughter, holy joy in God. *Money makes merry, makes glad the life, but money is not the measure of all things and answers to all things. Pecunia obediunt omnia—Money commands all things.* Though wine make merry, it will not be a house for us, nor a bed, nor clothing, nor provisions and portions for our children; *but money*, if men have enough of it, will be all these. The feast cannot be made without money, and, though men have wine, they are not so much disposed to be merry unless they have money for the necessary supports of life. Money of itself answers nothing; it will neither feed nor clothe, but, as it is the instrument of commerce, answers all the occasions of this present life. What is to be had may be had for money. But it answers nothing to the soul; it will not procure the pardon of sin, the favour of God, the peace of conscience; the soul, as it is not redeemed, so it is not maintained, *silver corruptible things as silver and gold*. So refer this to rulers; it is ill with the people when they give up themselves to luxury and riot, feasting and making merry, not only because their business is neglected, but because money must be had to answer all these things, and, in order to that, the people are squeezed by heavy taxes.

IV. How cautious subjects have need to be that they harbour not any disloyal purposes in their minds, nor keep up any faction, cabals or consultations against the government, because it is ten to one that they are discovered and brought to light, v. 20. "Though rulers should be guilty of some errors, yet be not, upon all occasions, arraigning the administration and running them down, but make the best of them." Here, 1. The command teaches us our duty: "*Curse not the king, no, not in thy thought*, do not wish ill to the government in thy mind." All sin begins there, and therefore the first risings of it must be curbed and suppressed, and particularly that of treason and sedition. "*Curse not the rich*, the princes and governors, *in the bed-chamber*, in a conclave or club of persons disaffected to the government; associate not with such; *come not into their secret*; join not with them in speaking ill of the government or plotting against it." 2. The reason consults our safety. "Though the design be carried on ever so closely, *a bird of the air shall carry the voice* to the king, who has more spies about than thou art aware of, *and that which has wings shall tell the matter*, to thy confusion and ruin." God sees what men do, and hears what they say, in secret

1, when he pleases, he can bring it to light strange and unsuspected ways. Wouldst thou then not be hurt by the powers that be, be afraid of them? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same; if thou do that which is evil, be afraid, m. xiii. 3, 4.

CHAP. XI.

In this chapter we have, I. A pressing exhortation to works of charity and bounty to the poor, as the best cure of the vanity which our worldly riches are subject to and the only way of making them turn to a substantial good account, ver. 1—6. II. A serious admonition to prepare for death and judgment, and to begin betimes, even in the days of our youth, to do so, ver. 7—10.

CAST thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days. 2 Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest what evil shall be upon the earth. If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be. 4 He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap. 5 As thou knowest what is the way of the spirit, nor can the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou shalt not know the works of God who can do all. 6 In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either in this, or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.

Solomon had often, in this book, pressed upon rich people to take the comfort of their riches themselves; here he presses it on them to do good to others with them, to abound in liberality to the poor, which, another day, abound to their account. *serve,*

How the duty itself is recommended to v. 1. 1. *Cast thy bread upon the waters, bread-corn upon the low places* (so some understand it), alluding to the husbandman, who goes forth, bearing precious seed, sparing bread-corn from his family for the seedness, saying that without that he can have no rest another year; thus the charitable takes from his bread-corn for seed-corn, obliges himself to supply the poor, that he sow beside all waters (Isa. xxxii. 20), because as he sows so he must reap, Gal. vi. 7. read of the harvest of the river, Isa. xxiii. Waters, in scripture, are put for multitudes (Rev. xvi. 5), and there are multitudes of poor (we do not want objects of charity); rivers are put also for mourners: the poor men of sorrows. Thou must give bread, necessary supports of life, not only give

good words, but good things, Isa. lviii. 7. It must be *thy* bread, that which is honestly got; it is no charity, but injury, to give that which is none of our own to give; first do justly, and then love mercy. “*Thy bread, which thou didst design for thyself, let the poor have a share with thee, as they had with Job, ch. xxxi. 17. Give freely to the poor, though it may seem thrown away and lost, as that which is cast upon the waters. Send it a voyage, send it as a venture, as merchants that trade by sea. Trust it upon the waters; it shall not sink.*”

2. “*Give a portion to seven and also to eight, that is, be free and liberal in works of charity.*” (1.) “*Give much if thou hast much to give, not a pittance, but a portion, not a bit or two, but a mess, a meal; give a large dole, not a paltry one; give good measure* (Luke vi. 38); be generous in giving, as those were when, on festival days, they sent portions to those for whom nothing was prepared (Neh. viii. 10), worthy portions.” (2.) “*Give to many, to seven, and also to eight, if thou meet with seven objects of charity, give to them all, and then, if thou meet with an eighth, give to that, and, if with eight more, give to them all too. Excuse not thyself with the good thou hast done from the good thou hast further to do, but hold on, and mend. In hard times, when the number of the poor increases, let thy charity be proportionably enlarged.*” God is rich in mercy to all, to us, though unworthy; he gives liberally, and upbraids not with former gifts, and we must be merciful as our heavenly Father is.

II. The reasons with which it is pressed upon us. Consider,

1. Our reward for well-doing is very certain. “*Though thou cast it upon the waters, and it seem lost, thou thinkest thou hast given thy good word with it and art likely never to hear of it again, yet thou shalt find it after many days, as the husbandman finds his seed again in a plentiful harvest and the merchant his venture in a rich return. It is not lost, but well laid out, and well laid up; it brings in full interest in the present gifts of God’s providence, and graces and comforts of his Spirit; and the principal is sure, laid up in heaven, for it is lent to the Lord.*” Seneca, a heathen, could say, *Nihil magis possidere me credam, quam bene donata—I possess nothing so completely as that which I have given away. Hoc habeo quodcumque dedi; hæ sunt divitiæ certæ in quacunque sortis humanæ levitate—Whatever I have imparted I still possess; these riches remain with me through all the vicissitudes of life.* “*Thou shalt find it, perhaps not quickly, but after many days; the return may be slow, but it is sure and will be so much the more plentiful.*” Wheat, the most valuable grain, lies longest in the ground. Long voyages make the best returns.

2. Our opportunity for well-doing is very uncertain: “*Thou knowest not what evil*

may be upon the earth, which may deprive thee of thy estate, and put thee out of a capacity to do good, and therefore, while thou hast wherewithal, be liberal with it, improve the present season, as the husbandman in sowing his ground, before the frost comes." We have reason to expect *evil upon the earth*, for we are born to trouble; what the evil may be we *know not*, but that we may be ready for it, whatever it is, it is our wisdom, in the day of prosperity, to be in good, to be doing good. Many make use of this as an argument against giving to the poor, because they know not what hard times may come when they may want themselves; whereas we should therefore the rather be charitable, that, when *evil days come*, we may have the comfort of having done good while we were able; we would then hope to find mercy both with God and man, and therefore should now show mercy. If by charity we trust God with what we have, we put it into good hands against bad times.

III. How he obviates the objections which might be made against this duty and the excuses of the uncharitable.

1. Some will say that what they have is their own and they have it for their own use, and will ask, Why should we *cast it thus upon the waters*? Why should I *take my bread, and my flesh, and give it to I know not whom*? So Nabal pleaded, 1 Sam. xxv. 11. "Look up, man, and consider how soon thou wouldest be starved in a barren ground, if the clouds over thy head should plead thus, that they have their waters for themselves; but thou seest, when they are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth, to make it fruitful, till they are wearied and spent with watering it, Job xxxvii. 11. Are the heavens thus bountiful to the poor earth, that is so far below them, and wilt thou grudge thy bounty to thy poor brother, who is *bone of thy bone*? Or thus: some will say, Though we give but little to the poor, yet, thank God, we have as charitable a heart as any." Nay, says Solomon, *if the clouds be full of rain, they will empty themselves*; if there be charity in the heart, it will show itself, Jam. ii. 15, 16. He that *draws out his soul to the hungry* will reach forth his hand to them, as he has ability.

2. Some will say that their sphere of usefulness is low and narrow; they cannot do the good that they see others can, who are in more public stations, and therefore they will sit still and do nothing. Nay, says he, *in the place where the tree falls*, or happens to be, *there it shall be*, for the benefit of those to whom it belongs; every man must labour to be a blessing to that place, whatever it is, where the providence of God casts him; wherever we are we may find good work to do if we have but hearts to do it. Or thus: some will say, "Many present themselves as objects of charity who are unworthy, and I do not know whom it is fit to give it to."

"Trouble not thyself about that" (says Solomon); "give as discreetly as thou canst, then be satisfied that, though the person should prove undeserving of thy charity, if thou give it with an honest heart, thou shalt not lose thy reward; which way so the charity is directed, north or south, it shall be the benefit of it." This is commonly applied to death; therefore let us do good, and, as good trees, bring forth the fruit of righteousness, because death will shortly come and cut us down, and we shall then be terminated to an unchangeable state of happiness or misery according to what was done in the body. As the tree falls at death, it is likely to lie to all eternity.

3. Some will object the many discouragements they have met with in their charity. They have been reproached for it as pride and pharisaical; they have but little to give, and they shall be despised if they do not, as others do; they know not but their children may come to want it, and they had better put it up for them; they have taxes to pay, purchases to make; they know not what will be made of their charity, nor what construction will be put upon it; these, and a hundred such objections, he answers, in the word (v. 4): *He that observes the wind shall not sow*, which signifies doing good; and *that regards the clouds shall not reap*, which signifies getting good. If we stand magnifying every little difficulty and making the worst of it, starting objections and fancying hardship and danger where there is none, we shall never go on, much less go through with our work, nor make any thing of it. The husbandman should decline, or leave sowing for the sake of every flying cloud, and reaping for the sake of every blasting wind, he would make but an ill account of his husbandry at the year's end. The duties of religion are as necessary as sowing and reaping, and will turn as much to our advantage. The discouragements we meet with in these duties are but as winds, clouds, which will do us no harm, and we those that put on a little courage and resolution will despise and easily break through. Note, Those that will be deterred and driven off by small and seeming difficulties from great and real duties will never bring anything to pass in religion, for there will always arise some wind, some cloud or other, at least in our imagination, to discourage us. Winds and clouds are in God's hands, are designed to try us, and our Christianity obliges us to endure hardness.

4. Some will say, "We do not see in what way what we expend in charity should be made up to us; we do not find ourselves ever the richer; why should we depend upon the general promise of a blessing on the charitable, unless we saw which way to expect the operation of it?" To this he answers, "Thou knowest not the work of God, nor fit thou shouldst. Thou mayest be surer

I make good his word of promise, though does not tell thee how, or which way, and though he works in a way by himself, according to the counsels of his unsearchable wisdom. He will work, and none shall hinder; but then he will work and none shall direct or prescribe to him. The blessing shall work insensibly but irresistibly. God's work will certainly agree with his word, whether we will it or no." Our ignorance of the work of God he shows, in two instances:—(1.) *We know not what is the way of the Spirit, of the Father, or of the Son (so some), we know not whence it comes, nor whither it goes, or when it will turn; yet the saints are ready waiting for it, till it comes, and then they are about in favour of them; so we must wait for our duty, in expectation of the time appointed for the blessing. Or it may be understood of the human soul; we know that God made us, and gave us these souls, but we know not how they entered into these bodies, are united to them, animate them, and operate upon them, we know not; the soul is a mystery to God, and we know not how he works in it.* (2.) *We know not how the bones were fashioned in the womb of her that is with child. We cannot describe the manner either of the formation of the body or of its information with a soul; both, we know, are the work of God, and we acquiesce in his work, we cannot, in either, trace the process of the operation. We doubt not of the birth of the child that is conceived, though we know not how it is formed; nor need we doubt of the performance of the promise, though we perceive not how things work towards it. And we may well trust God to provide for us that which is convenient, without our anxious disquieting cares, and therein to recompense us for our charity, since it was without any knowledge or forecast of ours that our bodies were curiously wrought in secret and our souls found the way into them; and so the argument is the same, and urged to the same point, with that of our Saviour (Matt. vi. 26). *The life, the living soul that God has given us, is more than meat; the body, that he has made us, is more than raiment; let us therefore that has done the greater for us cheerfully depended upon to do the less.* Some say, "We have been charitable, we have given a great deal to the poor, and never saw any return for it; many days are they that, and we have not found it again," to which he answers (v. 6), "Yet go on, prosper and persevere in well-doing; let slip no opportunity. *In the morning sow thy seed in the objects of charity that offer themselves early, and in the evening do not withhold thy hand, under pretence that thou art busy; as thou hast opportunity, be doing it, some way or other, all the day long, and the husbandman follows his seedness from morning till night. In the morning of youth set out thyself to do good; give out of the time thou hast to begin the world with; and in the evening of old age yield not to the com-**

mon temptation old people are in to be penurious; even then *withhold not thy hand*, and think not to excuse thyself from charitable works by purposing to make a charitable will, but do good to the last, *for thou knowest not which work of charity and piety shall prosper*, both as to others and as to thyself, *this or that*, but hast reason to hope that *both shall be alike good. Be not weary of well-doing, for in due season, in God's time and that is the best time, you shall reap*," Gal. vi. 9. This is applicable to spiritual charity, our pious endeavours for the good of the souls of others; let us continue them, for, though we have long laboured in vain, we may at length see the success of them. Let ministers, in the days of their seedness, sow both morning and evening; *for who can tell which shall prosper?*

7 Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun: 8 But if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity. 9 Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. 10 Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity.

Here is an admonition both to old people and to young people, to think of dying, and get ready for it. Having by many excellent precepts taught us how to live well, the preacher comes now, towards the close of his discourse, to teach us how to die well and to put us in mind of our latter end.

1. He applies himself to the aged; writes to them as fathers, to awaken them to think of death, v. 7, 8. Here is, 1. A rational concession of the sweetness of life, which old people find by experience: *Truly the light is sweet; the light of the sun is so; it is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold it.* Light was the first thing made in the formation of the great world, as the eye is one of the first in the formation of the body, the little world. It is pleasant to see the light; the heathen were so charmed with the pleasure of it that they worshipped the sun. It is pleasant by it to see other things, the many agreeable prospects this world gives us. The light of life is so. Light is put for life, Job iii. 20, 23. It cannot be denied that life is sweet. It is sweet to bad men because they have *their portion in this life*; it is sweet to good men because they have this life as the time

of their preparation for a better life; it is sweet to all men; nature says it is so, and there is no disputing against it; nor can death be desired for its own sake, but dreaded, unless as a period to present evils or a passage to future good. Life is sweet, and therefore we have need to double a guard upon ourselves, lest we love it too well. 2. A caution to think of death, even in the midst of life, and of life when it is most sweet and we are most apt to forget death: *If a man live many years, yet let him remember the days of darkness are coming.* Here is, (1.) A summer's day supposed to be enjoyed—that life may continue long, even many years, and that, by the goodness of God, it may be made comfortable and a man may rejoice in them all. There are those that *live many years* in this world, escape many dangers, receive many mercies, and therefore are secure that they shall want no good, and that no evil shall befall them, that the pitcher which has come so often from the well safe and sound shall never come home broken. But who are those that *live many years and rejoice in them all*? Alas! none; we have but hours of joy for months of sorrow. However, some rejoice in their years, their many years, more than others; if these two things meet, a prosperous state and a cheerful spirit, these two indeed may do much towards enabling a man to *rejoice in them all*, and yet the most prosperous state has its alloys and the most cheerful spirit has its damps; jovial sinners have their melancholy qualms, and cheerful saints have their gracious sorrows; so that it is but a supposition, not a case in fact, that a man should *live many years and rejoice in them all*. But, (2.) Here is a winter's night proposed to be expected after this summer's day: *Yet let this hearty old man remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many.* Note, [1.] There are *days of darkness* coming, the days of our lying in the grave; there the body will lie in the dark; there the eyes see not, the sun shines not. The darkness of death is opposed to the light of life; the grave is a *land of darkness*, Job x. 21. [2.] Those *days of darkness* will be *many*; the days of our lying under ground will be more than the days of our living above ground. They are many, but they are not infinite; many as they are, they will be numbered and finished when *the heavens are no more*, Job xiv. 12. As the longest day will have its night, so the longest night will have its morning. [3.] It is good for us often to remember those *days of darkness*, that we may not be lifted up with pride, nor lulled asleep in carnal security, nor even transported into indecencies by vain mirth. [4.] Notwithstanding the long continuance of life, and the many comforts of it, yet we must *remember the days of darkness*, because those will certainly come, and they will come with much the less terror if we have thought of them before.

II. He applies himself to the young, and writes to them as children, to awaken them to think of death (v. 9, 10); here we have,

1. An ironical concession to the vanities and pleasures of youth: *Rejoice, O young man! in thy youth.* Some make this to be the counsel which the atheist and the epicure give to the young man, the poisonous suggestions against which Solomon, in the end of the verse, prescribes a powerful antidote. But it is more emphatic if we take it, as it commonly understood, by way of irony, like that of Elijah to the priests of Baal (*Cry aloud for he is a god*), or of Micaiah to Ahab (*Go to Ramoth-Gilead, and prosper*), or of Christ to his disciples, *Sleep on now.* “*Rejoice, young man! in thy youth, live a merry life, follow thy sports, and take thy pleasure; let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; cheer thee with its fancies and foolish hope; entertain thyself with thy pleasing dreams; walk in the ways of thy heart; do whatever thou hast a mind to do, and stick at nothing that may gratify the sensual appetite. Quicquid libet, licet—Make thy will thy law. Walk in the ways of thy heart, and let thy heart lead thee; walk after thy eyes, a rambling heart after a roving eye; what is pleasing in thy own eye do it, whether it be pleasing in the eyes of God or no.*” Solomon speaks thus ironically to the young man to intimate, (1.) That this is that which he would do, and which he would fain have leave to do, in which he places his happiness and on which he sets his heart. (2.) That he wishes all about him would give him this counsel, would prophesy to him such smooth things as these, and cannot brook an advice to the contrary, but reckons those his enemies that bid him be sober and serious. (3.) To expose his folly, and the great absurdity of a voluptuous vicious course of life. The very description of it, if men would set things entirely, and judge of them impartially, is enough to show how contrary to reason those act that live such a life. The very opening of the cause is enough to determine it, without any argument. (4.) To show that if men give themselves to such a course of life as this it is just with God to give them up to it, to abandon them to their own hearts' lusts, that they may walk in their own counsels, Hos. iv. 7.

2. A powerful check given to these vanities and pleasures: “*Know thou that for all these things God shall bring thee into judgment, and duly consider that, and then judge such a luxurious life if thou canst, if thou darest.*” This is a *κολαστήριον*—a corrector to the foregoing concession, and plucks it from the reins he had laid on the neck of the young man's lust. “*Know then, for a certain that, if thou dost take such a liberty as this it will be thy everlasting ruin; thou hast do with a God who will not let it go unpunished.*” Note, (1.) There is a judgment come. (2.) We must every one of us be brought into judgment, however we may

now put far from us that evil day. (3.) We shall be reckoned with for all our carnal mirth and sensual pleasures in that day. (4.) It is good for all, but especially for young people, to know and consider this, that they may not, by the indulgence of their youthful lusts, *treasure up unto themselves wrath against that day of wrath*, the wrath of the Lamb.

3. A word of caution and exhortation inferred from all this, v. 10. Let young people look to themselves and manage well both their souls and their bodies, their heart and their flesh. (1.) Let them take care that their minds be not lifted up with pride, nor disturbed with anger, or any sinful passion: *Remove sorrow, or anger, from thy heart*; the word signifies any disorder or perturbation of the mind. Young people are apt to be impatient of check and control, to vex and fret at any thing that is humbling and mortifying to them, and their proud hearts rise against every thing that crosses and contradicts them. They are so set upon that which is pleasing to sense that they cannot hear any thing that is displeasing, but it goes with sorrow to their heart. Their pride often disquiets them, and makes them uneasy. "Put that away, and the love of the world, and lay thy expectations low from the creature, and then disappointments will not be occasions of sorrow and anger to thee." Some by sorrow were understand that carnal mirth described in v. 9, the end of which will be bitterness and sorrow. Let them keep at a distance from every thing which will be sorrow in the refection. (2.) Let them take care that their bodies be not defiled by intemperance, uncleanness, or any fleshly lusts: "*Put away evil from the flesh*, and let not the members of thy body be instruments of unrighteousness. The evil of sin will be the evil of punishment, and that which thou art fond of, as good for the flesh, because it gratifies the appetites of it, will prove evil, and hurtful to it, and therefore put it far from thee, the further the better."

III. The preacher, to enforce his admonition both to old and young, urges, as an effectual argument, that which is the great argument of his discourse, the vanity of all present things, their uncertainty and insufficiency. 1. He reminds old people of this (v. 8): *All that comes is vanity*; yea, though a man live many years and rejoice in them all, All that has come already, and all that is yet to come, how much soever men promise themselves from the concluding scenes, it is all *vanity*. What will be will do no more to make men happy than what has been. *All that comes into the world are vanity*; they are altogether so, at their best estate. 2. He reminds young people of this: *Childhood and youth are vanity*. The dispositions and actions of childhood and youth have in them a great deal of impertinence and iniquity, sinful vanity, which young people have need to

watch against and get cured. The pleasures and advantages of childhood and youth have in them no certainty, satisfaction, nor continuance. They are passing away; these flowers will soon wither, and these blossoms fall; let them therefore be knit into good fruit, which will continue and abound to a good account.

CHAP. XII.

The wise and penitent preacher is here closing his sermon; and he closes it, not only like a good orator, but like a good preacher, with that which was likely to make the best impressions and which he wished might be powerful and lasting upon his hearers. Here is, I. An exhortation to young people to begin betimes to be religious and not to put it off to old age (ver. 1), enforced with arguments taken from the calamities of old age (ver. 1-5) and the great change that death will make upon us, ver. 6, 7. II. A repetition of the great truth he had undertaken to prove in this discourse, the vanity of the world, ver. 8. III. A confirmation and recommendation of what he had written in this and his other books, as worthy to be duly weighed and considered, ver. 9-12. IV. The whole matter summed up and concluded, with a charge to all to be truly religious, in consideration of the judgment to come, ver. 13, 14.

REMEMBER now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; 2 While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain: 3 In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened, 4 And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low; 5 Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: 6 Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. 7 Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

Here is, I. A call to young people to think of God, and mind their duty to him, when they are young: *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth*. This is, 1. The royal preacher's application of his sermon concerning the vanity of the world and every thing in it. "You that are young flatter yourselves with expectations of great things from it, but

believe those that have tried; it yields no solid satisfaction to a soul; therefore, that you may not be deceived by this vanity, nor too much disturbed by it, *remember your Creator*, and so guard yourselves against the mischiefs that arise from the vanity of the creature." 2. It is the royal physician's antidote against the particular diseases of youth, the love of mirth, and the indulgence of sensual pleasures, the vanity which childhood and youth are subject to; to prevent and cure this, *remember thy Creator*. Here is, (1.) A great duty pressed upon us, to *remember God as our Creator*, not only to remember that God is our Creator, that he *made us and not we ourselves*, and is therefore our rightful Lord and owner, but we must engage ourselves to him with the considerations which his being our Creator lay us under, and pay him the honour and duty which we owe him as our Creator, *Remember thy Creators*; the word is plural, as it is Job xxxv. 10, *Where is God my Makers?* For God said, *Let us make man, us, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.* (2.) The proper season for this duty—in the days of thy youth, the days of thy choice (so some), thy choice days, thy choosing days. "Begin in the beginning of thy days to remember him from whom thou hadst thy being, and go on according to that good beginning. Call him to mind when thou art young, and keep him in mind throughout all the days of thy youth, and never forget him. Guard thus against the temptations of youth, and thus improve the advantages of it."

II. A reason to enforce this command: *While the evil days come not, and the years of which thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them.*

1. Do it quickly, (1.) "Before sickness and death come. Do it while thou livest, for it will be too late to do it when death has removed thee from this state of trial and probation to that of recompence and retribution." The days of sickness and death are the *days of evil*, terrible to nature, *evil days* indeed to those that have forgotten their Creator. These *evil days* will come sooner or later; as yet they come not, for God is *long-suffering to us-ward*, and gives us *space to repent*; the continuing of life is but the deferring of death, and, while life is continued and death deferred, it concerns us to prepare, and get the property of death altered, that we may die comfortably. (2.) Before old age comes, which, if death prevent not, will come; and they will be *years of which we shall say, We have no pleasure in them*,—when we shall not relish the delights of sense, as Barzillai (2 Sam. xix. 35),—when we shall be loaded with bodily infirmities, old and blind, or old and lame,—when we shall be taken off from our usefulness, and our *strength* shall be *labour and sorrow*,—when we shall either have parted with our relations, and all our old friends, or be afflicted in them and

see them weary of us,—when we shall ourselves die by inches. These *years of evil*, when all that comes will be vanity, the remaining months all months of vanity, and there will be *no pleasure* but in the reflection of a good life on earth and the expectation of a better life in heaven.

2. These two arguments he enlarges upon in the following verses, only inverting the order, and shows,

(1.) How many are the calamities of age, and that if we should live to be old, our days will be such as we shall have *no pleasure in*, which is a good reason why we should return to God, and make our peace with him, *in the days of our youth*, and not put off till we come to be old; for it will be no thanks to us to leave the pleasures of sin when they have left us, nor to return to God when need forces us. It is the greatest absurdity and ingratitude imaginable to give the cream and flower of our days to the devil, and reserve the bran, and refuse, and dregs of them for God; this is offering *the torn, and the lame, and the sick for sacrifice*, and, besides, old age being thus clogged with infirmities, it is the greatest folly imaginable to put off that needful work till then, which requires the best of our strength, when our faculties are in their prime, and especially to make the work more difficult by a longer continuance in sin, and, laying up treasure of guilt in the conscience, to add to the burdens of age and make them much heavier. If the calamities of age will be such as are here represented, we shall have need of something to support and comfort us then, and nothing will be more effectual to do that than the testimony of our consciences for us that we began sometimes to remember our Creator and have not since laid aside the remembrance of him. How can we expect God should help us when we are old, if we will not serve him when we are young? See Ps. lxxi. 17, 18.

[1.] The decays and infirmities of old age are here elegantly described in figurative expressions, which have some difficulty in them to us now, who are not acquainted with the common phrases and metaphors used in Solomon's age and language; but the general scope is plain—to show how uncomfortable generally, the days of old age are. *First* Then the sun and the light of it, the moon and the stars, and the light which they borrow from it, will be darkened. They look dim to old people, in consequence of the decay of their sight; their countenance is clouded and the beauty and lustre of it are eclipsed; their intellectual powers and faculties, which are as lights in the soul, are weakened; their understanding and memory fail them, and their apprehension is not so quick nor their fancy so lively as it has been; the days of their mirth are over (light is often put for joy and prosperity) and they have not the pleasure either of the converse of the day or the repose of the night, for both the sun and

the moon are darkened to them. *Secondly*, When the clouds return after the rain; as, when the weather is disposed to wet, no sooner has one cloud blown over than another succeeds it, so it is with old people, when they have got free from one pain or ailment, they are seized with another, so that their distempers are like a continual dropping in a very rainy day. The end of one trouble is, in this world, but the beginning of another, and deep calls unto deep. Old people are often afflicted with defluxions of rheum, like soaking rain, after which still more clouds return, feeding the humour, so that it is continually grievous, and therein the body, as it were, melts away. *Thirdly*, Then the keepers of the house tremble. The head, which is as the watch-tower, shakes, and the arms and hands, which are ready for the preservation of the body, shake too, and grow feeble, upon every sudden approach and attack of danger. That vigour of the animal spirits which used to be exerted for self-defence fails and cannot do its office; old people are easily dispirited and discouraged. *Fourthly*, When the strong men shall bow themselves; the legs and thighs, which used to support the body, and bear its weight, bend, and cannot serve for travelling as they have done, but are soon tired. Old men that have been in their time strong men become weak and stoop for age, Zech. viii. 4. *God takes no pleasure in the legs of a man* (Ps. cxlvii. 10), or their strength will soon fail; but in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength; he has everlasting arms. *Fifthly*, Then the grinders cease because they are few; the teeth, with which we grind our meat and prepare it for concoction, cease to do their part, because they are few. They are rotted and broken, and perhaps have been drawn because they ached. Some old people have lost all their teeth, and others have but few left; and this infirmity is the more considerable because the meat, not being well chewed, or want of teeth, is not well digested, which has as much an influence as any thing upon the other decays of age. *Sixthly*, Those that look out of the windows are darkened; the eyes wax dim, as Isaac's (Gen. xxvii. 1), and Ahijah's, 1 Kings xiv. 4. Moses was a rare instance of one who, when 120 years old, had good eye-sight, but ordinarily the sight decays in old people as soon as any thing, and it is a mercy to them that art helps nature with spectacles. We have need to improve our sight well while we have it, because the light of the eyes may be gone before the light of life. *Seventhly*, The doors are shut in the streets. Old people keep within doors, and care not for going abroad to entertainments. The lips, the doors of the mouth, are shut in eating, because the teeth are gone and the sound of the grinding with them is low, so that they have not that command of their meat in their mouths which they used to have; they cannot digest their meat, and

therefore little grist is brought to the mill. *Eighthly*, Old people rise up at the voice of the bird. They have no sound sleep as young people have, but a little thing disturbs them, even the chirping of a bird; they cannot rest for coughing, and therefore rise up at cock-crowing, as soon as any body is stirring; or they are apt to be jealous, and timorous, and full of care, which breaks their sleep and makes them rise early; or they are apt to be superstitious, and rise up as in a fright, at those voices of birds, as of ravens, or screech-owls, which soothsayers call ominous. *Ninthly*, With them all the daughters of music are brought low. They have neither voice nor ear, can neither sing themselves nor take any pleasure, as Solomon had done in the days of his youth, in singing men, and singing women, and musical instruments, ch. ii. 8. Old people grow hard of hearing, and unapt to distinguish sounds and voices. *Tenthly*, They are afraid of that which is high, afraid to go to the top of any high place, either because, for want of breath, they cannot reach it, or, their heads being giddy or their legs failing them, they dare not venture to it, or they frighten themselves with fancying that that which is high will fall upon them. *Fear is in the way*; they can neither ride nor walk with their former boldness, but are afraid of every thing that lies in their way, lest it throw them down. *Eleventhly*, The almond-tree flourishes. The old man's hair has grown white, so that his head looks like an almond-tree in the blossom. The almond-tree blossoms before any other tree, and therefore fitly shows what haste old age makes in seizing upon men; it prevents their expectations and comes faster upon them than they thought of. Gray hairs are here and there upon them, and they perceive it not. *Twelfthly*, The grasshopper is a burden and desire fails. Old men can bear nothing; the lightest thing sits heavily upon them, both on their bodies and on their minds, a little thing sinks and breaks them. Perhaps the grasshopper was some food that was looked upon to be very light of digestion (John Baptist's meat was locusts), but even that lies heavily upon an old man's stomach, and therefore desire fails, he has no appetite to his meat, neither shall he regard the desire of woman, as that king, Dan. xi. 37. Old men become mindless and listless, and the pleasures of sense are to them tasteless and sapless.

[2.] It is probable that Solomon wrote this when he was himself old, and could speak feelingly of the infirmities of age, which perhaps grew the faster upon him for the indulgence he had given himself in sensual pleasures. Some old people bear up better than others under the decays of age, but, more or less, the days of old age are and will be evil days and of little pleasure. Great care therefore should be taken to pay respect and honour to old people, that they may have something to balance these grievances and

nothing may be done to add to them. And all this, put together, makes up a good reason why we should remember our Creator in the days of our youth, that he may remember us with favour when these evil days come, and his comforts may delight our souls when the delights of sense are in a manner worn off.

(2.) He shows how great a change death will make with us, which will be either the prevention or the period of the miseries of old age. Nothing else will keep them off, nor any thing else cure them. "Therefore remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, because death is certainly before thee, perhaps it is very near thee, and it is a serious thing to die, and thou shouldst feel concerned with the utmost care and diligence to prepare for it." [1.] Death will fix us in an unchangeable state: *Man shall then go to his long home*, and all these infirmities and decays of age are harbingers of and advances towards that awful remove. At death *man goes* from this world and all the employments and enjoyments of it. He has gone for good and all, as to his present state. He has gone home, for here he was a stranger and pilgrim; both soul and body go to the place whence they came, v. 7. He has gone to his rest, to the place where he is to fix. He has gone to his home, to the house of his world (so some), for this world is not his. He has gone to his long home, for the days of his lying in the grave will be many. He has gone to his house of eternity, not only to his house whence he shall never return to this world, but to the house where he must be for ever. This should make us willing to die, that, at death, we must go home; and why should we not long to go to our Father's house? And this should quicken us to get ready to die, that we must then go to our long home, to an everlasting habitation. [2.] Death will be an occasion of sorrow to our friends that love us. When *man goes to his long home the mourners go about the streets*—the real mourners, and those, as now with us, distinguished by their habits as they go along the streets,—the mourners for ceremony, that were hired to weep for the dead, both to express and to excite the real mourning. When we die we not only remove to a melancholy house before us, but we leave a melancholy house behind us. Tears are a tribute due to the dead, and this, among other circumstances, makes it a serious thing to die. But in vain do we go to the house of mourning, and see the mourners go about the streets, if it do not help to make us serious and pious mourners in the closet. [3.] Death will dissolve the frame of nature and take down the earthly house of this tabernacle, which is elegantly described, v. 6. Then shall the silver cord, by which soul and body were wonderfully fastened together, be loosed, that sacred knot untied, and those old friends be forced to part; then shall the golden bowl, which held the waters of life for us, be broken; then shall the pitcher with which we used to fetch up water, for the con-

stant support of life and the repair of its decay, be broken, even at the fountain, so that it can fetch up no more; and the wheel (all the organs that serve for the collecting and distributing of nourishment) shall be broken, and disabled to do their office any more. The body shall become like a watch, when the spring is broken, the motion of all the wheels is stopped and they all stand still; the machine is taken to pieces; the heart beats no more, nor does the blood circulate. So apply this to the ornaments and utensils of life; rich people must, at death, leave behind them their clothing and furniture of silver and gold, and poor people their earthen pitcher, and the drawers of water will have their wheels broken. [4.] Death will resolve us into our first principles, v. 7. Man is a strange sort of creature, a ray of heaven united to a clod of earth; at death these are separated, and each goes to the place whence it came. First, The body, that clod of clay, returns to its own earth. It is made of the earth; Adam's body was so, and we are of the same mould; it is a house of clay. At death it is laid in the earth, and in a little time will be resolved into earth, not to be distinguished from common earth, according to the sentence (Gen. iii. 19) *Dust thou art and therefore to dust thou shalt return*. Let us not therefore indulge the appetites of the body, nor pamper it (it will be worms' meat shortly), nor let sin reign in our mortal bodies, for they are mortal, Rom. vi. 12. Secondly, The soul, that beam of light, returns to that God who, when he made man, *of the dust of the ground, breathed into him the breath of life*, to make him a living soul (Gen. ii. 7), and forms the spirit of every man within him. When the fire consumes the wood the flame ascends, and the ashes return to the earth out of which the wood grew. The soul does not die with the body; it is redeemed from the power of the grave (Ps. xlix. 15); it can subsist without it and will in a state of separation from it, as the candle burns, and burns brighter, when it is taken out of the dark lantern. It removes to the world of spirits, to which it is allied. It goes to God as a Judge, to give account of itself, and to be lodged either with the spirits in prison (1 Pet. iii. 19) or with the spirits in paradise (Luke xxiii. 43), according to what was done in the body. This makes death terrible to the wicked, whose souls go to God as an avenger, and comfortable to the godly, whose souls go to God as a Father, into whose hand they cheerfully commit them, through a Mediator, out of whom sinners may justly dread to think of going to God.

8 Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity. 9 And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many

verbs. 10 The preacher sought to find out acceptable words and at which was written was upright, in words of truth. 11 The words the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd. And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

Solomon is here drawing towards a close, he is loth to part till he has gained his point, and prevailed with his hearers, with his reading to seek for that satisfaction in God only in their duty to him which they can never find in the creature.

1. He repeats his text (v. 8), 1. As that which he had fully demonstrated the truth of, and so made good his undertaking in this sermon, wherein he had kept closely to his text, and both his reasons and his application to the purpose. 2. As that which he desired to inculcate both upon others and upon himself, to have it ready, and to make use of it upon all occasions. We see it daily proved; let it therefore be daily improved: *vanity of vanities, all is vanity.*

1. He recommends what he had written on this subject by divine direction and inspiration to our serious consideration. The words of this book are faithful, and well worthy our acceptance, for,

1. They are the words of one that was a sinner, a penitent, that could speak by dear-bought experience of the vanity of the world and the folly of expecting great things from it. He was *Cokeleth*, one gathered in from wanderings and gathered home to that land from whom he had revolted. *Vanity of vanities, saith the penitent.* All true penitents are convinced of the vanity of the world, for they find it can do nothing to ease them of the burden of sin, which they complain of.

2. They are the words of one that was wise, wiser than any, endued with extraordinary treasures of wisdom, famous for it among his neighbours, who all sought unto him to hear wisdom, and therefore a competent judge in his matter, not only wise as a prince, but also as a preacher—and preachers have need of wisdom to win souls.

3. He was one that made it his business to be good, and to use wisdom aright. Because he was himself wise, but knew he had not his wisdom for himself, any more than he had it from himself, he still taught the people that knowledge which he had found useful to himself, and hoped might be so to them too. He was the interest of princes to have their people well taught in religion, and no disparagement to them to teach them themselves the knowledge of the Lord, but their duty to encourage those whose office it is to teach

them and to speak comfortably to them, 2 Chron. xxx. 22. Let not the people, the common people, be despised, no, not by the wisest and greatest, as either unworthy or incapable of good knowledge: even those that are well taught have need to be still taught, that they may grow in knowledge.

4. He took a great deal of pains and care to do good, designing to teach the people knowledge. He did not put them off with any thing that came next to hand, because they were inferior people, and he a very wise man, but, considering the worth of the souls he preached to and the weight of the subject he preached on, he gave good heed to what he read and heard from others, that, having stocked himself well, he might bring out of his treasury things new and old. He gave good heed to what he spoke and wrote himself, and was choice and exact in it; all he did was elaborate. (1.) He chose the most profitable way of preaching, by proverbs or short sentences, which would be more easily apprehended and remembered than long and laboured periods. (2.) He did not content himself with a few parables, or wise sayings, and repeat them again and again, but he furnished himself with many proverbs, a great variety of grave discourses, that he might have something to say on every occasion. (3.) He did not only give them such observations as were obvious and trite, but he sought out such as were surprising and uncommon; he dug into the mines of knowledge, and did not merely pick up what lay on the surface. (4.) He did not deliver his heads and observations at random, as they came to mind, but methodised them and set them in order that they might appear in more strength and lustre.

5. He put what he had to say in such a dress as he thought would be most pleasing: He sought to find out acceptable words, words of delight (v. 10); he took care that good matter might not be spoiled by a bad style, and by the ungratefulness and incongruity of the expression. Ministers should study, not for big words, nor for fine words, but acceptable words, such as are likely to please men for their good, to edification, 1 Cor. x. 33. Those that would win souls must contrive how to win upon them with words fitly spoken.

6. That which he wrote for our instruction is of unquestionable certainty, and what we may rely upon: That which was written was upright and sincere, according to the real sentiments of the penman, even words of truth, the exact representation of the thing as it is. Those are sure not to miss their way who are guided by these words. What good will acceptable words do us if they be not upright and words of truth? Most are for smooth things, that flatter them, rather than right things, that direct them (Isa. xxx. 10), but to those that understand themselves, and their own interest, words of truth will always be acceptable words.

7. That which he and other holy men wrote

will be of great use and advantage to us, especially being inculcated upon us by the exposition of it, v. 11. Here observe, (1.) A double benefit accruing to us from divine truths if duly applied and improved; they are *profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness*. They are of use, [1.] To excite us to our duty. They are as goads to the ox that draws the plough, putting him forward when he is dull and quickening him, to amend his pace. The truths of God *prick men to the heart* (Acts ii. 37) and put them upon bethinking themselves, when they trifle and grow remiss, and exerting themselves with more vigour in their work. While our good affections are so apt as they are to grow flat and cool, we have need of these *goads*. [2.] To engage us to persevere in our duty. They are *as nails* to those that are wavering and inconstant, to fix them to that which is good. They are *as goads* to such as are dull and draw back, and *nails* to such as are desultory and draw aside, means to establish the heart and confirm good resolutions, that we may not sit loose to our duty, nor even be taken off from it, but that what good there is in us may be *as a nail fastened in a sure place*, Ezra ix. 8. (2.) A double way of communicating divine truths, in order to these benefits:—[1.] By the scriptures, as the standing rule, the *words of the wise*, that is, of the prophets, who are called *wise men*, Matt. xxiii. 34. These we have in black and white, and may have recourse to them at any time, and make use of them as *goads and as nails*. By them we may teach ourselves; let them but come with pungency and power to the soul, let the impressions of them be deep and durable, and they will *make us wise to salvation*. [2.] By the ministry. To make the *words of the wise* more profitable to us, it is appointed that they should be impressed and fastened by the *masters of assemblies*. Solemn assemblies for religious worship are an ancient divine institution, intended for the honour of God and the edification of his church, and are not only serviceable, but necessary, to those ends. There must be masters of these assemblies, who are Christ's ministers, and as such are to preside in them, to be God's mouth to the people and theirs to God. Their business is to fasten the *words of the wise*, and drive them as *nails* to the head, in order to which the word of God is likewise *as a hammer*, Jer. xxiii. 29.

8. That which is written, and thus recommended to us, is of divine origin. Though it comes to us through various hands (many *wise men*, and many *masters of assemblies*), yet it is *given by one and the same shepherd*, the great shepherd of Israel, that leads Joseph like a flock, Ps. lxxx. 1. God is that one Shepherd, whose good Spirit indited the scriptures, and assists the *masters of the assemblies* in opening and applying the scriptures. These *words of the wise* are the true

sayings of God, on which we may rest our souls. From that one Shepherd all ministers must receive what they deliver, and speak according to the light of the written word.

9. The sacred inspired writings, if we but make use of them, are sufficient to guide us in the way to true happiness, and we need not, in the pursuit of that, to fatigue ourselves with the search of other writings (12): "*And further, nothing now remains to tell thee that of making many books there is no end*," that is, (1.) Of writing many books. "If what I have written, serve not to convince thee of the vanity of the world, and the necessity of being religious, neither would thou be convinced if I should write ever so much." If the end be not attained in the use of those books of scripture which God has blessed us with, neither should we attain the end, if we had twice as many more, nay, if we had so many that the whole world could not contain them (John xxi. 25), a much study of them would but confound and would rather be *a weariness to the flesh* than any advantage to the soul. We have much as God saw fit to give us, saw fit for us, and saw us fit for. Much less can it be expected that those who will not by these be admonished should be wrought upon by other writings. Let men write ever so many books for the conduct of human life, until they have tired themselves with much study, they cannot give better instruction than those we have from the word of God. Or, (2.) Of buying many books, making ourselves masters of them, and masters of wisdom is in them, by much study; still the desire of learning would be unsatisfied. It will give man indeed the best entertainment and the best accomplishment this world can afford him; but if we be not by these admonished of the vanity of the world, and human learning, among other things, and its insufficiency to make us happy without true piety, all there is no end of it, nor real benefit by it will weary the body, but never give the soul any true satisfaction. The great Selden subscribed to this when he owned that in all the books he had read he never found that on which he could rest his soul but in the holy scripture, especially Tit. 11, 12. By these therefore let us be admonished.

13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. 14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

The great enquiry which Solomon proposes in this book is, *What is that good which the sons of men should do?* ch. ii. 3. What the true way to true happiness, the cert means to attain our great end? He had

n sought it among those things which
 est men are eager in pursuit of, but here,
 length, he has found it, by the help of that
 recovery which God anciently made to man
 ob xxviii. 28), that serious godliness is the
 ly way to true happiness: *Let us hear the*
clusion of the whole matter, the return en-
 upon the writ of enquiry, the result of
 diligent search; you shall have all I have
 en driving at in two words. He does not
 , *Do you hear it*, but, *Let us hear it*; for
 teachers must themselves be hearers of that
 rd which they preach to others, must hear
 s from God; those are teachers by the
 ly who teach others and not themselves,
 im. ii. 21. Every word of God is pure and
 cious, but some words are worthy of more
 ecial remark, as this; the Masorites begin
 with a capital letter, as that Deut. vi. 4.
 olomon himself puts a *nota bene* before it,
 manding attention in these words, *Let us*
ur the conclusion of the whole matter. Ob-
 ve here,

I. The summary of religion. Setting aside
 matters of doubtful disputation, to be re-
 ous is to *fear God and keep his command-*
nts. 1. The root of religion is the fear of
 d reigning in the heart, a reverence of his
 jesty, a deference to his authority, and a
 ead of his wrath. *Fear God*, that is, wor-
 p God, give him the honour due to his
 ne, in all the instances of true devotion,
 ward and outward. See Rev. xiv. 7. 2.
 rule of religion is the law of God re-
 led in the scriptures. Our fear towards
 d must be taught by his commandments
 a. xxix. 13), and those we must keep and
 efully observe. Wherever the fear of God
 uppermost in the heart, there will be a
 pect to all his commandments and care to
 p them. In vain do we pretend to fear
 d if we do not make conscience of our
 y to him.

II. The vast importance of it. *This is the*
whole of man; it is all his business and all
 his blessedness; our whole duty is summed
 up in this and our whole comfort is boun-
 up in this. It is the concern of every man,
 and ought to be his chief and continual care;
 it is the common concern of all men, of their
 whole time. It is nothing to a man whether
 he be rich or poor, high or low, but it is the
 main matter, it is all in all to a man, to fear
 God and do as he bids him.

III. A powerful inducement to this, r. 14.
 We shall see of what vast consequence it is
 to us that we be religious if we consider the
 account we must every one of us shortly give
 of himself to God; thence he argued against
 a voluptuous and vicious life (*ch. xi. 9*), and
 here for a religious life: *God shall bring every*
work into judgment. Note, 1. There is a
 judgment to come, in which every man's
 eternal state will be finally determined. 2.
 God himself will be the Judge, God-man
 will, not only because he has a right to
 judge, but because he is perfectly fit for it,
 infinitely wise and just. 3. *Every work* will
 then be *brought into judgment*, will be en-
 quired into and called over again. It will
 be a day to *bring to remembrance every thing*
done in the body. 4. The great thing to be
 then judged of concerning *every work* is whe-
 ther it be good or evil, conformable to the
 will of God or a violation of it. 5. Even
 secret things, both good and evil, will be
 brought to light, and brought to account, in
 the judgment of the great day (Rom. ii. 16):
 there is no good work, no bad work, hid, but
 shall then be made manifest. 6. In con-
 sideration of the judgment to come, and the
 strictness of that judgment, it highly con-
 cerns us now to be very strict in our walk-
 ing with God, that we may *give up our ac-*
count with joy.

AN

EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, OF THE SONG OF SOLOMON.

. scripture, we are sure, is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for the support and
 dvancement of the interests of his kingdom among men, and it is never the less so for there
 eing found in it some things dark and hard to be understood, which those that are unlearned
 nd unstable wrest to their own destruction. In our belief both of the divine extraction and of
 e spiritual exposition of this book we are confirmed by the ancient, constant, and concurring
 testimony both of the church of the Jews, to whom were committed the oracles of God, and who
 ever made any doubt of the authority of this book, and of the Christian church, which happily

succeeds them in that trust and honour. I. It must be confessed, on the one hand, that if who barely reads this book be asked, as the eunuch was, *Understandest thou what thou readest*; he will have more reason than he had to say, *How can I, except some man shall guide me*. The books of scripture-history and prophecy are very much like one another, but this *Song of Solomon's* is very much unlike the songs of his father David; here is not the name of God in it; it is never quoted in the New Testament; we find not in it any expressions of natural religion or pious devotion, no, nor is it introduced by vision, or any of the marks of immediate revelation. It seems as hard as any part of scripture to be made a *savour of life unto life*, and to those who come to the reading of it with carnal minds and corrupt affections, it is a danger of being made a *savour of death unto death*; it is a flower out of which they extract poison; and therefore the Jewish doctors advised their young people not to read it till they were thirty years old, lest by the abuse of that which is most pure and sacred (*horrendum dictum—horrible to say!*) the flames of lust should be kindled with fire from heaven, which is intended for the altar only. But, II. It must be confessed, on the other hand, that with the help of the many faithful guides we have for the understanding of this book it appears to be a very bright and powerful ray of heavenly light, admirably fitted to excite pious and devout affections in holy souls, to draw out their desires towards God, to increase the delight in him, and improve their acquaintance and communion with him. It is an allegory the letter of which kills those who rest in that and look no further, but the spirit of which gives life, 2 Cor. iii. 6; John vi. 63. It is a parable, which makes divine things more difficult to those who do not love them, but more plain and pleasant to those who do, Matt. xiii. 14, 16. Experienced Christians here find a counterpart of their experiences, and to them it is intelligible, while *those* neither understand it nor relish it who have no part nor lot in this matter. It is a song, an *Epithalamium*, or nuptial song, wherein, by the expressions of love between a bridegroom and his bride, are set forth and illustrated the mutual affections that pass between God and a distinguished remnant of mankind. It is a pastoral; the bridegroom, for the more lively representation of humility and innocence, are brought in as a shepherd and his shepherdess. Now, 1. This song might easily be taken in a spiritual sense in the Jewish church, for whose use it was first composed, and was so taken, as appears by Chaldee-Paraphrase and the most ancient Jewish expositors. God betrothed the people of Israel to himself; he entered into covenant with them, and it was a marriage-covenant. He had given abundant proofs of his love to them, and required of them that they should love him with all their heart and soul. Idolatry was often spoken of as spiritual adultery, and detested upon idols, to prevent which this song was penned, representing the complacency which God took in Israel and which Israel ought to take in God, and encouraging them to continue faithful to him, though he might seem sometimes to withdraw and hide himself from them, and to wait for the further manifestation of himself in the promised Messiah. 2. It may more easily be taken in a spiritual sense by the Christian church, because the condescensions and communications of divine love appear more rich and free under the gospel than they did under the law, and the communion between heaven and earth more familiar. God sometimes spoke of himself as the husband of the Jewish church (Isa. xiv. 5, Hos. ii. 16, 19), and rejoiced in it as his bride (Isa. lxii. 4, 5). But more frequently is Christ represented as the bridegroom of his church (Matt. xxv. 1, Rom. vii. 4, 2 Cor. xi. 2, Eph. v. 32), and the church as the bride, the Lamb's wife, Rev. xix. 7; xxi. 2, 9. Pursuant to this metaphor Christ and the church in general, Christ and particular believers, are here discoursing with abundance of mutual esteem and dearest dearment. The best key to this book is the 45th Psalm, which we find applied to Christ in the New Testament, and therefore this ought to be so too. It requires some pains to find out what may, probably, be the meaning of the Holy Spirit in the several parts of this book; as David's songs are many of them level to the capacity of the meanest, and there are shallows in them in which a lamb may wade, so this of Solomon's will exercise the capacities of the learned, and there are depths in it in which an elephant may swim. But, when the meaning is found out, it will be of admirable use to excite pious and devout affections in us; and the scriptures which are plainly laid down in other scriptures when they are extracted out of this book to the soul with a more pleasing power. When we apply ourselves to the study of this book we must not only, with Moses and Joshua, *put off our shoe from off our foot*, and even for that we have bodies, because *the place where we stand is holy ground*, but we must, with Joshua, *come up hither*, must spread our wings, take a noble flight, and soar upwards, till by faith and holy love we enter into the holiest, for this is no other than the house of God and this is the gate of heaven.

CHAP. I.

In this chapter, after the title of the book (ver. 1), we have Christ and his church, Christ and a believer, expressing their esteem for each other. I. The brute, the church, speaks to the bridegroom (ver. 2-4), to the daughters of Jerusalem (ver. 5, 6), and then to the bridegroom, ver. 7. II. Christ, the bridegroom, speaks in answer to the complaints and requests of his spouse, ver. 8-11. III. The church expresses the great value she has for Christ, and the delights she takes in communion with him, ver. 12-14. IV. Christ commends the church's beauty, ver. 15. V. The church returns the commendation, ver. 16, 17. Where there is a fire of true love to Christ in the heart this will be of use to blow it up into a flame.

THE song of songs, which is Solomon's.

We have here the title of this book, showing, 1. The nature of it; it is a *song*, though it might the better answer the intention which is to stir up the affections and to help them, which poetry will be very instrumental to do. The subject is pleasing, and therefore fit to be treated of in a song, in single words which we may make melody with our hearts unto the Lord. It is evangelical; and gospel-times should be times of joy, for gospel-grace puts a new song into our mouths.

xcviii. 1. 2. The dignity of it; it is the *king of songs*, a most excellent song, not only above any human composition, or above all the other songs which Solomon penned, but even above any other of the scripture-songs, as having more of Christ in it. 3. The penman of it; it is Solomon's. It is not the song of fools, as many of the songs of love are, but a song of the wisest of men; nor can any man give a better proof of his wisdom than to celebrate the love of God to mankind and excite his own love to God and that of others with it. Solomon's songs were a thousand and five (1 Kings iv. 32); those at least of other subjects are lost, but this seraphic love remains, and will to the end of time. Solomon, like his father, was addicted to poetry, and, which way soever a man's genius lies, he should endeavour to honour God and edify the church with it. One of Solomon's names was *Jedidiah*—*beloved of the Lord* (2 Sam. xii. 25); and none so fit to write of the Lord's love as he that had himself so great an interest in it; none of all the apostles wrote so much of love as that was himself the beloved disciple and in Christ's bosom. Solomon, asaking, had great affairs to mind and manage, which took up much of his thoughts and time, yet he found art and leisure for this and other religious exercises. Men of business ought to be devout men, and not to think that business will excuse them from that which is every man's great business—to keep up communion with God. It is not certain when Solomon penned this sacred song. Some think that he penned it after he recovered himself by the grace of God from his backslidings, as a further proof of his repentance, and as if by being good to many with this song he would make amends for the hurt he had perhaps done with those vain, amorous songs, when he *loved many strange wives*; now he turned his wit the right way. It is more probable that he penned it in the beginning of his time, while he kept close to God and kept up his communion with him; and perhaps he put this song, with his father's psalms, into the hands of the chief musician, for the service of the temple, not without a key to it, for the right understanding of it. Some think that it was penned upon occasion of his marriage with Pharaoh's daughter, but that is uncertain; the tower of Lebanon, which is mentioned in this book (ch. vii. 4), was not built, as is supposed, till long after that marriage. We may reasonably think that when in the height of his prosperity he *loved the Lord* (1 Kings iii. 3) he thus *served him with joyfulness and gladness of heart in the abundance of all his days*. It may be rendered, *The song of songs, which is concerning Solomon*, who as the son and successor of David, on whom the covenant of royalty was entailed, as the ruler of the temple, and as one that excelled in wisdom and wealth, was a type of Christ, in whom are *hidden all the treasures of*

wisdom and knowledge, and yet is a greater than Solomon; this is therefore a song concerning him. It is here fitly placed after *Ecclesiastes*; for when by that book we are thoroughly convinced of the vanity of the creature, and its insufficiency to satisfy us and make a happiness for us, we shall be quickened to seek for happiness in the love of Christ, and that true transcendent pleasure which is to be found only in communion with God through him. The voice in the wilderness, that was to prepare Christ's way, cried, *All flesh is grass*.

2 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine. 3 Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee. 4 Draw me, we will run after thee: the king hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee. 5 I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. 6 Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me; they made me keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.

The spouse, in this dramatic poem, is here first introduced addressing herself to the bridegroom and then to the daughters of Jerusalem.

I. To the bridegroom, not giving him any name or title, but beginning abruptly: *Let him kiss me*; like Mary Magdalen to the supposed gardener (John xx. 15), *If thou have borne him hence*, meaning Christ, but not naming him. The heart had been before taken up with the thoughts of him, and to this relative those thoughts were the antecedent, that good matter which the heart was inditing, Ps. xlv. 1. Those that are full of Christ themselves are ready to think that others should be so too. Two things the spouse desires, and pleases herself with the thoughts of:—

1. The bridegroom's friendship (v. 2): "*Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth*, that is, be reconciled to me, and let me know that he is so; let me have the tokens of his favour." Thus the Old-Testament church desired Christ's manifesting himself in the flesh, to be no longer under the law as a school-master, under a dispensation of bondage and terror, but to receive the communications of divine grace in the gospel, in which God is reconciling the world unto himself, binding up and healing what by the law was torn and

smitten; as the mother kisses the child that she has chidden. "Let him no longer send to me, but come himself, no longer speak by angels and prophets, but let me have the word of his own mouth, those *gracious words* (Luke iv. 22), which will be to me as the *kisses of his mouth*, sure tokens of reconciliation, as Esau's kissing Jacob was." All gospel-duty is summed up in our kissing the Son (Ps. ii. 12); so all gospel-grace is summed up in his kissing us, as the father of the prodigal kissed him when he returned a penitent. It is a kiss of peace. Kisses are opposed to wounds (Prov. xxvii. 6), so are the kisses of grace to the wounds of the law. Thus all true believers earnestly desire the manifestations of Christ's love to their souls; they desire no more to make them happy than the assurance of his favour, the lifting up of the light of his countenance upon them (Ps. iv. 6, 7), and the knowledge of that love of his which surpasses knowledge; this is the one thing they desire, Ps. xxvii. 4. They are ready to welcome the manifestation of Christ's love to their souls by his Spirit, and to return them in the humble professions of love to him and complacency in him, above all. *The fruit of his lips is peace*, Isa. lvii. 19. "Let him give me ten thousand kisses whose very fruition makes me desire him the more, and, whereas all other pleasures sour and wither by using, those of the Spirit become more delightful." So bishop Reynolds. She gives several reasons for this desire. (1.) Because of the great esteem she has for his love: *Thy love is better than wine*. Wine makes glad the heart, revives the drooping spirits, and exhilarates them, but gracious souls take more pleasure in loving Christ and being beloved of him, in the fruits and gifts of his love and in the pledges and assurances of it, than any man ever took in the most exquisite delights of sense, and it is more reviving to them than ever the richest cordial was to one ready to faint. Note, [1.] Christ's love is in itself, and in the account of all the saints, more valuable and desirable than the best entertainments this world can give. [2.] Those only may expect the kisses of Christ's mouth, and the comfortable tokens of his favour, who prefer his love before all the delights of the children of men, who would rather forego those delights than forfeit his favour, and take more pleasure in spiritual joys than in any bodily refreshments whatsoever. Observe here the change of the person: *Let him kiss me*; there she speaks of him as absent, or as if she were afraid to speak to him; but, in the next words, she sees him near at hand, and therefore directs her speech to him; "*Thy love, thy loves*" (so the word is), "I so earnestly desire, because I highly esteem it." (2.) Because of the diffusive fragrant of his love and the fruits of it (v. 3): "*Because of the savour of thy good ointment* (the agreeableness and acceptableness of thy graces and comforts to all that

rightly understand both them and themselves *thy name is as ointment poured forth*, thou, so, and all that whereby thou hast made thyself known; thy very name is precious to the saints; it is an ointment and perfume which rejoice the heart." The unfolding Christ's name is as the opening of a box precious ointment, which the room is filled with the odour of. The preaching of gospel was the *manifesting the savour of knowledge in every place*, 2 Cor. ii. 14. The Spirit was the *oil of gladness* wherewith Christ was anointed (Heb. i. 9), and all true believers have that *unction* (1 John ii. 27) so that he is precious to them, and they him and to one another. *A good name is precious ointment*, but Christ's name is more fragrant than any other. Wisdom, like oil, makes the face to shine; but the Redeemer outshines, in beauty, all others. The name of Christ is not now like ointment sealed up as it had been long (*Ask not after my name for it is secret*), but like *ointment poured forth*, which denotes both the freeness and fulness of the communications of his grace by the gospel. (3.) Because of the general affection that all holy souls have to him. *Therefore do the virgins love thee*. It is Christ's love shed abroad in our hearts that draws them out in love to him; all that are pure from the corruptions of sin, that preserve the chastity of their own spirits, and true to the vows by which they have devoted themselves to God, that not only suffer not their affections to be violated, but cannot bear so much as to be solicited by the world and the flesh, those are the virgins that love Jesus Christ and follow him whithersoever he goes, Rev. xiv. 4. And, because Christ is the darling of all the pure in heart, let him be ours, and let our desire be towards him and towards the *kisses of his mouth*.

2. The bridegroom's fellowship, v. 4. Observe here,

(1.) Her petition for divine grace: *Draw me*. This implies sense of distance from him, desire of union with him. "Draw me to thyself, draw me nearer, draw me home to thee." She had prayed that he would draw nigh to her (v. 2); in order to that, she prays that he would draw her nigh to him. "*Draw me*, not only with the moral suasion which there is in the fragrant of the good ointments, not only with the attractives of that name which is as ointment poured forth but with supernatural grace, with the cords of a man and the bands of love," Hos. xi. 4. Christ has told us that none come to him but such as the Father draws, John vi. 44. We are not only weak, and cannot come of ourselves any further than we are helped, but we are naturally backward and averse to come and therefore must pray for those influences and operations of the Spirit, by the power of which we are of unwilling made willing, Ps. cx. 3. "*Draw me*, else I move not; overcome the world and the flesh that would

draw me from thee. We are not driven to Christ, but drawn in such a way as is agreeable to rational creatures.

(2.) Her promise to increase that grace: *Draw me, and then we will run after thee.* See how the doctrine of special and effectual grace consists with our duty, and is a powerful engagement and encouragement to it, and yet reserves all the glory of all the good that is in us to God only. Observe, [1.] The flowing forth of the soul after Christ, and its ready compliance with him, are the effect of his grace; we could not run after him if he did not draw us, 2 Cor. iii. 5; Phil. iv. 13. [2.] The grace which God gives us we must diligently improve. When Christ by his Spirit draws us we must with our spirits run after him. As God says, *I will, and you shall* (Ezek. xxxvi. 27), so we must say, "*Thou shalt and we will; thou shalt work in us both to will and to do, and therefore we will work out our own salvation*" (Phil. ii. 12, 13); not only we will walk, but we will run after thee, which denotes eagerness of desire, readiness of affection, vigour of pursuit, and swiftness of motion. *When thou shalt enlarge my heart then I will run the way of thy commandments* (Ps. cxix. 32); when thy right hand upholds me then my soul follows hard after thee (Ps. xlii. 8); when with lovingkindness to us he draws us (Jer. xxxi. 3) we with lovingkindness to him must run after him, Isa. xl. 31. Observe the difference between the petition and the promise: "*Draw me, and then we will run.*" When Christ pours out his Spirit upon the church in general, which is his bride, all the members of it do thence receive quickening influences, and are made to run to him with the more cheerfulness, Isa. lv. 5. Or, "*Draw me*" (says the believing soul) "*and then I will not only follow thee myself as fast as I can, but will bring all mine along with me: We will run after thee, I and the virgins that love thee*" (v. 3), *I and all that I have any interest in or influence upon, I and my house* (Josh. xxiv. 5), *I and the transgressors whom I will teach thy ways,*" Ps. li. 13. Those that put themselves forth, in compliance with divine grace, shall find that their zeal will provoke many, 1 Cor. ix. 2. Those that are lively will be active; when Philip was drawn to Christ he drew Nathanael; and they will be exemplary, and so will win those that would not be won by the word.

(3.) The immediate answer that was given to this prayer: *The King has drawn me, has brought me into his chambers.* It is not so much an answer fetched by faith from the word of Christ's grace as an answer fetched by experience from the workings of his grace. If we observe, as we ought, the returns of prayer, we may find that sometimes, while we are yet speaking, Christ hears, Isa. lxx. 24. The bridegroom is a king; so much the more wonderful is his condescension in the invitations and entertainments that he gives

us, and so much the greater reason have we to accept of them and to run after him. God is the King that has made the marriage-supper for his Son (Matt. xxii. 2) and brings in even the poor and the maimed, and even the most shy and bashful are compelled to come in. Those that are drawn to Christ are brought, not only into his courts, into his palaces (Ps. xlv. 15), but into his presence-chamber, where his secret is with them (Ps. xxv. 14), where he is free with them (John xiv. 21), and where they are safe in his pavilion, Ps. xxvii. 5; Isa. xxvi. 20. Those that wait at wisdom's gates shall be made to come (so the word is) into her chambers; they shall be led into truth and comfort.

(4.) The wonderful complacency which the spouse takes in the honour which the king put upon her. Being brought into the chamber, [1.] "We have what we would have. Our desires are crowned with unspeakable delights; all our griefs vanish, and we will be glad and rejoice. If a day in the courts, much more an hour in the chambers, is better than a thousand, than ten thousand, elsewhere." Those that are, through grace, brought into covenant and communion with God, have reason to go on their way rejoicing, as the eunuch (Acts viii. 39), and that joy will enlarge our heart and be our strength, Neh. viii. 10. [2.] All our joy shall centre in God: "*We will rejoice, not in the ointments, or the chambers, but in thee.*" It is God only that is our exceeding joy, Ps. xliii. 4. We have no joy but in Christ, and which we are indebted to him for." *Gaudium in Domino—Joy in the Lord*, was the ancient salutation, and *Salus in Domino sempiternum—Eternal salvation in the Lord*. [3.] "We will retain the relish and savour of this kindness of thine and never forget it: *We will remember thy loves more than wine*; not only thy love itself (v. 2), but the very remembrance of it shall be more grateful to us than the strongest cordial to the spirits, or the most palatable liquor to the taste. We will remember to give thanks for thy love, and it shall make more durable impressions upon us than any thing in this world."

(5.) The communion which a gracious soul has with all the saints in this communion with Christ. In the chambers to which we are brought we not only meet with him, but meet with one another (1 John i. 7); for the upright love thee; the congregation, the generation, of the upright love thee. Whatever others do, all that are Israelites indeed, and faithful to God, will love Jesus Christ. Whatever differences of apprehension and affection there may be among Christians in other things, this they are all agreed in, Jesus Christ is precious to them. *The upright* here are the same with the *virgins*, v. 3. All that remember his love more than wine will love him with a superlative love. Nor is any love acceptable to Christ but the love of the upright, love in sincerity, Eph. vi. 24.

II. To the daughters of Jerusalem, v. 5, 6.

The church in general, being in distress, speaks to particular churches to guard them against the danger they were in of being offended at the church's sufferings, 1 Thess. iii. 3. Or the believer speaks to those that were professors at large in the church, but not of it, or to weak Christians, babes in Christ, that labour under much ignorance, infirmity, and mistake, not perfectly instructed, and yet willing to be taught in the things of God. She observed these by-standers look disdainfully upon her because of her blackness, in respect both of sins and sufferings, upon the account of which they thought she had little reason to expect the kisses she wished for (v. 2) or to expect that they should join with her in her joys, v. 4. She therefore endeavours to remove this offence; she owns she is black. Guilt blackens; the heresies, scandals, and offences, that happen in the church, make her black; and the best saints have their failings. Sorrow blackens; that seems to be especially meant; the church is often in a low condition, mean, and poor, and in appearance despicable, her beauty sullied and her face foul with weeping; she is in mourning weeds, clothed with sackcloth, as the Nazarites that had become blacker than a coal, Lam. iv. 8. Now, to take off this offence,

1. She asserts her own comeliness notwithstanding (v. 5): *I am black, but comely*, black as the tents of Kedar, in which the shepherds lived, which were very coarse, and never whitened, weatherbeaten and discoloured by long use, but comely as the curtains of Solomon, the furniture of whose rooms, no doubt, was sumptuous and rich, in proportion to the stateliness of his houses. The church is sometimes black with persecution, but comely in patience, constancy, and consolation, and never the less amiable in the eyes of Christ, black in the account of men, but comely in God's esteem, black in some that are a scandal to her, but comely in others that are sincere and are an honour to her. True believers are black in themselves, but comely in Christ, with the comeliness that he puts upon them, black outwardly, for the world knows them not, but all glorious within, Ps. xlv. 13. St. Paul was weak, and yet strong, 2 Cor. xii. 10. And so the church is black and yet comely; a believer is a sinner and yet a saint; his own righteousnesses are as filthy rags, but he is clothed with the robe of Christ's righteousness. The Chaldee Paraphrase applies it to the people of Israel's blackness when they made the golden calf and their comeliness when they repented of it.

2. She gives an account how she came to be so black. The blackness was not natural, but contracted, and was owing to the hard usage that had been given her: *Look not upon me so scornfully because I am black*. We must take heed with what eye we look upon the church, especially when she is in black. *Thou shouldst not have looked upon*

the day of thy brother, the day of his affliction. Obad. 12. Be not offended; for,

(1.) *I am black* by reason of my suffering. *The sun has looked upon me*. She was fair and comely; whiteness was her proper colour; but she got this blackness by the burden and heat of the day, which she was forced to bear. She was sun-burnt, scorched with tribulation and persecution (Matt. xiii. 6, 7), and the greatest beauties, if exposed to weather, are soonest tanned. Observe how she mitigates her troubles; she does not say as Jacob (Gen. xxxi. 40), *In the day that drought consumed me*, but, *The sun has looked upon me*; for it becomes not God's suffering people to make the worst of their suffering. But what was the matter? [1.] She fell under the displeasure of those of her own house. *My mother's children were angry with me*. She was in perils by false brethren; her foes were those of her own house (Matt. x. 36), brethren by nature as men, by profession as members of the same sacred corporation, the children of the church her mother, but not of God her Father; they were angry with her. The Samaritans, who claimed kindred to the Jews, were vexed at any thing that tended to the prosperity of Jerusalem, Neh. ii. 10. Note. It is no new thing for the people of God to fall under the anger of their own mother's children. *It was thou, a man, my equal*, Ps. lv. 12, 13. This makes the trouble the more irksome and grievous; from such it is taken unkindly, and the anger of such is implacable. *A brother offended is hard to be won*. [2.] They dealt very hardly with her: *They made me the keeper of the vineyards*, that is, First, "They seduced me to sin, drew me into false worships, to serve their gods, which was like dressing their vineyards, keeping the vine of Sodom; and they would not let me keep my own vineyard, serve my own God, and observe those pure worships which he gave me in charge, and which I do and ever will own for mine." These are the grievances, which good people complain most of in a time of persecution, that their consciences are forced, and that those who rule them with rigour say to their souls, *Bow down, that we may go over*, Isa. li. 23. Or, Secondly, "They brought me into trouble, imposed that upon me which was toilsome, and burdensome, and very disgraceful." Keeping the vineyards was base servile work, and very laborious, Isa. lxi. 5. Her mother's children made her the drudge of the family. *Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce, and their wrath, for it was cruel*. The spouse of Christ has met with a great deal of hard usage.

(2.) "My sufferings are such as I have deserved; for my own vineyard have I not kept. How unrighteous soever my brethren are in persecuting me, God is righteous in permitting them to do so. I am justly made a slavish keeper of men's vineyards, because I have been a careless keeper of the vineyard God has entrusted me with." Slothful ser-

ants of God are justly made to serve their enemies, that they may know his service, and the service of the kings of the countries, 2 Chron. ii. 8; Deut. xxviii. 47, 48; Ezek. xx. 23, 24. "Think not the worse of the ways of God for my sufferings, for I smart for my own folly." Note, When God's people are oppressed and persecuted it becomes them to acknowledge their own sin to be the procuring cause of their troubles, especially their carelessness in keeping their vineyards, so that it has been *like the field of the slothful*.

7 Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou takest *thy flock* to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions? If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents. 9 I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots. 10 Thy cheeks are comely with *bows of jewels*, thy neck with chains of gold. 11 We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver.

Here is, I. The humble petition which the spouse presents to her beloved, the shepherd to the shepherd, the church and every believer to Christ, for a more free and intimate communion with him. She turns from the daughters of Jerusalem, to whom she had complained both of her sins and of her troubles, and looks up to heaven for relief and succour against both, v. 7. Here observe, The title she gives to Christ: *O thou whom my soul loveth*. Note, It is the undoubted character of all true believers that their souls love Jesus Christ, which intimates both the sincerity and the strength of their love; they *love him with all their hearts*; and those that do so may come to him boldly and may humbly plead it with him. 2. The opinion she has of him as the good shepherd of the sheep; she doubts not but he *feeds his flock and makes them rest at noon*. Jesus Christ graciously provides both repast and repose for his sheep; they are not starved, but well fed, not scattered upon the mountains, but gathered together, fed in *green pastures* and in the best time of the day *led by the still waters* and made to lie down under a cool refreshing shade. Is it with God's people a noon-time of outward troubles, inward conflicts? Christ has rest for them; he *carries them in his arms*, Isa. xl. 11. 3. Her request to him that she might be admitted into his society: *Tell me where thou feedest*. Those that would be told, that would be taught, what they are concerned to know and do, must apply to Jesus Christ, and beg of him to teach them, to tell them. Tell me where to find thee, where I may

have conversation with thee, *where thou feedest* and tendest thy flock, that there I may have some of thy company." Observe, by the way, We should not, in love to our friends and their company, tempt them or urge them to neglect their business, but desire such an enjoyment of them as will consist with it, and rather, if we can, to join with them in their business and help to forward it. "*Tell me where thou feedest*, and there I will sit with thee, walk with thee, feed my flocks with thine, and not hinder thee nor myself, but bring my work with me." Note, Those whose souls love Jesus Christ earnestly desire to have communion with him, by his word in which he speaks to us and by prayer in which we speak to him, and to share in the privileges of his flock; and we may learn from the care he takes of his church, to provide convenient food and rest for it, how to take care of our own souls, which are our charge. 4. The plea she uses for the enforcing of this request: "*For why should I be as one that turns aside by (or after) the flocks of thy companions*, that pretend to be so, but are really thy competitors, and rivals with thee." Note, Turning aside from Christ after other lovers is that which gracious souls dread, and deprecate, more than any thing else. "Thou wouldst not have me to *turn aside*, no, nor to be as one that turns aside; tell me then, O tell me, where I may be near thee, and I will never leave thee." (1.) "*Why should I lie under suspicion*, and look as if I belonged to some other and not to thee? *Why should I be thought by the flocks of our companions to be a deserter from thee*, and a retainer to some other shepherd?" Good Christians will be afraid of giving any occasion to those about them to question their faith in Christ and their love to him; they would not do any thing that looks like unconcernedness about their souls, or uncharitableness towards their brethren, or that savours of indifference and disaffection to holy ordinances; and we should pray to God to direct us into and keep us in the way of our duty, that we may not so much as *seem to come short*, Heb. iv. 1. (2.) "*Why should I lie in temptation to turn aside*, as I do while I am absent from thee?" We should be earnest with God for a settled peace in communion with God through Christ, that we may not be as waifs and strays, ready to be picked up by him that next passes by.

II. The gracious answer which the bridegroom gives to this request, v. 8. See how ready God is to answer prayer, especially prayers for instruction; even while she is yet speaking, he hears. Observe, 1. How affectionately he speaks to her: *O thou fairest among women!* Note, Believing souls are fair, in the eyes of the Lord Jesus, above any other. Christ sees a beauty in holiness, whether we do or no. The spouse had called herself black, but Christ calls her fair. Those that are low in their own eyes are so much the more amiable in the eyes of Jesus Christ.

Blushing at their own deformity (says Mr. Durham) is a chief part of their beauty. 2. How mildly he checks her for her ignorance, in these words, *If thou know not*, intimating that she might have known it if it had not been her own fault. What! dost thou not know where to find me and my flock? Compare Christ's answer to a like address of Philip's (John xiv. 9), *Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?* But, 3. With what tenderness he acquaints her where she might find him. If men say, *Lo, here is Christ, or, Lo, he is there, believe them not, go not after them*, Matt. xxiv. 23, 26. But, (1.) *Walk in the way of good men* (Prov. ii. 20), follow the track, ask for the good old way, observe the footsteps of the flock, and go forth by them. It will not serve to sit still and cry, "Lord, show me the way," but we must bestir ourselves to enquire out the way; and we may find it by looking which way the footsteps of the flock lead, what has been the practice of godly people all along; let that practice be ours, Heb. vi. 12; 1 Cor. xi. 1. (2.) Sit under the direction of good ministers: "*Feed thyself and thy kids beside the tents of the under-shepherds. Bring thy charge with thee*" (it is probable that the custom was to commit the lambs and kids to the custody of the women, the shepherdesses); "they shall all be welcome; the shepherds will be no hindrance to thee, as they were to Reuel's daughters (Exod. ii. 17), but helpers rather, and therefore abide by their tents." Note, Those that would have acquaintance and communion with Christ must closely and conscientiously adhere to holy ordinances, must join themselves to his people and attend his ministers. Those that have the charge of families must bring them with them to religious assemblies; let their kids, their children, their servants, have the benefit of the shepherds' tents.

III. The high encomiums which the bridegroom gives of his spouse. To be given in marriage, in the Hebrew dialect, is to be praised (Ps. lxxviii. 63, margin), so this spouse is here; her husband praises this virtuous woman (Prov. xxxi. 28); he praises her, as is usual in poems, by similitudes. 1. He calls her his *love* (v. 9); it is an endearing compellation often used in this book: "My friend, my companion, my familiar." 2. He compares her to a set of strong and stately horses in Pharaoh's chariots. Egypt was famous for the best horses. Solomon had his thence; and Pharaoh, no doubt, had the choicest the country afforded for his own chariots. The church had complained of her own weakness, and the danger she was in of being made a prey of by her enemies: "Fear not," says Christ; "*I have made thee like a company of horses; I have put strength into thee as I have done into the horse* (Job xxxix. 19), so that thou shalt with a gracious boldness mock at fear, and not be affrighted, like the lion, Prov. xviii. 1. The Lord has made thee as his

goodly horse in the day of battle, Zech. x. *I have compared thee to my company of horses which triumphed over Pharaoh's chariots, thy holy angels, horses of fire.*" Hab. iii. 15, *Thou didst walk through the sea with thy horse* and see Isa. lxiii. 13. We are weak in ourselves, but if Christ make us as horses, strong and bold, we need not fear what all the powers of darkness can do against us. 3. He admires the beauty and ornaments of her countenance (v. 10): *Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, the attire of the head, curls of hair, or favourites (so some), or knots of ribbons; thy neck also with chains, such as persons of the first rank wear, chains of gold.* The ordinances of Christ are the ornaments of the church. The graces, gifts, and comforts of the Spirit, are the adorning of every believing soul, and beautify it; these render it, *in the sight of God, of great price.* The ornaments of the saints are many, but orderly disposed in rows and chains, in which there is a mutual connexion with and dependence upon each other. The beauty is not from any thing in themselves, from the neck or from the cheeks, but from the ornaments with which they are set off. *It was comeliness which I put upon thee, saith the Lord God; for we were born not only naked but polluted, Ezek. xvi. 14.*

IV. His gracious purpose to add to her ornaments; for where God has given true grace he will give more grace; to him *all things shall be given.* Is the church courageous in her resistance of sin, as the horses in Pharaoh's chariots? Is she comely in the exercise of grace, as with rows of jewels and chains of gold? She shall be yet further beautified (v. 11): *We will make thee borders of gold, inlaid, or enamelled, with studs of silver.* Whatever is wanting shall be made up, till the church and every true believer come to be perfect in beauty; see Ezek. xlv. 14. This is here undertaken to be done by the concurring power of the three persons in the Godhead: *We will do it*; like that (Gen. i. 26), "*Let us make man*"; so let us now make him, and perfect his beauty." The same that is the author will be the finisher of the good work; and it cannot miscarry.

12 While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof. 13 A bundle of myrrour is my wellbeloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts. 14 My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi. 15 Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thine eyes are like doves' eyes. 16 Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant also our bed is green. 17 The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir.

Here the conference is carried on between Christ and his spouse, and endearments are mutually exchanged.

I. Believers take a great complacency in Christ, and in communion with him. *To you that believe he is precious*, above any thing in this world, 1 Pet. ii. 7. Observe, 1. The humble reverence believers have for Christ as their Sovereign, v. 12. He is a King in respect both of dignity and dominion; wears the crown of honour, he bears the sceptre of power, both which are the unalienable satisfaction of all his people. This King has his royal table spread in the gospel, which is *made for all nations a feast of fat things*, Isa. xxv. 6. Wisdom has *furnished the table*, Prov. ix. 1. He *sits at this table to see his guests* (Matt. xxii. 11), to see that nothing be wanting that is fit for them; he *sits with them and they with him* (Rev. iii. 20); has fellowship with them and rejoices in them; he *sits at his table* to bid them welcome, and to carve for them, as Christ *broke five loaves* and gave to his disciples, that they might distribute to the multitude. He sits there to receive petitions, as Ahasuerus admitted Esther's petition at the banquet of pleasure. He has promised to be present with his people in his ordinances always. Then believers do him all the honour they can, and study how to express their esteem of him and gratitude to him, as Mary did when he anointed his head with the ointment of *kenard* that was *very costly*, one pound of *north three hundred pence*, and so fragrant that the house was filled with the *pleasing odour* of it (John xii. 3), which story seems as if it were designed to refer to this passage, for Christ was then *sitting at table*. When good Christians, in any religious duty, especially the ordinance of the Lord's supper, where the King is pleased, as it were, to *sit* with us at his own table, have their graces exercised, their hearts broken by repentance, healed by his blood, and inflamed with holy love and desire towards Christ, and with joyful expectations of the glory to be revealed, then the *kenard sends forth the smell thereof*. Christ is pleased to reckon himself honoured by it, and to accept of it as an instance of respect to him, as it was in the wise men of the east, who paid their homage to the new-born King of the Jews by presenting to him *frankincense* and *myrrh*. The graces of God's Spirit in the hearts of believers are exceedingly precious in themselves and pleasing to Christ, and his presence in ordinances draws them into act and exercise. If he withdraw, graces wither and languish, as plants in the absence of the sun; if he approach, the face of the soul is renewed, as of the earth in the spring; and then it is time to bestir ourselves, that we may not lose the gleam, not lose the seed; for nothing is done acceptably but what God does, Heb. xii. 28.

2. The strong affection they have for Christ as their *beloved*, their *well-beloved*, v. 13.

Christ is not only *beloved* by all believing souls, but is their *well-beloved*, their *best-beloved*, their only beloved; he has that place in their hearts which no rival can be admitted to, the innermost and uppermost place. Observe, (1.) How Christ is accounted of by all believers: He is a *bundle of myrrh* and a *cluster of camphire*, something, we may be sure, nay, every thing, that is pleasant and delightful. The doctrine of his gospel, and the comforts of his Spirit, are very refreshing to them, and they rest in his love; none of all the delights of sense are comparable to the spiritual pleasure they have in meditating on Christ and enjoying him. There is a complicated sweetness in Christ and an abundance of it; there is a *bundle of myrrh* and a *cluster of camphire*. We are not straitened in him in whom there is *all fulness*. The word translated *camphire* is *copher*, the same word that signifies *atonement* or *propitiation*. Christ is a *cluster* of merit and righteousness to all believers; therefore he is dear to them because *he is the propitiation for their sins*. Observe what a stress the spouse lays upon the application: He is *unto me*, and again *unto me*, all that is sweet; whatever he is to others, he is so to me. He *loved me*, and *gave himself for me*. He is *my Lord*, and *my God*. (2.) How he is accepted: He *shall lie all night between my breasts*, near my heart. Christ lays the beloved disciples in his bosom; why then should not they lay their beloved Saviour in their bosoms? Why should not they embrace him with both arms, and hold him fast, with a resolution never to let him go? Christ must *dwell in the heart* (Eph. iii. 17), and, in order to that, the adulteries must be put from *between the breasts* (Hos. ii. 2), no pretender must have his place in the soul. He shall be as a *bundle of myrrh*, or perfume bag, between *my breasts*, always sweet to me; or his effigies in miniature, his love-tokens, shall be hung between *my breasts*, according to the custom of those that are dear to each other. He shall not only be laid there for a while, but shall lie there, shall abide there.

II. Jesus Christ has a great complacency in his church and in every true believer; they are amiable in his eyes (v. 15): *Behold, thou art fair, my love*; and again, *Behold, thou art fair*. He says this, not to make her proud (humility is one principal ingredient in spiritual beauty), but, 1. To show that there is a real beauty in holiness, that all who are sanctified are thereby beautified; they are truly fair. 2. That he takes great delight in that good work which his grace has wrought on the souls of believers; so that though they have their infirmities, whatever they think of themselves, and the world thinks of them, he thinks them fair. He calls them friends. The *hidden man of the heart*, in that which is not corruptible, is in the sight of God of great price, 1 Pet. iii. 4. 3. To comfort weak believers, who are discouraged by their

own blackness; let them be told again and again that they are fair. 4. To engage all who are sanctified to be very thankful for that grace which has made them fair, who by nature were deformed, and changed the Ethiopian's skin. One instance of the beauty of the spouse is here mentioned, that she *has doves' eyes*, as *ch. iv. 1*. Those are fair, in Christ's account, who have, not the piercing eye of the eagle, but the pure and chaste eye of the *dove*, not like the hawk, who, when he soars upwards, still has his eye upon the prey on earth, but a humble modest eye, such an eye as discovers a simplicity and godly sincerity and a dove-like innocency, eyes enlightened and guided by the Holy Spirit, that blessed Dove, weeping eyes. I did *mourn as a dove*, Ezek. vii. 16.

III. The church expresses her value for Christ, and returns esteem for esteem (*v. 16*): *Behold, thou art fair*. See how Christ and believers praise one another. Israel saith of God, *Who is like thee?* Exod. xv. 11. And God saith of Israel, *Who is like thee?* Deut. xxxiii. 29. Lord, saith the church, "Dost thou call me *fair*? No; if we speak of strength, *thou art strong* (Job ix. 19), so, if of beauty, *thou art fair*. I am fair no otherwise than as I have thy image stamped upon me. Thou art the great Original; I am but a faint and imperfect copy, I am but thy *umbra—the shadow of thee*, John i. 16; iii. 34. Thou art fair in thyself and (which is more) *pleasant* to all that are thine. Many are fair enough to look at, and yet the sourness of their temper renders them unpleasant; but *thou art fair, yea, pleasant*." Christ is pleasant, as he is ours, in covenant with us, in relation to us. "Thou art pleasant now, when the *King sits at his table*." Christ is always precious to believers, but in a special manner pleasant when they are admitted into communion with him, when they hear his voice, and see his face, and taste his love. *It is good to be here*. Having expressed her esteem of her husband's person, she next, like a loving spouse, that is transported with joy for having disposed of herself so well, applauds the accommodations he had for her entertainment, his *bed, his house, his rafters or galleries* (*v. 16*), which may fitly be applied to those holy ordinances in which believers have fellowship with Jesus Christ, receive the tokens of his love and return their pious and devout affections to him, increase their acquaintance with him and improve their advantages by him. Now, 1. These she calls *ours*, Christ and believers having a joint-interest in them. As husband and wife are *heirs together* (1 Pet. iii. 7), so believers are *joint-heirs with Christ*, Rom. viii. 17. They are his institutions and their privileges; in them Christ and believers meet. She does not call them *mine*, for a believer will own nothing as his but what Christ shall have an interest in, nor *thine*, for Christ has said, *All that I have is thine*, Luke xv. 31. All is *ours*

if we are Christ's. Those that can by no lay claim to Christ may lay claim to all that is his. 2. These are the best of the kind. Does the colour of the bed, and the furniture belonging to it, help to set it off? *Our is green*, a colour which, in a pastoral, is preferred before any other, because it is the colour of the fields and groves where the shepherd's business and delight are. It is a refreshing colour, good for the eyes; it denotes fruitfulness. *I am like a green olive tree*, Ps. lii. 8. We are *married to Christ*, that we should bring forth unto God, Rom. vii. 4. The beams of our house are cedars (*v. 17*), which probably refers to the temple Solomon had lately built for communion between God and Israel, which was of cedar, a strong sort of wood, sweet, durable, which will never rot, typifying the firmness and continuance of the church, the gospel temple. The galleries for walking are of *olive or cypress*, some sort of wood that was pleasing both to the sight and to the smell, intimating the delight which the saints take in walking with Christ and conversing with him. Every thing in the covenant of grace (on which foot all their treaties are carried on) is very firm, very fine, and very fragrant.

CHAP. II.

In this chapter, I. Christ speaks both concerning himself and concerning his church, ver. 1, 2. II. The church speaks, I. concerning the pleasure and satisfaction she had in communion with Christ, ver. 3, 4. 2. Entertaining herself with the tokens of his favour and taking care that nothing happened to intercept them, ver. 5–7. 3. Triumphant in his approach towards her, ver. 8, 9. 4. Repeating the gracious calls he given her to go along with him a walking, invited by the sures of the returning spring (ver. 10–13), out of her obscurity (ver. 14), and the charge he had given to the servants to desert that which would be hurtful to his vineyard, ver. 15. 5. Rejoicing in her interest in him, ver. 16. 6. Longing for his arrival, ver. 17. Those whose hearts are filled with love to Christ, and of heaven, know best what these things mean.

I AM the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys. 2 As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.

See here, I. What Christ is pleased to compare himself to; and he condescends very much in the comparison. He that is the Son of the Highest, the bright and morning star, calls and owns himself *the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys*, to express his presence with his people in this world, the easiness of their access to him, and the beauty and sweetness which they find in him, and to teach them to adorn themselves with him, as shepherds and shepherdesses, when they appeared gay, were decked with roses and lilies, garlands and chaplets of flowers. *The rose*, for beauty and fragrantcy, is the chief of flowers, and our Saviour prefers the clothing of the lily before that of Solomon, *all his glory*. Christ is *the rose of Sharon* where probably the best roses grew and most plenty, *the rose of the field* (so some denoting that the gospel salvation is a common salvation; it lies open to all; whoever will may come and gather the rose-buds, privileges and comforts that grow in the covenant of grace. He is not a rose locked

a garden, but all may come and receive benefit by him and comfort in him. He is *lily* for whiteness, a *lily of the valleys* for sweetness, for those which we call so yield a strong perfume. He is a *lily of the valleys*, *low places*, in his humiliation, exposed to injury. Humble souls see most beauty in him. Whatever he is to others, to those that are in the *valleys* he is a *lily*. He is the *rose*, the *lily*; there is none besides. Whatever excellency is in Christ, it is in him singularly and in the highest degree.

II. What he is pleased to compare his church to, v. 2. 1. She is *as a lily*; he himself is the *lily* (v. 1), she is *as the lily*. The beauty of believers consists in their conformity and resemblance to Jesus Christ. They are his love, and so they are as lilies, for those are made like Christ in whose hearts *love is shed abroad*. 2. *As a lily among thorns*, as a *lily* compared with *thorns*. The church of Christ as far excels all other societies as a bed of roses excels a bush of thorns. *As a lily* compassed with *thorns*. The wicked, the daughters of this world, such have no love to Christ, are as *thorns*, worthless and useless, good for nothing but to stop a gap; nay, they are noxious and hurtful; they came in with sin and are a fruit of the curse; they choke good seed, and hinder good fruit, and their end is to be burned. God's people are *as lilies among thorns*, scratched and torn, shaded and obscured, by them; they are dear to Christ, yet yet exposed to hardships and troubles in this world; they must expect it, for they are planted *among thorns* (Ezek. ii. 6), but they are nevertheless dear to him; he does not overlook nor undervalue any of his lilies for their being *among thorns*. When they are *among thorns* they must still be *as lilies*, must maintain their innocence and purity, and, though they are *among thorns*, must not be turned into *thorns*, must not render railing railing, and, if they thus preserve their character, they shall be still owned as comparable to Christ. Grace in the soul is a *lily among thorns*; corruptions are *thorns in the flesh* (2 Cor. xii. 7), are as Canaanites to God's Israel (Josh. xxiii. 13); but the *lily* that is now *among thorns* shall shortly be transplanted out of this wilderness into that paradise where there is no pricking brier nor piercing thorn, Ezek. xxviii. 24.

3 As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under its shadow with great delight, and its fruit was sweet to my taste. 4 He brought me to the banquetting house, and his banner over me was love. 5 Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love. 6 His left hand is under

my head, and his right hand doth embrace me. 7 I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roses, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.

Here, I. The spouse commends her beloved and prefers him before all others: *As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood*, which perhaps does not grow so high, nor spread so wide, as some other trees, yet is useful and serviceable to man, yielding pleasant and profitable fruit, while the other trees are of little use, no, not the cedars themselves, till they are cut down, so is my beloved among the sons, so far does he excel them all,—all the sons of God, the angels (that honour was put upon him which was never designed for them, Heb. i. 4),—all the sons of men; he is fairer than them all, fairer than the choicest of them, Ps. xlv. 2. Name what creature you will, and you will find Christ has the pre-eminence above them all. The world is a barren tree to a soul; Christ is a fruitful one.

II. She remembers the abundant comfort she has had in communion with him: She sat down by him with great delight, as shepherds sometimes repose themselves, sometimes converse with one another, under a tree. A double advantage she found in sitting down so near the Lord Jesus:—1. A refreshing shade: *I sat down under his shadow*, to be sheltered by him from the scorching heat of the sun, to be cooled, and so to take some rest. Christ is to believers as the shadow of a great tree, nay, of a great rock in a weary land, Isa. xxxii. 2; xxv. 4. When a poor soul is parched with convictions of sin and the terrors of the law, as David (Ps. xxxii. 4), when fatigued with the troubles of this world, as Elijah when he sat down under the juniper tree (1 Kings xix. 4), they find that in Christ, in his name, his graces, his comforts, and his undertaking for poor sinners, which revives them and keeps them from fainting; those that are weary and heavily laden may find rest in Christ. It is not enough to pass by this shadow, but we must sit down under it (*here will I dwell, for I have desired it*); and we shall find it not like Jonah's gourd, that soon withered, and left him in a heat, both inward and outward, but like the tree of life, the leaves whereof were not only for shelter, but for the healing of the nations. We must sit down under this shadow with delight, must put an entire confidence in the protection of it (as Judges ix. 15), and take an entire complacency in the refreshment of it. But that is not all: 2. Here is pleasing nourishing food. This tree drops its fruits to those that sit down under its shadow, and they are welcome to them, and will find them sweet unto their taste, whatever they are to others. Believers have tasted that the Lord

Jesus is gracious (1 Pet. ii. 3); his fruits are all the precious privileges of the new covenant, purchased by his blood and communicated by his Spirit. Promises are sweet to a believer, yea, and precepts too. *I delight in the law of God after the inward man*: Pardons are sweet, and peace of conscience is sweet, assurances of God's love, joys of the Holy Ghost, the hopes of eternal life, and the present earnest and foretastes of it are sweet, all sweet to those that have their spiritual senses exercised. If our mouths be put out of taste for the pleasures of sin, divine consolations will be *sweet to our taste, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb*.

III. She owns herself obliged to Jesus Christ for all the benefit and comfort she had in communion with him (v. 4): *"I sat down under the apple-tree, glad to be there, but he admitted me, nay, he pressed me, to a more intimate communion with him: Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, why standest thou without? He brought me to the house of wine, the place where he entertains his special friends, from lower to higher measures and degrees of comfort, from the fruit of the apple tree to the more generous fruit of the vine. To him that values the divine joys he has more shall be given. One of the rabbins by the banquet-house understands the tabernacle of the congregation, where the interpretation of the law was given; surely then we may apply it to Christian assemblies, where the gospel is preached and gospel-ordinances are administered, particularly the Lord's supper, that banquet of wine, especially to the inside of those ordinances, communion with God in them. Observe, 1. How she was introduced: "He brought me, wrought in me an inclination to draw nigh to God, helped me over my discouragements, took me by the hand, guided and led me, and gave me an access with boldness to God as a Father," Eph. ii. 18. We should never have come into the banquet-house, never have been acquainted with spiritual pleasures, if Christ had not brought us, by opening for us a new and living way and opening in us a new and living fountain. 2. How she was entertained: His banner over me was love; he brought me in with a banner displayed over my head, not as one he triumphed over, but as one he triumphed in, and whom he always caused to triumph with him and in him, 2 Cor. ii. 14. The gospel is compared to a banner or ensign (Isa. xi. 12), and that which is represented in this banner, written in it in letters of gold, letters of blood, is love, love; and this is the entertainment in the banquet-house. Christ is the captain of our salvation, and he enlists all his soldiers under the banner of love; in that they centre; to that they must continually have an eye, and be animated by it. The love of Christ must constrain them to fight manfully. When a city was taken the conqueror set up his standard in it. "He has conquered me with his love, overcome*

me with kindness, and that is the banner over me." This she speaks of as what she had formerly had experience of, and she remembers it with delight. Eaten bread must not be forgotten, but remembered with thankfulness to that God who has fed us with manna in this wilderness.

IV. She professes her strong affection and most passionate love to Jesus Christ (v. 5). *I am sick of love, overcome, overpowered* it. David explains this when he says (Ps. cxix. 20), *My soul breaks for the longing that it has unto thy judgments*, and (v. 81), *My soul faints for thy salvation*, languishing with care to make it sure and fear of coming short of it. The spouse was now absent perhaps from her beloved, waiting for his return, and cannot bear the grief of distance and delay. How much better is it with the soul when it is sick of love to Christ than when it is satisfied with the love of this world! She cries out for cordials: *"Oh stay me with flagons, ointments, or flowers, any thing that is reviving; comfort me with apples, with the fruit of that apple-tree, Christ (v. 3), with the merit and mediation of Christ and the sense of his love to my soul."* Note, Those that are sick of love to Christ shall not want spiritual supports, while they are yet waiting for spiritual comforts.

V. She experiences the power and tenderness of divine grace, relieving her in her present faintings, v. 6. Though he seemed to have withdrawn, yet he was even then a present help, 1. To sustain the love-sick soul and to keep it from fainting away: *"His left hand is under my head, to bear it up, nay, a pillow to lay it easy."* David experienced God's hand upholding him then when *his soul was following hard after God* (Ps. lxi. 8), and Job in a state of desertion yet found that God put strength into him, Job xxiii. 4. *All his saints are in his hand*, which tenderly holds their aching heads. 2. To encourage the love-sick soul to continue waiting till returns: *"For, in the mean time, his right hand embraces me, and thereby gives me an unquestionable assurance of his love."* Believers owe all their strength and comfort to the supporting left hand and embracing right hand of the Lord Jesus.

VI. Finding her beloved thus nigh unto her she is in great care that her communion with him be not interrupted (v. 7): *I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem. Jerusalem, the mother of us all, charges all her daughters, the church charges all her members, the believing soul charges all its powers and faculties, the spouse charges herself at all about her, not to stir up, or awake, her love until he please, now that he is asleep in her arms, as she was borne up in his, v. 6. She gives them this charge by the roses and the hands of the field, that is, by every thing that is amiable in their eyes, and dear to them, the loving hind and the pleasant roe. "My love is to me dearer than those can be*

and will be disturbed, like them, with a very little noise." Note, 1. Those that experience the sweetness of communion with Christ, and the sensible manifestations of his love, cannot but desire the continuance of these blessed views, these blessed visits. Peter would make tabernacles upon the holy mount, Matt. xvii. 4. 2. Yet Christ will, when he pleases, withdraw those extraordinary communications of himself, for he is a free-agent, and the Spirit, as *the wind, blows where it listeth*, and in his pleasure becomes us to acquiesce. But, 3. Our duty must be that we do nothing to provoke him to withdraw and to hide his face, that we carefully watch over our own hearts and suppress every thought that may grieve his good Spirit. Let those that have comfort be afraid of sinning it away.

8 The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, showing himself through the lattice. My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. 11 For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; 13 The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

The church is here pleasing herself exceedingly with the thoughts of her further communion with Christ after she has recovered from her fainting fit.

1. She rejoices in his approach, v. 8. 1. She hears him speak: "It is the voice of my beloved, calling to me to tell me he is coming." Like one of his own sheep, she knows his voice before she sees him, and can easily distinguish it from the voice of a stranger (John x. 4, 5), and, like a faithful friend of the bridegroom, she rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice, John iii. 29. With an air of triumph and exultation does she cry out, "It is the voice of my beloved, it is the voice of no other, for none besides can speak to the heart and make that burn." She sees him come, sees the goings of God, our King, Ps. xlviii. 24. Behold, he comes. This may very well be applied to the respect which the Old-Testament saints had of Christ's coming in the flesh. Abraham saw his day at a distance, and was glad. The nearer the time came the clearer discoveries

were made of it; and those that waited for the consolation of Israel with an eye of faith saw him come, and triumphed in the sight: Behold, he comes; for they had heard him say (Ps. xl. 7), Lo, I come, to which their faith here affixes its seal: Behold, he comes as he has promised. (1.) He comes cheerfully and with great alacrity; he comes leaping and skipping like a roe and like a young hart (v. 9), as one pleased with his own undertaking, and that had his heart upon it and his delights with the sons of men. When he came to be baptized with the baptism of blood, how was he straitened till it was accomplished! Luke xii. 50. (2.) He comes slighting and surmounting all the difficulties that lay in his way; he comes leaping over the mountains, skipping over the hills (so some read it), making nothing of the discouragements he was to break through; the curse of the law, the death of the cross, must be undergone, all the powers of darkness must be grappled with, but, before the resolutions of his love, these great mountains become plains. Whatever opposition is given at any time to the deliverance of God's church, Christ will break through it, will get over it. (3.) He comes speedily, like a roe or a young hart; they thought the time long (every day a year), but really he hastened; as now, so then, surely he comes quickly; he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. When he comes for the deliverance of his people he flies upon a cloud, and never stays beyond his time, which is the best time. We may apply it to particular believers, who find that even when Christ has withdrawn sensible comforts, and seems to forsake, yet it is but for a small moment, and he will soon return with everlasting lovingkindness.

II. She pleases herself with the glimpses she has of him, and the glances she has of his favour: "He stands behind our wall; I know he is there, for sometimes he looks forth at the window, or looks in at it, and displays himself through the lattice." Such was the state of the Old-Testament church while it was in expectation of the coming of the Messiah. The ceremonial law is called a wall of partition (Eph. ii. 14), a veil (2 Cor. iii. 13); but Christ stood behind that wall. They had him near them; they had him with them, though they could not see him clearly. He that was the substance was not far off from the shadows, Col. ii. 17. They saw him looking through the windows of the ceremonial institutions and smiling through those lattices; in their sacrifices and purifications Christ discovered himself to them, and gave them intimations and earnestings of his grace, both to engage and to encourage their longings for his coming. Such is our present state in comparison with what it will be at Christ's second coming. We now see him through a glass darkly (the body is a wall between us and him, through the windows of which we now and then get a sight of him), but not

face to face, as we hope to see him shortly. In the sacraments Christ is near us, but it is *behind the wall of external signs, through those lattices* he manifests himself to us; but we shall shortly *see him as he is*. Some understand this of the state of a believer when he is under a cloud; Christ is out of sight and yet not far off. See Job xxxiv. 14, and compare Job xxiii. 8—10. She calls the wall that interposed between her and her beloved *our wall*, because it is sin, and nothing else, that separates between us and God, and that is a wall of our own erecting (Isa. lix. 1); behind that he stands, as *waiting to be gracious*, and ready to be reconciled, upon our repentance. Then *he looks in at the window*, observes the frame of our hearts and the working of our souls; he looks forth at the window, and shows himself in giving them some comfort, that they may continue hoping for his return.

III. She repeats the gracious invitation he had given her to come a walking with him, v. 10—13. She remembers what her beloved said to her, for it had made a very pleasing and powerful impression upon her, and the word that quickens us we shall never forget. She relates it for the encouragement of others, telling them what he had said to her soul and *done for her soul*, Ps. lxvi. 16.

1. He called her his love and his fair one. Whatever she is to others, to him she is acceptable, and in his eyes she is amiable. Those that take Christ for their beloved, he will own as his; never was any love lost that was bestowed upon Christ. Christ, by expressing his love to believers, invites and encourages them to follow him.

2. He called her to *rise and come away*, v. 10, and again v. 13. The repetition denotes backwardness in her (we have need to be often called to come away with Jesus Christ; *precept must be upon precept and line upon line*), but it denotes earnestness in him; so much is his heart set upon the welfare of precious souls that he importunes them most pressingly to that which is for their own good.

3. He gave for a reason the return of the spring, and the pleasantness of the weather.

(1.) The season is elegantly described in a great variety of expressions. [1.] *The winter is past*, the dark, cold, and barren winter. Long winters and hard ones pass away at last; they do not endure always. And the spring would not be so pleasant as it is if it did not succeed the winter, which is a foil to its beauty, Eccl. vii. 14. Neither the face of the heavens nor that of the earth is always the same, but subject to continual vicissitudes, diurnal and annual. *The winter is past*, but has not passed away for ever; it will come again, and we must provide for it in summer, Prov. vi. 6, 8. We must weep in winter, and rejoice in summer, as though we wept and rejoiced not, for both are passing. [2.] *The rain is over and gone*, the winter-rain, the cold stormy rain; it is over now, and *the dew is as*

the dew of herbs. Even the rain that drowns the world was over and gone at last (viii. 1—3), and God promised to drown the world no more, which was a type and figure of the covenant of grace, Isa. liv. 9.

The flowers appear on the earth. All winter they are dead and buried in their roots, there is no sign of them; but in the spring they revive, and show themselves in a wonderful variety and verdure, and, like them, that produces them, *tarry not for man*, v. 7. They appear, but they will soon appear again, and man is herein like *flower of the field*, Job xiv. 2. [4.] *The singing of birds has come*. The winter birds, which all the winter lie hid in their retirements and scarcely live, when the spring returns forget all the calamities of the winter, and to the best of their capacity chant forth the praises of their Creator. Doubtless who understands the birds that cry for winter (Ps. cxlvii. 9) takes notice of those that sing for joy, Ps. civ. 12. The singing of the birds may shame our silence in God's praises, they are better fed (Matt. vi. 26), and better taught (Job xxv. 11), and are of more value than many sparrows. They live without intricate care (Matt. vi. 26) and therefore they sing, while we murmur. [5.] *The voice of the turtle is heard in our land*, which is one of the season-birds mentioned Jer. viii. 7, observe the time of their coming and the time of their singing, and so shame us who *know not the judgment of the Lord*, understand not the times, nor do that which is *beautiful in its season*, do not sing in their time. [6.] *The fig-tree puts forth her green figs*, by which we know that summer is near (Matt. xxiv. 32), when the green figs will be ripe figs and fit for use; and the vines and the tender grape give a good smell. The earth produces not only flowers (v. 12), but fruits, and the smell of the fruits, which are profitable, is to be preferred far before that of flowers, which are only for show and pleasure. Serpents, they say, are driven away by the smell of vines; and who is the old serpent and who the true vine, we know very well.

(2.) Now this description of the return of spring, as a reason for coming away with Christ, is applicable, [1.] To the introduction of the gospel in the room of the Old Testament dispensation, during which it had been winter time with the church. Christ's gospel warms that which was cold, makes it fruitful which before was dead and barren, when it comes to any place it puts a beauty and glory upon that place (2 Cor. iii. 7) and furnishes occasion for joy. Spring-time is pleasant time, and so is gospel-time. *As venturo latentur ut omnia seculo—Behold the joy the dawning age inspires!* said Virgil, of the Sibyls, perhaps with more reference to the setting up of the Messiah's kingdom than that time than he himself thought of. Ps. xcvi. 11. *Arise then, and improve the spring-time. Come away from the world*

the flesh, come into fellowship with Christ, Cor. i. 9. [2.] To the delivering of the church from the power of persecuting enemies, and the restoring of liberty and peace to it, after a severe winter of suffering and strait. When the storms of trouble are over and gone, when the voice of the turtle, the joyful sound of the gospel of Christ, is again heard, and ordinances are enjoyed with freedom, then *arise and come away* to improve the happy juncture. Walk in the light of the Lord; sing in the ways of the Lord. When the churches had rest, then were they edified, Acts ix. 31. [3.] To the conversion of sinners from a state of nature to a state of grace. That blessed change is like the return of the spring, a universal change and a very comfortable one; it is a new creation; it is being born again. The soul that was hard, and cold, and frozen, and unprofitable, like the earth in winter, becomes fruitful, like the earth in spring, and by degrees, like it, brings its fruits to perfection. This blessed change is owing entirely to the approaches and influences of the Lord of righteousness, who calls to us from heaven to *arise and come away*: come, gather in the summer. [4.] To the consolations of the saints after a state of inward dejection and despondency. A child of God, under doubts and fears, is like the earth in winter, its nights long, its days dark, good affections chilled, nothing done, nothing got, the hand sealed. But comfort will return; the birds shall sing again, and the flowers appear. Arise therefore, poor drooping soul, and come away to thy beloved. *Arise, and shake thyself from the dust*, Isa. lii. 2. *Arise, shine, for thy light has come* (Isa. lx. 1); *walk in that light*, i. ii. 5. [5.] To the resurrection of the body at the last day, and the glory to be revealed. The bones that lay in the grave, as the roots of plants in the ground during the winter, all then flourish as a herb, Isa. lxvi. 14; vi. 19. That will be an eternal farewell to winter and a joyful entrance upon an everlasting spring.

14 O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely. 15 Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes. 16 My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies. 17 Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, arise, my beloved, and be thou like a young hart upon the mountains of Bethel.

Here is, I. The encouraging invitation which Christ gives to the church, and every believing soul, to come into communion with him, 14.

1. His love is now his dove; David had called the church God's turtle-dove (Ps. lxxiv. 19), and so she is here called; a dove for beauty, her wings covered with silver (Ps. lxxviii. 13), for innocence and inoffensiveness; a gracious spirit is a dove-like spirit, harmless, loving quietness and cleanliness, and faithful to Christ, as the turtle to her mate. The Spirit descended like a dove on Christ, and so he does on all Christians, making them of a meek and quiet spirit. She is Christ's dove, for he owns her and delights in her; she can find no rest but in him and his ark, and therefore to him, as her Noah, she returns.

2. This dove is in the clefts of the rock and in the secret places of the stairs. This speaks either, (1.) Her praise. Christ is the rock, to whom she flies for shelter and in whom alone she can think herself safe and find herself easy, as a dove in the hole of a rock, when struck at by the birds of prey, Jer. xlviii. 28. Moses was hid in a cleft of the rock, that he might behold something of God's glory, which otherwise he could not have borne the brightness of. She retires into the secret places of the stairs, where she may be alone, undisturbed, and may the better commune with her own heart. Good Christians will find time to be private. Christ often withdrew to a mountain himself alone, to pray. Or, (2.) Her blame. She crept into the clefts of the rock, and the secret places, for fear and shame, any where to hide her head, being heartless and discouraged, and shunning even the sight of her beloved. Being conscious to herself of her own unfitness and unworthiness to come into his presence, and speak to him, she drew back, and was like a silly dove without heart, Hos. vii. 11.

3. Christ graciously calls her out of her retirements: Come, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice. She was mourning like a dove (Isa. xxxviii. 14), bemoaning herself like the doves of the valleys, where they are near the clefts of the impending rocks, mourning for her iniquities (Ezek. vii. 16) and refusing to be comforted. But Christ calls her to lift up her face without spot, being purged from an evil conscience (Job xi. 15; xxii. 26), to come boldly to the throne of grace, having a great high priest there (Heb. iv. 16), to tell what her petition is and what her request: Let me hear thy voice, hear what thou hast to say; what would you that I should do unto you? Speak freely, speak up, and fear not a slight or repulse.

4. For her encouragement, he tells her the good thoughts he had of her, whatever she thought of herself: Sweet is thy voice; thy praying voice, though thou canst but chatter like a crane or a swallow (Isa. xxxviii. 14); it is music in God's ears. He has assured us that the prayer of the upright is his delight; he smelled a sweet savour from Noah's sacrifice, and the spiritual sacrifices are no less acceptable, 1 Pet. ii. 5. This does not so much commend our services as God's gracious con-

descension in making the best of them, and the efficacy of the *much incense* which is *offered with the prayers of saints*, Rev. viii. 3. "That countenance of thine, which thou art ashamed of, is comely, though now mournful, much more will it be so when it becomes cheerful." Then the voice of prayer is sweet and acceptable to God when the countenance, the conversation in which we show ourselves before men, is holy, and so comely, and agreeable to our profession. Those that are sanctified have the best comeliness.

II. The charge which Christ gives to his servants to oppose and suppress that which is a terror to his church and drives her, like a poor frightened dove, into the clefts of the rock, and which is an obstruction and prejudice to the interests of his kingdom in this world and in the heart (v. 15): *Take us the foxes* (take them for us, for it is good service both to Christ and the church), *the little foxes*, that creep in insensibly; for, though they are little, they do great mischief, they *spoil the vines*, which they must by no means be suffered to do at any time, especially now when our vines have *tender grapes* that must be preserved, or the vintage will fail. Believers are as vines, weak but useful plants; their fruits are as *tender grapes* at first, which must have time to come to maturity. This charge to *take the foxes* is, 1. A charge to particular believers to mortify their own corruptions, their sinful appetites and passions, which are as *foxes, little foxes*, that destroy their graces and comforts, quash good motions, crush good beginnings, and prevent their coming to perfection. Seize the *little foxes*, the first risings of sin, the little ones of Babylon (Ps. cxxxvii. 9), those sins that seem little, for they often prove very dangerous. Whatever we find a hindrance to us in that which is good we must put away. -2. A charge to all in their places to oppose and prevent the spreading of all such opinions and practices as tend to corrupt men's judgments, debauch their consciences, perplex their minds, and discourage their inclinations to virtue and piety. Persecutors are foxes (Luke xiii. 32); false prophets are foxes, Ezek. xiii. 4. Those that sow the tares of heresy or schism, and, like Diotrophes, trouble the peace of the church and obstruct the progress of the gospel, they are the *foxes, the little foxes*, which must not be knocked on the head (*Christ came not to destroy men's lives*), but taken, that they may be tamed, or else restrained from doing mischief.

III. The believing profession which the church makes of her relation to Christ, and the satisfaction she takes in her interest in him and communion with him, v. 16. He had called her to *rise and come away* with him, to let him see her face and hear her voice; now this is her answer to that call, in which, though at present in the dark and at a distance,

1. She comforts herself with the thoughts

of the mutual interest and relation that w between her and her beloved: *My beloved me and I to him*, so the original reads it v emphatically; the conciseness of the language speaks the largeness of her affection: "W he is to me and I to him may better be c ceived than expressed." Note, (1.) It is a unspeakable privilege of true believers t Christ is theirs: *My beloved is mine*; t denotes not only propriety ("I have a to him") but possession and tenure—"I ceive from his fulness." Believers are p takers of Christ; they have not only an in rest in him, but the enjoyment of him, taken not only into covenant, but into co munion with him. All the benefits of glorious undertaking, as Mediator, are m over to them. He is that to them which world neither is nor can be, all that wh they need and desire, and which will mak complete happiness for them. All he is theirs, and all he has, all he has done, and he is doing; all he has promised in the g pel, all he has prepared in heaven, all is yo (2.) It is the undoubted character of all t believers that they are Christ's, and then, s then only, he is theirs. They have given th own selves to him (2 Cor. viii. 5); they ceive his doctrine and obey his laws; t bear his image and espouse his interest; t belong to Christ. If we be his, his whol his only, his for ever, we may take the co fort of his being ours.

2. She comforts herself with the thoug of the communications of his grace to people: *He feeds among the lilies*. When she wants the tokens of his favour to her in p ticular, she rejoices in the assurance of presence with all believers in general, w are as lilies in his eye. He *feeds amo* them, that is, he takes as much pleasure them and their assemblies as a man does his table or in his garden, for he *walks in midst of the golden candlesticks*; he delight to converse with them, and to do them good.

IV. The church's hope and expectation of Christ's coming, and her prayer ground thereupon. 1. She doubts not but that *the day will break and the shadows will flee away*. The gospel-day will dawn, and the shadow of the ceremonial law will flee away. This was the comfort of the Old-Testament church, that, after the long night of that dark dispensation, the *day-spring from on high would length visit them, to give light to those th sit in darkness*. When the sun rises the shadow of the night vanish, so do the shadows of the night when the substance comes. The day of comfort will come after a night of desertion. It may refer to the second coming of Christ and the eternal happiness of the saints; the shadows of our present state will flee away, our darkness and doubts, our griefs and our grievances, and a glorious day shall dawn a morning when the *upright shall have dominion*, a day that shall have no night after. 2. She begs the presence of her beloved,

mean time, to support and comfort her: Turn, my beloved, turn to me, come and sit me, come and relieve me, be with me *ways to the end of the age.* In the day of extremity, make haste to help me, make long tarrying. Come over even the mountains of division, interposing time and days, with some gracious anticipations of that light and love." 3. She begs that he would not only turn to her for the present, but hasten coming to fetch her to himself. "Even come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Though there be mountains in the way, thou canst, O roe, or a young hart, step over them with ease. O show thyself to me, or take me to thee."

CHAP. III.

In this chapter, I. The church gives an account of a sore trial wherewith she was exercised through the withdrawing of her beloved from her, the pains she was at before she recovered the comfortable sense of his favour again, and the resolution she took, when she did recover it, not to lose it again, as she had one through her own carelessness, ver. 1-5. II. The daughters of Jerusalem admire the excellencies of the church, ver. 6-11.

III. The church admires Jesus Christ under the person of Solomon, his bed, and the life-guards about it (ver. 7, 8), his nuptial, ver. 9, 10. She calls upon the daughters of Zion, who were admiring her, to admire him rather, especially as he appeared on his coronation day and the day of his nuptials, ver. 11.

By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. 2 I will arise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. 3 The watchmen that go about the city said unto me: *to whom I said,* Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? 4 *It was* but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me. 5 I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.

God is not wont to say to the seed of Jacob, *seek you me in vain*; and yet here we have a spouse for a great while seeking her beloved in vain, but finding him at last, to her speakable satisfaction. It was hard to the Old-Testament church to find Christ in the ceremonial law, and the types and figures which then were of good things to come. It was the consolation of Israel looked for before it came. The watchman of that church gave little assistance to those who enquired after him; but at length Simeon had him in his arms whom his soul loved. It is applicable to the case of particular believers, who often walk in darkness a great while, but at length it shall be light, and those that seek

Christ to the end shall find him at length. Observe,

I. How the spouse sought him in vain upon her bed (v. 1); when she was up and looking about her, grace in act and exercise, though her beloved was withdrawn, yet she could see him at a distance (ch. ii. 8), but now it was otherwise. She still continued her affection to him, still it was *he whom her soul loved*, that bond of the covenant still continued firm. "Though he slay me, I will trust in him; though he leave me, I will love him. When I have him not in my arms, I have him in my heart." But she wanted the communion she used to have with him, as David when he thirsted for God, for the living God. She sought him, but, 1. It was by night on her bed; it was late and lazy seeking. Her understanding was clouded; it was by night, in the dark. Her affections were chilled, it was on her bed half asleep. The wise virgins slumbered in the absence of the bridegroom. It was a dark time with the believer; she saw not her signs, and yet she sought them. Those whose souls love Jesus Christ will continue to seek him even in silence and solitude: their reins instruct them to do so, even in the night season. 2. She failed in her endeavour. Sometimes he is found of those that seek him not (Isa. lxxv. 1), but here he is not found of one that sought him, either for the punishment of her corruptions, her slothfulness and security (we miss of comfort because we do not seek it aright), or for the exercise of graces, her faith and patience, to try whether she will continue seeking. The woman of Canaan sought Christ, and found him not at first, that she might find him, at length, so much the more to her honour and comfort.

II. How she sought him in vain abroad, v. 2. She had made trial of secret worship, and had gone through the duties of the closet, had remembered him on her bed and meditated on him in the night-watches (Ps. lxxiii. 6), but she did not meet with comfort. *My sore ran in the night*, and then *I remembered God and was troubled*, Ps. lxxvii. 2, 3. And yet she is not driven off by the disappointment from the use of further means; she resolves, "I will rise now; I will not lie here if I cannot find my beloved here, nor be content if he be withdrawn. I will rise now without delay, and seek him immediately, lest he withdraw further from me." Those that would seek Christ so as to find him must lose no time. "I will rise out of a warm bed, and go out in a cold dark night, in quest of my beloved." Those that seek Christ must not startle at difficulties. "I will rise, and go about the city, the holy city, in the streets, and the broad-ways;" for she knew he was not to be found in any blind by-ways. We must seek in the city, in Jerusalem, which was a type of the gospel-church. The likeliest place to find Christ is in the temple (Luke ii. 46), in the streets of the

gospel-church, in holy ordinances, where the children of Zion pass and re-pass at all hours. She had a good purpose when she said, *I will arise now*, but the good performance was all in all. She arose, and sought him (those that are in pursuit of Christ, the knowledge of him and communion with him, must turn every stone, seek every where), and yet she found him not; she was still unsatisfied, uneasy, as Job, when he looked on all sides, but could not perceive any tokens of the divine favour (Job xxiii. 8, 9), and the Psalmist often, when he complained that God hid his face from him, Ps. lxxxviii. 14. We may be in the way of our duty and yet may miss of comfort, for *the wind bloweth where it listeth*. How heavy is the accent on this repeated complaint: *I sought him, but I found him not!* like that of Mary Magdalen, *They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him*, John xx. 13.

III. How she enquired of the watchmen concerning him, v. 3. In the night the watchmen go about the city, for the preservation of its peace and safety, to guide and assist the honest and quiet, as well as to be a check upon those that are disorderly; these met her in her walks, and she asked them if they could give her any tidings of her beloved. In the streets and broad-ways of Jerusalem she might meet with enough to divert her from her pursuit and to entertain her, though she could not meet her beloved; but she regards none in comparison with him. Gracious souls press through crowds of other delights and contentments in pursuit of Christ, whom they prefer before their chief joy. Mary Magdalen sees angels in the sepulchre, but that will not do unless she see Jesus. *Saw you him whom my soul loveth?* Note, We must evince the sincerity of our love to Christ by our solicitous enquiries after him. *The children of the bride-chamber will mourn when the bridegroom is taken away* (Matt. ix. 15), especially for the sin which provoked him to withdraw; and, if we do so, we shall be in care to recover the sense of his favour and diligent and constant in the use of proper means in order thereunto. We must search the scriptures, be much in prayer, keep close to ordinances, and all with this upon our heart, *Saw you him whom my soul loveth?* Those only who have seen Christ themselves are likely to direct others to a sight of him. When the Greeks came to worship at the feast they applied to Philip, with such an address as this of the spouse to the watchmen, *Sir, we would see Jesus*, John xii. 21.

IV. How she found him at last, v. 4. She passed from the watchmen as soon as she perceived they could give her no tidings of her beloved; she would not stay with them, because he was not among them, but went on seeking, for (as Ainsworth observes) the society neither of brethren, nor of the church, nor of ministers, can comfort the afflicted

conscience unless Christ himself be apprehended by faith. But soon after she passed from the watchmen she found him whom she sought, and then called him *him whom my soul loveth*, with as much delight as before with desire. Note, Those that continue seeking Christ shall find him at last, and will perhaps they were almost ready to despair finding him. See Ps. xlii. 7, 8; lxxvii. 9. Isa. lii. 7, 8. Disappointments must drive us away from gracious pursuits. Hold out, faith and patience; *the vision is for appointed time*, and, though the watchmen can give us no account of it, *at the end they shall itself speak and not lie*; and the comfort that comes in after long waiting, in the use of means, will be so much the sweeter for the last.

V. How close she kept to him when she had found him. She is now as much in the way of losing him as before she was in care to find him: *I held him*, held him fast, as women, when they met with Christ after resurrection, *held him by the feet*, and *would not let him go*. Not only, I would never do anything to provoke him to depart, but I would by faith and prayer prevail with him to stay, and by the exercise of grace preserve inward peace. Those that know how hard comfort is come by, and how dearly it is bought, will be afraid of forfeiting it and playing it away and will think nothing too much to do to keep it safe. *Non minor est virtus quæ querere parta tueri—As much is implied in securing our acquisitions as in making them*. Those that have laid hold on wisdom must retain her, Prov. iii. 18. Those that have Christ fast in the arms of faith and love shall not let him go; he will abide with them.

VI. How desirous she was to make others acquainted with him: *I brought him to my mother's house*, that all my relations, all who are dear to me, might have the benefit of communion with him. When Zaccheus found Christ, or rather was found of him, *salvation came to his house*, Luke xix. Wherever we find Christ we must take him home with us to our houses, especially to our hearts. The church is our mother, and should be concerned for her interests, that she may have Christ present with her and be earnest in prayer for his presence with people and ministers always. Those that enjoy the tokens of Christ's favour to their souls should desire that the church, and religious assemblies in their public capacity might likewise enjoy the tokens of his favour.

VII. What care she was in that no disturbance might be given him (v. 5); she repeats the charge she had before given (v. ii. 7) to the *daughters of Jerusalem* not to stir up or awake her love. When she had brought him into her mother's house, among her sisters she gives them a strict charge to keep quiet and in good order, to be very observant of him, careful to please him, and afraid

offending him. The charge given to the church in the wilderness concerning the angel of the covenant, who was among them, explains this. *Exod. xxiii. 21, Beware of him and obey his voice; provoke him not. See that none of you stir out of your places, lest you disturb him, but with quietness work and mind your own business; make no noise; let all clamour and bitterness be put far from you, for that grieves the Holy Spirit of God, Eph. v. 30, 31.* Some make this to be Christ's charge to the daughters of Jerusalem not to disturb or disquiet his church, nor trouble the minds of the disciples; for Christ is very tender of the peace of his church, and all the members of it, even the little ones; and those that trouble them *shall bear their judgment, Mal. v. 10.*

6 Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?

These are the words of the daughters of Jerusalem, to whom the charge was given, v. 5. They had looked shily upon the bride because she was black (*ch. i. 6*); but now they admire her, and speak of her with great respect: *Who is this?* How beautiful she looks! Who would have expected such a lovely and magnificent person to come out of the wilderness? As, when Christ rode in triumph into Jerusalem, they said, *Who is this?* And of the accession of strangers to the church she herself says, with wonder (*sa. xlix. 21*), *Who has begotten me these?* This is applicable to the Jewish church, when, after forty years' wandering in the wilderness, they came out of it, to take a glorious possession of the land of promise; and this may very well be illustrated by what Isaiah said of them at that time, when they came out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, and he stood admiring them: *From the top of the rocks I see him. How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob!* Num. xxiii. 9; xxiv. 2.

It is applicable to any public deliverance of the church of God, as particularly Babylon, the Old-Testament and the New-Testament Babylon; then the church is like pillars of smoke, ascending upwards in devout affections, the incense of praise, from which, as from Noah's sacrifice, God smells sweet savour; then she is amiable in the eyes of her friends, and her enemies too cannot but have a veneration for her, and worship at her feet, knowing that God has loved her. Rev. iii. 9. Sometimes the fear of the Lord was upon their neighbours, when they saw that God was with them of a truth, Esth. ii. 17. 3. It is applicable to the recovery of a gracious soul out of a state of desertion and despondency. (1.) She ascends out of the wilderness, the dry and barren land, where there is no way, where there is no water, where travellers are still in want and ever at

a loss; here a poor soul may long be left to wander, but shall come up, at last, under the conduct of the Comforter. (2.) She comes up like pillars of smoke, like a cloud of incense ascending from the altar or the smoke of the burnt-offerings. This intimates a fire of pious and devout affections in the soul, whence this smoke arises, and the mounting of the soul heaven-ward in this smoke (*as Judges xiii. 20*), the heart lifted up to God in the heavens, as the sparks fly upward. Christ's return to the soul gives life to its devotion, and its communion with God is most reviving when it ascends out of a wilderness. (3.) She is perfumed with myrrh and frankincense. She is replenished with the graces of God's Spirit, which are as sweet spices, or as the holy incense, which, being now kindled by his gracious returns, sends forth a very fragrant smell. Her devotions being now peculiarly lively, she is not only acceptable to God, but amiable in the eyes of others also, who are ready to cry out with admiration, *Who is this?* What a monument of mercy is this! The graces and comforts with which she is perfumed are called the powders of the merchant, for they are far-fetched and dear bought, by our Lord Jesus, that blessed merchant, who took a long voyage, and was at vast expense, no less than that of his own blood, to purchase them for us. They are not the products of our own soil, nor the growth of our own country; no, they are imported from the heavenly Canaan, the better country.

7 Behold his bed, which is Solomon's; threescore valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel. 8 They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night. 9 King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon. 10 He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem. 11 Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.

The daughters of Jerusalem stood admiring the spouse and commending her, but she overlooks their praises, is not puffed up with them, but transfers all the glory to Christ, and directs them to look off from her to him, recommends him to their esteem, and sets herself to applaud him. Here he is three times called Solomon, and we have that name but three times besides in all this song, *ch. i. 5; viii. 11, 12.* It is Christ that is here

meant, who is greater than Solomon, and of whom Solomon was an illustrious type for his wisdom and wealth, and especially his building the temple.

Three things she admires him for:—

I. The safety of his bed (v. 7): *Behold his bed, even Solomon's, very rich and fine; for such the curtains of Solomon were. His bed, which is above Solomon's, so some read it. Christ's bed, though he had not where to lay his head, is better than Solomon's best bed. The church is his bed, for he has said of it. This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell. The hearts of believers are his bed, for he lies all night between their breasts, Eph. iii. 17. Heaven is his bed, the rest into which he entered when he had done his work. Or it may be meant of the sweet repose and satisfaction which gracious souls enjoy in communion with him; it is called his bed, because, though we are admitted to it, and therefore it is called our bed (ch. i. 16), yet it is his peace that is our rest, John xiv. 27. I will give you rest, Matt. xi. 28. It is Solomon's bed, whose name signifies peace, because in his days Judah and Israel dwelt safely under their vines and fig-trees. That which she admires his bed for is the guard that surrounded it. Those that rest in Christ not only dwell at ease (many do so who yet are in the greatest danger) but they dwell in safety. Their holy serenity is under the protection of a holy security. This bed had threescore valiant men about it, as yeomen of the guard, or the band of gentlemen-pensioners; they are of the valiant of Israel, and a great many bold and brave men David's reign had produced. The life-guard men are well armed: They all hold swords, and know how to hold them; they are expert in war, well skilled in all the arts of it. They are posted about the bed at a convenient distance. They are in a posture of defence, every man with his sword upon his thigh and his hand upon his sword, ready to draw upon the first alarm, and this because of fear in the night, because of the danger feared; for the lives of princes, even the wisest and best, as they are more precious, so they are more exposed, and require to be more guarded than the lives of common persons. Or, because of the fear of it, and the apprehension which the spouse may have of danger, these guards are set for her satisfaction, that she may be quiet from the fear of evil, which believers themselves are subject to, especially in the night, when they are under a cloud as to their spiritual state, or in any outward trouble more than ordinary. Christ himself was under the special protection of his Father in his whole undertaking. In the shadow of his hand has he hid me (Isa. xlix. 2); he had legions of angels at his command. The church is well guarded; more are with her than against her. Lest any hurt this vineyard, God himself keeps it night and day (Isa. xxvii. 2, 3); particular believers, when they repose them-*

selves in Christ and with him, though it may be night-time with them, and they may have their fears in the night, are yet safe, as safe as Solomon himself in the midst of his guards; the angels have a charge concerning them, ministers are appointed to watch for their souls, and they ought to be valiant men expert in the spiritual warfare, holding the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and having that girt upon their thigh, always ready to them for the silencing of the fears of God's people in the night. All the attributes of God are engaged for the safety of believers; they are kept as in a strong-hold by his power (1 Pet. i. 5), are safe in his name (Prov. xviii. 10), his peace protects those in whom it rules (Phil. iv. 7), and the effect of righteousness in them is quietness and assurance, Isa. xxxii. 17. Our danger is from the rulers of the darkness of this world, but we are safe in the armour of light.

II. The splendour of his chariot, v. 9, 10. As Christ and believers rest in safety under a sufficient guard, so when they appear publicly, as kings in their coaches of state, they appear in great magnificence. This chariot was of Solomon's own contriving and making, the materials very rich, silver, and gold, and cedar, and purple. He made it for himself, and yet made it for the daughters of Jerusalem, to oblige them. Some by this chariot, or coach, or chaise (the word is nowhere else used in scripture), understand the human nature of Christ, in which the divine nature rode as in an open chariot. It was divine workmanship (*A body hast thou prepared me*); the structure was very fine, but that which was at the bottom of it was love, pure love to the children of men. Other make it to represent the everlasting gospel in which, as in an open chariot, Christ shows himself, and as in a chariot of war rides forth triumphantly, conquering and to conquer. The pillars, the seven pillars (Prov. ix. 1), are of silver, for the words of the Lord are as silver tried (Ps. xii. 6), nay, they are better than thousands of gold and silver. It is hung with purple, a princely colour; all the adornings of it are dyed in the precious blood of Christ, and that gives them this colour. But that which completes the glory of it is love; it is paved with love, it is lined with love, not love of strangers, as Solomon's was in the days of his defection, but love of the daughters of Jerusalem, a holy love. Silver is better than cedar, gold than silver, but love is better than gold, better than all, and it is put last, for nothing can be better than that. The gospel is all love. Mr. Durham applies it to the covenant of redemption, the way of our salvation, as it is contrived in the eternal counsel of God, and manifested to us in the scripture. This is that work of Christ himself wherein the glory of his grace and love to sinners most eminently appears, and which makes him amiable and admirable in the eyes of believers. In this covenant love is con-

yed to them, and they are carried in it to e perfection of love, and, as it were, ride triumph. It is admirably framed and conved, both for the glory of Christ and for e comfort of believers. It is *well ordered all things, and sure* (2 Sam. xxiii. 5); it s pillars that cannot be shaken; it is *made the wood of Lebanon*, which can never rot; e basis of it is *gold*, the most lasting metal; e blood of the covenant, that rich *purple*, the cover of this chariot, by which believers e sheltered from the wind and storms of vine wrath, and the troubles of this world; e midst of it, and that which is all in in it, is *love*, that *love of Christ which surasses knowledge* and the dimensions of which e immeasurable.

III. The lustre of his royal person, when e appears in his greatest pomp, v. 11. Here e serve,

1. The call that is given to the *daughters of ion* to acquaint themselves with the glories *king Solomon: Go forth, and behold him.* e multitude of the spectators adds to the auty of a splendid cavalcade. Christ, in s gospel, manifests himself. Let each of e add to the number of those that give hou- ur to him, by giving themselves the satisfac- ion of looking upon him. Who should y respects to Zion's king but Zion's daugh- rs? They have reason to rejoice greatly en he comes, Zech. ix. 9. (1.) *Behold him en.* Look with pleasure upon Christ in his ory. Look upon him with an eye of faith, h a fixed eye. Here is a sight worth see- g; *behold*, and admire him, *behold*, and love m; look upon him, and know him again. (2.) *Go forth and behold him*; go off from the orld, as those that see no beauty and excel- ncy in it in comparison with what is to be en in the Lord Jesus. Go out of your- lves, and let the sight of his transcendent auty put you out of conceit with your- lves. *Go forth* to the place where he is e seen, to the street through which he asses, as Zaccheus.

2. The direction that is given them to take epecial notice of that which they would not e every day, and that was his *crown*, either e crown of gold, adorned with jewels, which e wore on his coronation-day (Solomon's other, Bathsheba, though she did not pro- re that for him, yet, by her reasonable in- posal, she helped to secure it to him when onijah was catching at it), or the garland crown of flowers and green tied with rib- ns which his mother made for him, to orn the solemnity of his nuptials. Perhaps lomon's coronation day was his marriage- y, *the day of his espousals*, when the gar- d his mother crowned him with was added e crown his people crowned him with. plying this to Christ, it speaks, (1.) The ny honours put upon him, and the power d dominion he is entrusted with: *Go forth,* d see king Jesus, *with the crown wherewith e Father crowned him*, when he declared him

his *beloved Son*, in whom he was well-pleased, when he *set him as King upon his holy hill of Zion*, when he advanced him to his own right hand, and invested him with a sovereign au- thority, both in *heaven and in earth*, and *put all things under his feet*. (2.) The dishonour put upon him by his persecutors. Some ap- ply it to the *crown of thorns* with which his mother, the Jewish church, *crowned him* on the day of his death, which was *the day of his espousals* to his church, when he *loved it*, and *gave himself for it* (Eph. v. 25); and it is ob- servable that when he was *brought forth wear- ing the crown of thorns* Pilate said, and said it to the *daughters of Zion*, *Behold the man*. (3.) It seems especially to mean the honour done him by his church, as his mother, and by all true believers, in whose hearts he is formed, and of whom he has said, *These are my mother, and sister, and brother*, Matt. xii. 50. They give him the glory of his under- taking; to him is *glory in the church*, Eph. iii. 21. When believers accept of him as theirs, and join themselves to him in an ever- lasting covenant, [1.] It is his coronation- day in their souls. Before conversion they were crowning themselves, but then they be- gin to crown Christ, and continue to do so from that day forward. They appoint him their head; they bring *every thought into obe- dience to him*; they set up his throne in their hearts, and cast all their crowns at his feet. [2.] It is *the day of his espousals*, in which he betroths them to him for ever in loving- kindness and in mercies, joins them to him- self in faith and love, and gives himself to them in the promises and all he has, to be theirs. *Thou shalt not be for another, so will I also be for thee*, Hos. iii. 3. And to him they are presented as *chaste virgins*. [3.] It is *the day of the gladness of his heart*; he is pleased with the honour that his people do him, pleased with the progress of his inter- est among them. Does *Satan fall* before them? *In that hour Jesus rejoices in spirit*, Luke x. 18, 21. There is joy in heaven over repenting sinners; the family is glad when the prodigal son returns. *Go forth and be- hold* Christ's grace towards sinners, as his crown, his brightest glory.

CHAP. IV.

In this chapter, I. Jesus Christ, having espoused his church to himself (clu. iii. 11), highly commends her beauty in the several expressions of it, concluding her fair, all fair, ver. 1-5 and again, ver. 7. II. He retires himself, and invites her with him, from the mountains of terror to those of delight, ver. 6, 8. III. He professes his love to her and his delight in her affection to him, ver. 9-14. IV. She ascribes all she had that was valuable in her to him, and depends upon the continued influence of his grace to make her more and more acceptable to him, ver. 15, 16.

BEHOOLD, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks: thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead. 2 Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing whereof every one bear twins, and

none is barren among them. 3 Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely: thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks. 4 Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men. 5 Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies. 6 Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense. 7 Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.

Here is, I. A large and particular account of the beauties of the church, and of gracious souls on whom the image of God is renewed, consisting in the beauty of holiness. In general, he that is a competent judge of beauty, whose judgment, we are sure, is according to truth, and what all must subscribe to, he has said, *Behold, thou art fair*. She had commended him, and called all about her to take notice of his glories; and hereby she recommends herself to him, gains his favour, and, in return for her respects, he calls to all about him to take notice of her graces. Those that honour Christ he will honour, 1 Sam. ii. 30.

1. He does not flatter her, nor design hereby either to make her proud of herself or to court her praises of him; but, (1.) It is to encourage her under her present dejections. Whatever others thought of her, she was amiable in his eyes. (2.) It is to teach her what to value herself upon, not any external advantages (which would add nothing to her, and the want of which would deprive her of nothing that was really excellent), but upon the comeliness of grace which he had put upon her. (3.) It is to invite others to think well of her too, and to join themselves to her: "Thou art my love, thou lovest me and art beloved of me, and therefore thou art fair." All the beauty of the saints is derived from him, and they shine by reflecting his light; it is the beauty of the Lord our God that is upon us, Ps. xc. 17. She was espoused to him, and that made her beautiful. *Uxor fulget radiis mariti—The spouse shines in her husband's rays*. It is repeated: *Thou art fair*, and again, *Thou art fair*, denoting not only the certainty of it, but the pleasure he took in speaking of it.

2. As to the representation here made of the beauty of the church, the images are certainly very bright, the shades strong, and the comparisons bold, not proper indeed to represent any external beauty, for they were not designed to do so, but the beauty of holiness, the new man, the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible. Seven par-

ticulars are specified, a number of perfecting for the church is enriched with manifold graces by the seven spirits that are before the throne, Rev. i. 4; 1 Cor. i. 5, 7.

(1.) Her eyes. A good eye contributes much to a beauty: *Thou hast doves' eyes*, clean and chaste, and often cast up towards heaven. It is not the eagle's eye, that can face the sun, but the dove's eye, a humble, modest, modest eye, that is the praise of those whom Christ loves. Ministers are the church's eyes (Isa. lii. 8, *thy watchmen shall see eye to eye*); they must be like doves' eyes, harmless and inoffensive (Matt. x. 16), having their conversation in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity. Wisdom and knowledge are the eyes of the new man; they must be clear, but not haughty, *not exercised in things too high for us*. When our aims and intentions are sincere and honest, then we have doves' eyes, when we look not unto idols (Ezek. xlviii. 1), but have our eyes ever towards the Lord, xxv. 15. *The doves' eyes are within the locks*, which are as a shade upon them, so that [1.] They cannot fully see. As long as we are here in this world we know but in part for a hair hangs in our eyes; we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness; death will shortly cut those locks, and then we shall see all things clearly. [2.] They cannot be fully seen, but as the stars through the thin clouds. Some make it to intimate the bashfulness of her looks; she suffers not her eyes to wander but limits them with her locks.

(2.) Her hair; it is compared to a flock of goats, which looked white, and were, on the top of the mountains, like a fine head of hair, and the sight was the more pleasant to a spectator because the goats have not gravity from their beards, but they are comely in going (Prov. xxx. 29), but it was more pleasant of all to the owner, much of whose riches consisted in his flocks. Christ put value upon that in the church, and in believers, which others make no more account of than of their hair. He told his disciples that the very hairs of their head were all numbered, as carefully as men number their flocks (Matt. x. 30), and that not a hair of their hair should perish, Luke xxi. 18. Some by hair here understand the outward conversion of a believer, which ought to be comely and decent, and agreeable to the holiness of the heart. The apostle opposes good works such as become the professors of godliness to the plaiting of the hair, 1 Tim. ii. 9. Mary Magdalen's hair was beautiful when she wiped the feet of Christ with it.

(3.) Her teeth, v. 2. Ministers are the church's teeth; like nurses, they chew meat for the babes of Christ. The Chaldee paraphrase applies it to the priests and Levites, who fed upon the sacrifices as the representatives of the people. Faith, by which we feed upon Christ, meditation, by which we ruminate on the word and chew the cud upon what we have heard, in order to

gesting of it, are the teeth of the new man. These are here compared to a *flock of sheep*. Christ called his disciples and ministers a *flock*. It is the praise of teeth to be even, to be white, and kept clean, *like sheep from the washing*, and to be firm and well fixed in the gums, and not like sheep that cast their dung; for so the word signifies which we translate *barren*. It is the praise of ministers to be even in mutual love and concord, to be pure and clean from all moral pollutions, and to be fruitful, bringing forth souls to Christ, and nursing his lambs.

(4.) Her *lips*; these are compared to a *thread of scarlet*, v. 3. Red lips are comely, and a sign of health, as the paleness of the cheeks is a sign of faintness and weakness; her lips were of the colour of *scarlet*, but thin lips, *like a thread of scarlet*. The next words explain it: *Thy speech is comely*, always with grace, good, and to the use of edifying, which adds much to the beauty of a Christian. When we praise God with our lips, and with the truth make confession of him to salvation, then they are as a *thread of scarlet*. All our good works and good words must be *washed in the blood of Christ*, dyed like the *scarlet thread*, and then, and not till then, they are acceptable to God. The Chaldee applies it to the chief priest, and his prayers for Israel the day of atonement.

(5.) Her *temples*, or cheeks, which are here compared to a *piece of a pomegranate*, a fruit which, when cut in two, has rich veins and specks in it, like a blush in the face. Humility and modesty, blushing to lift up her faces before God, blushing at the remembrance of sin and in a sense of our unworthiness of the honour put upon us, will beautify us very much in the eyes of Christ. The blushes of Christ's bride are *within her cheeks*, which intimates (says Mr. Durham) that she blushes when no other sees, and for that which none sees but God and conscience; also that she seeks not to proclaim her humility, but modestly covers that too; the evidences of all these, in a tender look, appear and are comely.

(6.) Her *neck*; this is here compared to the *tower of David*, v. 4. This is generally applied to the grace of faith, by which we are united to Christ, as the body is united to the head by the neck; this is *like the tower of David*, furnishing us with weapons of war, especially *bucklers and shields*, as the soldiers are supplied with them out of that tower, *faith is our shield* (Eph. vi. 16): those that have it never want a *buckler*, for God will compass them with his favour as with a shield. When this neck is like a tower, straight, stately, and strong, a Christian goes on his way, and works with courage and magnanimity, and does not hang a drooping head, as he does when faith fails. Some make the *shields of the mighty men*, that are here said to hang up in the *tower of David*, to be the monuments of the valour of David's worthies.

Their shields were preserved, to keep in remembrance them and their heroic acts, intimating that it is a great encouragement to the saints to hold up their heads, to see what great things the saints in all ages have accomplished and won by faith. In Heb. xi. we have the *shields of the mighty men* hung up, the exploits of believers and the trophies of their victories.

(7.) Her *breasts*; these are *like two young roes that are twins*, v. 5. The church's breasts are both for ornament (Ezek. xvi. 7) and for use; they are the *breasts of her consolation* (Isa. lxvi. 11), as she is said to *suck the breasts of kings*, Isa. lx. 16. Some apply these to the two Testaments; others to the two sacraments, the seals of the covenant of grace; others to ministers, who are to be spiritual nurses to the children of God and to give out to them the *sincere milk of the word*, that they may grow thereby, and, in order to that, are themselves to *feed among the lilies* where Christ feeds (ch. ii. 16), that they may be to the babes of the church as full breasts. Or the breasts of a believer are his love to Christ, which he is pleased with, as a tender husband is with the affections of his wife, who is therefore said to be to him as the *loving hind and the pleasant roe*, because her *breasts satisfy him at all times*, Prov. v. 19. This includes also his edifying others and communicating grace to them, which adds much to a Christian's beauty.

II. The bridegroom's resolution hereupon to retire to the *mountain of myrrh* (v. 6) and there to make his residence. This *mountain of myrrh* is supposed to signify Mount Moriah, on which the temple was built, where incense was daily burnt to the honour of God. Christ was so pleased with the beauty of his church that he chose this to be his rest for ever; here he will dwell *till the day break and the shadows flee away*. Christ's parting promise to his disciples, as the representatives of the church, answers to this: *Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world*. Where the ordinances of God are duly administered there Christ will be, and there we must meet him at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Some make these to be the words of the spouse, either modestly ashamed of the praises given her, and willing to get out of the hearing of them, or desirous to be constant to the holy hill, not doubting but there to find suitable and sufficient succour and relief in all her straits, and there to cast anchor, and wish for the day, which, at the time appointed, would *break and the shadows flee away*. The holy hill (as some observe) is here called both a *mountain of myrrh*, which is bitter, and a *hill of frankincense*, which is sweet, for there we have occasion both to mourn and rejoice; repentance is a bitter sweet. But in heaven it will be all frankincense, and no myrrh. Prayer is compared to incense, and Christ will meet his praying people and will bless them.

III. His repeated commendation of the beauty of his spouse (v. 7): *Thou art all fair, my love*. He had said (v. 1), *Thou art fair*; but here he goes further, and, in review of the particulars, as of those of the creation, he pronounces *all very good*: "*Thou art all fair, my love*; thou art all over beautiful, and there is nothing amiss in thee, and thou hast all beauties in thee; thou art sanctified wholly in every part; *all things have become new* (2 Cor. v. 17); there is not only a new face and a new name, but a new man, a new nature; *there is no spot in thee*, as far as thou art renewed." The spiritual sacrifices must be without blemish. *There is no spot* but such as is often the spot of God's children, none of the leopard's spots. The church, when Christ shall present it to himself a glorious church, will be altogether *without spot or wrinkle*, Eph. v. 27.

8 Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards. 9 Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck. 10 How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices! 11 Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon. 12 A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. 13 Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard, 14 Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices.

These are still the words of Christ to his church, expressing his great esteem of her and affection to her, the opinion he had of her beauty and excellency, the desire he had of, and the delight he had in, her converse and society. And so ought men to love their wives as Christ loves the church, and takes pleasure in it as if it were spotless and had no fault, when yet it is compassed with infirmity. Now, observe here,

I. The endearing names and titles by which he calls her, to express his love to her, to assure her of it, and to engage and excite her love to him. Twice here he calls her *My spouse* (v. 8, 11) and three times *My sister*,

my spouse, v. 9, 10, 12. Mention was made (ch. iii. 11) of the day of his espousals, after that, she is called his spouse, not before. Note, There is a marriage-covenant between Christ and his church, between Christ and every true believer. Christ calls his church his spouse, and his calling her so makes her so. "I have betrothed thee unto me for ever, and, as the bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." He is not ashamed to own the relation, but as becomes a kind and tender husband, speaks affectionately to her, and calls her spouse, which cannot but strongly engage her to be faithful to him. Nay, because one relation among men is sufficient to set forth Christ's love to his church, and to show that all this must be understood spiritual, he owns her in two relations, which among men are incompatible, *My sister, my spouse*. Abraham's saying of Sarah, *She is my sister* was interpreted as a denying of her to be his wife; but Christ's church is to him both sister and a spouse, as Matt. xii. 50, *a sister and mother*. His calling her sister is grounded upon his taking our nature upon him in incarnation, and his making us partakers of his nature in our sanctification. He clothed himself with a body (Heb. ii. 14), and clothes believers with his Spirit (1 Cor. 17), and so they become his sisters. They are children of God his Father (2 Cor. vi. 18) and so they become his sisters; he that sanctifies, and those that are sanctified, are all one (Heb. ii. 11); and he owns them, as he loves them, as his sisters.

II. The gracious call he gives her to come along with him as a faithful bride, that may forget her own people and her father's house and leave all to cleave to him. *Ubi tu Caius ibi ego Caius*—Where thou Caius art, I Caius will be. Come with me from Lebanon, v. 8.

1. It is a precept; so we take it, like that (ch. ii. 10, 13), *Rise up, and come away*. That have by faith come to Christ must come with Christ, in holy obedience to him, in compliance with him. Being joined to him, we must walk with him. This is his command to us daily: "*Come with me, my spouse*" come with me to God as a Father; come with me onward, heavenward; come forward with me; come up with me; *come with me from Lebanon, from the top of Amana, from the lions' dens*." These mountains are to be considered, (1.) As seemingly delightful places. Lebanon is called *that goodly mountain*, Deut. iii. 25. We read of the *glory of Lebanon* (Isa. xxxv. 2) and its goodly smell, Hos. x. 6. We read of the pleasant *dew of Hermon* (Ps. cxxxiii. 3) and the *joy of Hermon* (Isa. lxxxix. 12); and we may suppose the other mountains here mentioned to be pleasant ones, and so this is Christ's call to his spouse to come off from the world, all its products, all its pleasures, to sit loose to the delights of sense. All those must do that would come with Christ; they must

ake their affections off from all present things; yea, though they be placed at the upper end of the world, on the top of *Amana* and the top of *Shenir*, though they enjoy the highest satisfactions the creature can propose to give, yet they must *come away* from them all, and live above the tops of the highest hills on earth, that they may have *their conversation in heaven*. Come from those mountains, to go along with Christ to the holy mountain, the mountain of *myrrh*, v. 6. Even while we have our residence on these mountains, yet we must look from them, look above them. Shall we *lift up our eyes to the hills*? No; *our help comes from the Lord*, Ps. cxxi. 1, 2. We must look beyond them, to the things that are not seen (as these high hills are), that are eternal. From the tops of *Shenir* and *Hermon*, which were on the other side Jordan, as from *Pisgah*, they could see the land of Canaan; from this world we must look forward to the better country. (2.) They are to be considered as really dangerous. These hills indeed are pleasant enough, but there are in them *lions' dens*; they are *mountains of the leopards*, mountains of prey, though they seem *glorious and excellent*, Ps. lxxvi. 4. Satan, that *roaring lion*, is the *prince of this world*; in the things of it he lies in wait to devour. On the tops of these mountains there are many dangerous temptations to those who take up their residence in them; and therefore *come with me* from them; let us not set our hearts upon the things of this world, and then they can do us no hurt. *Come with me* from the temples of idolaters, and the societies of wicked people (so some understand it); *come out from among them, and be you separate*. *Come out* from under the dominion of your own lusts, which are as *lions and leopards*, fierce upon us, and making us fierce.

2. It may be taken as a promise: *Thou shalt come with me from Lebanon, from the lions' dens*; that is, (1.) "Many shall be brought home to me, as living members of the church, from every point, from Lebanon to the north, *Amana* in the west, *Hermon* in the east, *Shenir* in the south, from all parts, sit down with *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, Matt. viii. 11. See Isa. xlix. 11, 12. Some from the tops of these mountains, some of the great men of this world, shall give themselves to Christ. (2.) The church shall be delivered from her persecutors, in due time; though now she *dwells among lions* (Ps. lvii. 1). Christ will take her with himself from among their dens.

III. The great delight Christ takes in his church and in all believers. He delights in them,

1. As in an agreeable bride, *adorned for her husband* (Rev. xxi. 2), who *greatly desires her* truly, Ps. xlv. 11. No expressions of love can be more passionate than these here, in which Christ manifests his affection to his church; and yet that great proof of his love,

his dying for it, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, goes far beyond them all. A spouse so dearly bought and paid for could not but be dearly loved. Such a price being given for her, a high value must needs be put upon her accordingly; and both together may well set us a wondering at the height and depth, and length and breadth, of the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge, that love in which he gave himself for us and gives himself to us. Observe, (1.) How he is affected towards his spouse: *Thou hast ravished my heart*; the word is used only here. *Thou hast hearted me*, or *Thou hast unhearted me*. New words are coined to express the inexpressibleness of Christ's surprising love to his church; and the strength of that love is set forth by that which is a weakness in men, the being so much in love with one object as to be heartless to every thing else. This may refer to that love which Christ had to the chosen remnant, before the worlds were, when *his delights were with the sons of men* (Prov. viii. 31), that first love, which brought him from heaven to earth, to seek and save them at such vast expense, yet including the complacency he takes in them when he has brought them to himself. Note, Christ's heart is upon his church; so it has appeared all along. His treasure is in it; it is his *peculiar treasure* (Exod. xix. 5); and therefore there his heart is also. "Never was love like unto the love of Christ, which made him even mindless of himself, when he emptied himself of his glory, and despised all shame and pain, for our sakes. The wound of love towards us, which he had from eternity in himself, made him neglect all the wounds and reproaches of the cross;" so bishop Reynolds. Thus let us love him. (2.) What it is that thus affects him with delight. [1.] The regard she has to him: *Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thy eyes*, those *doves' eyes*, clear and chaste (which were commended, v. 1), with one glance of those eyes. Christ is wonderfully pleased with those that look unto him as their Saviour, and through the eye of faith dart their affections to him, above any rival whatsoever, and whose eyes are ever towards him; he is soon aware of the first look of a soul towards him and meets it with his favours. [2.] The ornaments she has from him, that is, the obedience she yields to him, for that is the *chain of her neck*, the graces that enrich her soul, which are connected as links in a chain, the exercise of these graces in a conversation which adorns both herself and the doctrine of Jesus Christ, which she professes to believe (as a gold chain is an ornament to persons of quality), and an entire submission to the commanding power of his law and the constraining power of his love. Having shaken off the *bands of our neck*, by which we were tied to this world (Isa. lii. 2), and the *yoke of our transgressions*, we are bound with the *cords of love*, as *chains of gold*, to

Jesus Christ, and our necks are brought under his sweet and easy yoke, to draw in it. This recommends us to Jesus Christ, for this is that true wisdom which, in his account, is *an ornament of grace unto the head and chains about the neck*, Prov. i. 9. [3.] The affection she has for him: *How fair is thy love!* how beautiful is it! Not only thy love itself, but all the fruits and products of it, its working in the heart, its works in the life. How well does it become a believer thus to love Christ, and what a pleasure does Christ take in it! Nothing recommends us to Christ as this does. *How much better is thy love than wine*, than all the wine that was poured out to the Lord in the drink-offerings! Hence the fruit of the vine is said to *cheer God and man*, Judges ix. 13. She had said of Christ's love, *It is better than wine* (ch. i. 2), and now Christ says so of hers; there is nothing lost by praising Christ, nor will he be behindhand with his friends in kindness. [4.] The ointments, the odours wherewith she is perfumed, the gifts and graces of the Spirit, her good works, which are *an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God*, Phil. iv. 18. *The smell of thy ointment is better than all spices*, such as the queen of Sheba presented to Solomon, camel-loads of them (1 Kings x. 2), or, rather, than all the spices that were used in compounding the holy incense which was burned daily on the golden altar. Love and obedience to God are more pleasing to Christ than sacrifice or incense. *The smell of her garments too*, the visible profession she makes of religion, and relation to Christ, before men, and wherein she appears to the world, this is very grateful to Christ, as *the smell of Lebanon*. Christ having put upon his spouse the *white raiment* of his own righteousness (Rev. iii. 18), and *the righteousness of saints* (Rev. xix. 8), and this perfumed with holy joy and comfort, he is well pleased with it. [5.] Her words, both in her devotions to God and her discourses with men (v. 11): *Thy lips O my spouse! drop as the honeycomb*, drop that which is very sweet, and drop it freely and plentifully. If what God speaks to us be *sweeter to us than the honey and the honeycomb* (Ps. xix. 10), what we say to him in prayer and praise shall also be pleasing to him: *Sweet is thy voice*. And if out of a good treasure in the heart we bring forth good things, if our speech be always with grace, if our lips use knowledge aright, if they disperse knowledge, they then, in Christ's account, even drop the honeycomb, out-drop it. *Honey and milk* (the two staple commodities of Canaan) are under thy tongue; that is, in thy heart, not only reserved there for thy own use as a sweet morsel for thyself, but ready there for the use of others. In the word of God there is sweet and wholesome nourishment, milk for babes, honey for those that are grown up. Christ is well-pleased with those that are full of his word.

2. As in a pleasant garden. And well may a very great delight be compared to the delight taken in a garden, when the happiness of Adam in innocency was represented by the putting of him into a garden, a garden of pleasure. This comparison is pursued, v. 14. The church is fitly compared to a garden, to a garden which, as was usual, had a fountain in it. Where Solomon made his *self gardens and orchards*, he made him *pools of water* (Ecc. ii. 5, 6), not only for curiosity and diversion, in water-works, but for use, to water the gardens. Eden was watered, Gen. ii. 10; xiii. 10. Observe, (1.) The peculiarity of this garden: *It is a garden enclosed*, a paradise separated from the common earth. It is appropriated to God; he has set it apart for himself; Israel is God's portion, the lot of his inheritance. It is enclosed for secrecy; the saints are God's hidden ones, therefore *the world knows them not*; Christ walks in his garden unseen. It is enclosed for safety; a hedge of protection made about it, which all the powers of darkness cannot either find or make a gap in. God's vineyard is fenced (Isa. v. 2); there is a wall about it, a wall of fire. It has a spring in it, and a fountain, but it is a *spring shut up* and a *fountain sealed*, which sends its streams abroad (Prov. v. 16), but is itself carefully locked up, that it may not by any injurious hand be muddled or polluted. The souls of believers are as *gardens enclosed*; grace in them is as a *spring shut up* there; *the hidden man of the heart*, where the water that Christ gives is a *well of living water* (John iv. 14; vii. 38). The Old-Testament church was a *garden enclosed* by the partition wall of the ceremonial law. The Bible was then a *spring shut up* and a *fountain sealed*; it was confined to one nation; but now the wall of separation is removed, the gospel preached to every nation, and in *Jesus Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew*. (2.) The products of this garden: *It is as the garden of Eden*, where the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, Gen. ii. 9. *Thy plants, thy plantations, are an orchard of pomegranates with pleasant fruits*, v. 13. It is not like the vineyard of the man void of understanding, that was all grown over with thorns and nettles; but here are fruits, pleasant fruits, *trees of frankincense*, and all the chief spices, v. 14. Here is great plenty of fruits of great variety; nothing wanting which might either beautify or enrich this garden, might make it either delightful or serviceable to the great Lord. Every thing here is the best of the kind. Their chief spices were much more valuable, because much more durable, than the choicest of our flowers. Solomon was a great master in botany as well as other parts of natural philosophy; he treated largely of trees (1 Kings iv. 33), and perhaps had some reference to some specific qualities of the fruits here specified, which made them very fit

the purpose for which he alludes to them; but we must be content to observe, in general, that saints in the church, and graces in the saints, are very fitly compared to these *fruits and spices*; for, [1.] They are planted, and do not grow of themselves; *the trees of righteousness* are the *planting of the Lord* (Isa. lxi. 3); grace springs from an incorruptible seed. [2.] They are precious and of high value; hence we read of the *precious promises of Zion* and their *precious faith*; they are *plants of renown*. [3.] They are pleasant, and of a sweet savour to God and man, and, as strong aromatics, diffuse their fragrantcy. [4.] They are profitable and of great use. Saints are the blessings of this earth, and their graces are their riches, with which they trade as the merchants of the east with their wares. [5.] They are permanent, and will be reserved to good purpose, when flowers are withered and good for nothing. Grace, ripened into glory, will last for ever.

15 A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon. 16 Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.

These seem to be the words of the spouse, the church, in answer to the commendations which Christ, the bridegroom, had given of her as a pleasant fruitful garden. Is she a garden?

I. She owns her dependence upon Christ himself to make this garden fruitful. To him she has an eye (v. 15) as the *fountain of gardens*, not only the founder of them, by whom they are planted and to whom they owe their being, but the fountain of them, by which they are watered and to which they owe their continuance and well-being, and without whose constant supplies they would soon become like the dry and barren wilderness. To him she gives all the glory of her fruitfulness, as being nothing without him: *O fountain of gardens! fountain of all good, if all grace, do not thou fail me.* Does a believer say to the church, *All my springs are in thee*, in thee, O Zion? (Ps. lxxxvii. 7), the church transmits the praise to Christ, and says to him, *All my springs are in thee*; thou art the *well of living waters* (Jer. ii. 13), out of which flow the *streams of Lebanon*, the river Jordan, which had its rise at the foot of Mount Lebanon, and the waters of the sanctuary, which issued out from under the threshold of the house. Ezek. xlvi. 1. Those that are gardens to Christ must acknowledge him a fountain to them, from whose fulness they receive and to whom it is owing that their souls are as a *watered garden*, Jer. xxxi.

2. The city of God on earth is made glad with the river that flows from this fountain (Ps. xli. 4), and the new Jerusalem has its

pure river of water of life proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, Rev. xxii. 1.

II. She implores the influences of the blessed Spirit to make this garden fragrant (v. 16): *Awake, O north wind! and come, thou south.* This is a prayer, 1. For the church in general, that there may be a plentiful effusion of the Spirit upon it, in order to its flourishing estate. Ministers' gifts are *the spices*; when the Spirit is poured out these flow forth, and then the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, Isa. xxxii. 15. This prayer was answered in the pouring out of the Spirit on the day of pentecost (Acts ii. 1), ushered in by a *mighty wind*; then the apostles, who were bound up before, flowed forth, and were a *sweet savour to God*, 2 Cor. ii. 15. 2. For particular believers. Note, (1.) Sanctified souls are as gardens, gardens of the Lord, enclosed for him. (2.) Graces in the soul are as spices in these gardens, that in them which is valuable and useful. (3.) It is very desirable that the spices of grace should flow forth both in pious and devout affections and in holy gracious actions, that with them we may honour God, adorn our profession, and do that which will be grateful to good men. (4.) The blessed Spirit, in his operations upon the soul, is as the *north and the south wind*, which blows where it listeth, and from several points, John iii. 8. There is the north wind of convictions, and the south wind of comforts; but all, like the wind, brought out of God's treasures and fulfilling his word. (5.) The flowing forth of the spices of grace depends upon the gales of the Spirit; he stirs up good affections, and works in us both to will and to do that which is good; it is he that makes manifest the savour of his knowledge by us. (6.) We ought therefore to wait upon the Spirit of grace for his quickening influences, to pray for them, and to lay our souls under them. God has promised to give us his Spirit, but he will for this be enquired of.

III. She invites Christ to the best entertainment the garden affords: *Let my beloved then come into his garden and eat his pleasant fruits*; let him have the honour of all the products of the garden (it is fit he should), and let me have the comfort of his acceptance of them, for that is the best account they can be made to turn to." Observe, 1. She calls it *his garden*; for those that are espoused to Christ call nothing their own, but what they have devoted to him and desire to be used for him. When the spices flow forth then it is fit to be called his garden, and not till then. The fruits of the garden are his pleasant fruits, for he planted them, watered them, and gave the increase. What can we pretend to merit at Christ's hands when we can invite him to nothing but what is his own already? 2. She begs he would visit it, and accept of what it produced. The believer can take little pleasure in his garden, unless Christ, the beloved of his soul, come to him,

nor have any joy of the fruits of it, unless they redound some way or other to the glory of Christ, and he will think all he has well bestowed upon him.

CHAP. V.

In this chapter we have, I. Christ's gracious acceptance of the invitation which his church had given him, and the kind visit which he made to her, ver. 1. II. The account which the spouse gives of her own folly, in putting a slight upon her beloved, and the distress she was in by reason of his withdrawals, ver. 2-8. III. The enquiry of the daughters of Jerusalem concerning the amiable perfections of her beloved (ver. 9), and her particular answer to that enquiry, ver. 10-16. "Unto you that believe he is thus precious."

I AM come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.

These words are Christ's answer to the church's prayer in the close of the foregoing chapter, *Let my beloved come into his garden*; here he has come, and lets her know it. See how ready God is to hear prayer, how ready Christ is to accept the invitations that his people give him, though we are backward to hear his calls and accept his invitations. He is free in condescending to us, while we are shy of ascending to him. Observe how the return answered the request, and outdid it.

1. She called him *her beloved* (and really he was so), and invited him because she loved him; in return to this, he called her *his sister and spouse*, as several times before, *ch. iv.* Those that make Christ their best beloved shall be owned by him in the nearest and dearest relations. 2. She called the garden *his*, and the pleasant fruits of it *his*, and he acknowledges them to be so: It is *my garden*, it is *my spice*. When God was displeased with Israel he turned them off to Moses (They are *thy people*, Exod. xxxii. 7); and he called the appointed feasts of the Lord *their appointed feasts* (Isa. i. 14); but now that they are in his favour he owns them for his garden. "Though of small account, yet it is mine." Those that in sincerity give up themselves and all they have and can do to Jesus Christ, he will do them the honour to stamp them, and what they have and do for him, with his own mark, and say, *It is mine*. 3. She invited him to *come into his garden*, and he says, *I have come*. Isa. lviii. 9, *Thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am*. When Solomon prayed that God would come and take possession of the house he had built for him, he did come; *his glory filled the house* (2 Chron. vii. 2), and (v. 16) he let him know that he had chosen and sanctified this house, that *his name might be there for ever*. Those that throw open the door of their souls to Jesus Christ shall find him ready to come in to them; and in every place where he records his name he will meet his people, and bless them, Exod. xx. 24. 4. She desired him to *eat his pleasant fruits*, to accept of the

sacrifices offered in his temple, which were the fruits of his garden, and he does so, but finds they are not gathered and ready for eating, therefore he does himself gather them. As the fruits are his, so is the preparation them; he finds the heart unready for his entertainment, but does himself draw out into exercise those gracious habits which he had planted there. What little good that is in us would be shed and lost if he did gather it, and preserve it to himself. 5. She only desired him to *eat the fruits* of the garden, but he brought along with him something more, *honey, and wine, and milk*, which yield substantial nourishment, and which were the products of Canaan, Immanuel land. Christ delights himself greatly in that which he has both conferred upon his people and wrought in them. Or we may suppose this to have been prepared by the spouse herself, as Esther prepared for the king her husband a *banquet of wine*; it is but plain fare, and what is natural, honey and milk; but, being kindly designed, it is kindly accepted; imperfections are overlooked; the honey-comb is eaten with the honey, and the weakness of the flesh passed by and pardoned, because the *spirit is willing*. When Christ appeared to his disciples after his resurrection he did eat with them a piece of honey-comb (Luke xxiv. 42, 43), in which this scripture was fulfilled. He did not drink the wine only, which is liquor for men, great men, but the milk too, which is liquor for children, little children, for he was to be the *holy child Jesus*, that had need of milk. 6. She only invited him to come himself, but he, bringing his own entertainment along with him, brings his friends too, and invites them to share in the provisions. *The more the merrier*, we say; and here, where there was so great a plenty, there was not the worse fare. When our Lord Jesus fed 5000 at once they *did all eat and were filled*. Christ invites all his friends to the *wine and milk*, which he himself drinks of (Isa. lv. 1), to the *feast of fat things and wines on the lees*, Isa. lv. 1. The great work of man's redemption, and the riches of the covenant of grace are a feast to the Lord Jesus and they ought to be so to us. The invitation is very free and hearty, and loving: *Eat, O friends!* Christ comes to sup with us, it is we that sup with him, Rev. iii. 20. *Eat, O friends!* Those only that are Christ's friends are welcome to his table; his enemies, *that will not have him to reign over them*, have no part nor lot in the matter. *Drink, yea, drink abundantly*. Christ, in his gospel, has made plentiful provision for poor souls. *He fills the hungry with good things*; there is enough for all there is enough for each; *we are not straitened in him or in his grace*, let us not therefore be straitened in our own bosoms. *Open thy mouth widely, and Christ will fill it*. *Be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit*, Eph. v. 18. Those that entertain

Christ must bid his friends welcome with him; Jesus and his disciples were called together to the marriage (John ii. 2), and Christ will have all his friends to rejoice with him on the day of his espousals to his church, and, in token of that, to feast with him. In spiritual and heavenly joys there is no danger of exceeding; there we may drink abundantly, drink of the river of God's pleasures (Ps. xxxvi. 8), and be abundantly satisfied, Ps. lxxv. 4.

2 I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my cheeks with the drops of the night. 3 I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them? 4 My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him. 5 I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock. 6 I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer. 7 The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my helmet from me. 8 I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love.

In this song of loves and joys we have here a very melancholy scene; the spouse here speaks, not to her beloved (as before, when he has withdrawn), but of him, and it is a sad story she tells of her own folly and ill conduct towards him, notwithstanding his kindness, and of the just rebukes she fell under for it. Perhaps it may refer to Solomon's own apostasy from God, and the sad effects of that apostasy after God had come into his garden, had taken possession of the temple he had built, and he had feasted with God upon the sacrifices (v. 1); however, it is applicable to the too common case both of churches and particular believers, who by their carelessness and security provoke Christ to withdraw from them. Observe,

1. The indisposition that the spouse was under, and the listlessness that had seized her (v. 2): *I sleep, but my heart wakes*. Here is, Corruption appearing in the actings of it:

I sleep. The wise virgins slumbered. She was on her bed (ch. iii. 1), but now she sleeps. Spiritual distempers, if not striven against at first, are apt to grow upon us and to get ground. *She slept*, that is, pious affections cooled, she neglected her duty and grew remiss in it, she indulged herself in her ease, was secure and off her watch. This is sometimes the bad effect of more than ordinary enlargements—a good cause. St. Paul himself was in danger of being puffed up with abundant revelations, and of saying, *Soul, take thy ease*, which made a thorn in the flesh necessary for him, to keep him from sleeping. Christ's disciples, when he had come into his garden, the garden of his agony, were heavy with sleep, and could not watch with him. True Christians are not always alike lively and vigorous in religion. 2. Grace remaining, notwithstanding, in the habit of it: "*My heart wakes*; my own conscience reproaches me for it, and ceases not to rouse me out of my sluggishness. *The spirit is willing*, and, *after the inner man, I delight in the law of God, and with my mind I serve that*. I am, for the present, overpowered by temptation, but all does not go one way in me. I sleep, but it is not a dead sleep; I strive against it; it is not a sound sleep; I cannot be easy under this indisposition." Note, (1.) We ought to take notice of our own spiritual slumbers and distempers, and to reflect upon it with sorrow and shame that we have fallen asleep when Christ has been nigh us in his garden. (2.) When we are lamenting what is amiss in us, we must not overlook the good that is wrought in us, and preserved alive: "*My heart wakes in Christ, who is dear to me as my own heart, and is my life*; when I sleep, *he neither slumbers nor sleeps*."

II. The call that Christ gave to her, when she was under this indisposition: *It is the voice of my beloved*; she knew it to be so, and was soon aware of it, which was a sign that her heart was awake. Like the child Samuel, she heard at the first call, but did not, like him, mistake the person; she knew it to be the voice of Christ. He knocks, to awaken us to come and let him in, knocks by his word and Spirit, knocks by afflictions and by our own consciences; though this is not expressly quoted, yet probably it is referred to (Rev. iii. 20), *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock*. He calls sinners into covenant with him and saints into communion with him. Those whom he loves he will not let alone in their carelessness, but will find some way or other to awaken them, to rebuke and chasten them. When we are unmindful of Christ he thinks of us, and provides that our faith fail not. Peter denied Christ, but the Lord turned and looked upon him, and so brought him to himself again. Observe how moving the call is: *Open to me, my sister, my love*. 1. He sues for entrance who may demand it; he knocks who could easily knock the door down. 2. He

gives her all the kind and most endearing titles imaginable: *My sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled*; he not only gives her no hard names, nor upbraids her with unkindness in not sitting up for him, but, on the contrary, studies how to express his tender affection to her still. *His loving-kindness he will not utterly take away*. Those that by faith are espoused to Christ he looks upon as his sisters, his loves, his doves, and all that is dear; and, being clothed with his righteousness, they are undefiled. This consideration should induce her to open to him. Christ's love to us should engage ours to him, even in the most self-denying instances. *Open to me*. Can we deny entrance to such a friend, to such a guest? Shall we not converse more with one that is infinitely worthy of our acquaintance, and so affectionately desirous of it, though we only can be gainers by it? 3. He pleads distress, and begs to be admitted *sub forma pauperis*—under the character of a poor traveller that wants a lodging: "*My head is wet with the dew*, with the cold drops of the night; consider what hardships I have undergone, to merit thee, which surely may merit from thee so small a kindness as this." When Christ was crowned with thorns, which no doubt fetched blood from his blessed head, then was his head *wet with the dew*. "Consider what a grief it is to me to be thus unkindly used, as much as it would be to a tender husband to be kept out of doors by his wife in a rainy stormy night." Do we thus requite him for his love? The slights which careless souls put upon Jesus Christ are to him as a *continual dropping in a very rainy day*.

III. The excuse she made to put off her compliance with this call (v. 3): *I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on again?* She is half asleep; she knows the voice of her beloved; she knows his knock, but cannot find in her heart to open to him. She was undressed, and would not be at the pains to dress herself again; she had *washed her feet*, and would not have occasion to wash them again. She could not send another to open the door (it must be our own act and deed to let Christ into our hearts), and yet she was loth to go herself; she did not say, *I will not open*, but, *How shall I?* Note, Frivolous excuses are the language of prevailing slothfulness in religion; Christ calls to us to open to him, but we pretend we have no mind, or we have no strength, or we have no time, and therefore think we may be excused, as the *sluggard that will not plough by reason of cold*. And those who ought to *watch for the Lord's coming* with their *loins girt*, if they ungird themselves and put off their coat, will find it difficult to recover their former resolution and to put it on again; it is best therefore to keep tight. Making excuses (Luke xiv. 18) is interpreted making light of Christ (Matt. xxii. 5), and so it is. Those put a great contempt upon Christ that cannot find in their hearts to

bear a cold blast for him, or get out of warm bed.

IV. The powerful influences of divine grace by which she was made willing to rise and open to her beloved. When he could not prevail with her by persuasion he *put in his hand by the hole of the door*, to unbolt it, one weary of waiting, v. 4. This intimates work of the Spirit upon her soul, by which she was of unwilling made willing, Ps. cxviii. The conversion of Lydia is represented by the *opening of her heart* (Acts xvi. 14) and Christ is said to open his disciples' understanding (Luke xxiv. 45). He that *formed the spirit of man within him* knows all the avenues to it and which way to enter into it; he can find the *hole of the door* at which to put in his hand for the conquering of prejudices and the introducing of his own doctrine and law. He has the *key of David* (Rev. iii. 7), with which he opens the door of the heart in such a way as is suited to it, as the key is fitted to the wards of the lock, in such a way as not to put a force upon its nature, but only upon its ill nature.

V. Her compliance with these methods of divine grace at last: *My bowels were moved for him*. The will was gained by a good work wrought upon the affections: *My bowels were moved for him*, as those of the two disciples were when Christ made their hearts to burn within them. She was moved with compassion to her beloved, because his head was *wet with the dew*. Note, Tenderness of spirit, and a heart of flesh, prepare the soul for the reception of Christ into it; and therefore his love to us is represented in such a way as is most affecting. Did Christ redeem us in his pity? Let us in pity receive him, and, for his sake, those that are his, when at any time they are in distress. This good work, wrought upon her affections, raised her up, and made her ashamed of her dullness and slothfulness (v. 5, *I rose up, to open to my beloved*), his grace inclining her to do it and conquering the opposition of unbelief. It was her own act, and yet he wrought it in her. And *her hands dropped with myrrh upon the handle of the lock*. Either, 1. She found it there when she applied her hand to the lock, to shoot it back; he that put in his hand by the hole of the door left it there as an evidence that he had been there. When Christ has wrought powerfully upon a soul he leaves a blessed sweetness in it, which is very delightful to it. With this he oiled the lock, to make it go easy. Note, When we apply ourselves to our duty in the lively exercises of faith, under the influence of divine grace, we shall find it will go on much more readily and sweetly than we expected. If we will but rise up, to open to Christ, we shall find the difficulty we apprehended in it strangely overcome, and shall say with Daniel, *Now let my Lord speak, for thou hast strengthened me*, Dan. x. 19. Or, 2. She brought it thither. Her bowels being moved for her beloved, who had stood so long

the cold and wet, when she came to open him she prepared to anoint his head, and to refresh and comfort him, and perhaps to vent his catching cold; she was in such haste to meet him that she would not stay to make the usual preparation, but dipped her hand in her box of ointment, that she might dily anoint his head at his first coming in. Those that open the doors of their hearts to Christ, those *everlasting doors*, must meet him in the lively exercises of faith and other graces, and with these must anoint him.

VI. Her sad disappointment when she did not find her beloved. And here is the most melancholy part of the story: *I opened to my beloved, as I intended, but, alas! my beloved withdrawn himself, and was gone. My beloved was gone, was gone, so the word is.*

She did not open to him at his first knock, now she came too late, when afterwards *would have inherited this blessing*. Christ be sought while he may be found; if we wait our time, we may lose our passage. Note, Christ justly rebukes our delays with his silence, and suspends the communications of comfort from those that are remiss and drowsy in their duty. (2.) Christ's departures are matter of great grief and lamentation to believers. The royal psalmist never complains of anything with such sorrowful accents as *his hiding his face from him, and casting off, and forsaking him*. The spouse here ready to tear her hair, and rend her clothes, wringing her hands, crying, *He is gone, he is gone*; and that which cuts her to the heart is that she may thank herself, she provoked him to withdraw. If Christ departs, it is because she takes something unkindly.

Now observe what she does, in this case, what befel her. (1.) She still calls him *beloved*, being resolved, how cloudy and dark soever the day be, she will not quit her affection to him and interest in him. It is a sickness, upon every apprehension either of our own failings or of God's withdrawals, to conclude hardly as to our spiritual state. Every desertion is not despair. I will say, *Lord, I believe*, though I must say, *Lord, help my unbelief*. Though he leave me, I love him; he is mine. (2.) She now remembers the words he said to her when he called her, and the impressions they made upon her, reaching herself for her folly in not complying sooner with her convictions. "*My soul melted when he spoke*"; his words melted me when he said, *My head is wet with the dew*; and yet, wretch that I was, I lay still, and de excuse, and did not open to him." The smothering and stifling of our convictions is something that will be very bitter in the reflection, when God opens our eyes. Sometimes a word has not its effect immediately upon the heart, but it melts it afterwards, upon second thoughts. *My soul now melted because his words which he had spoken before*. (3.) She did not go to bed again, but went in pursuit of him: *I sought him; I called him*. She

might have saved herself this labour if she would but have bestirred herself when he first called; but we cut ourselves out a great deal of work, and create ourselves a great deal of trouble, by our own slothfulness and carelessness in improving our opportunities. Yet it is her praise that, when her beloved has withdrawn, she continues seeking him; her desires towards him are made more strong, and her enquiries after him more solicitous, by his withdrawals. She calls him by prayer, calls after him, and begs of him to return; and she not only prays but uses means, she seeks him in the ways wherein she used to find him.

(4.) Yet still she missed of him: *I could not find him; he gave me no answer*. She had no evidence of his favour, no sensible comforts, but was altogether in the dark, and in doubt concerning his love towards her. Note, There are those who have a true love for Christ, and yet have not immediate answers to their prayers for his smiles; but he gives them an equivalent if he strengthens them with strength in their souls to continue seeking him, Ps. cxxxviii. 3. St. Paul could not prevail for the removing of the *thorn in the flesh*, but was answered with grace sufficient for him. (5.) She was ill-treated by the watchmen: *They found me; they smote me; they wounded me*, v. 7. They took her for a lewd woman (because she went about the streets at that time of night, when they were walking their rounds), and beat her accordingly. Disconsolate saints are taken for sinners, and are censured and reproached as such. Thus Hannah, when she was praying in the *bitterness of her soul*, was wounded and smitten by Eli, one of the prime watchmen, when he said to her, *How long wilt thou be drunken?* so counting her a daughter of Belial, 1 Sam. i. 14, 15. It is no new thing for those that are of the loyal loving subjects of Zion's King to be misrepresented by the watchmen of Zion, as enemies or scandals to his kingdom; they could not abuse and persecute them but by putting them into an ill name. Some apply it to those ministers who, though watchmen by office, yet misapply the word to awakened consciences, and through unskilfulness, or contempt of their griefs, add affliction to the afflicted, and *make the hearts of the righteous sad whom God would not have made sad* (Ezek. xiii. 22), discouraging those who ought to be encouraged and talking to the grief of those *whom God has wounded*, Ps. lix. 26. Those watchmen were bad enough that could not, or would not, assist the spouse in her enquiries after her beloved (ch. iii. 3); but these were much worse, that hindered her with their severe and uncharitable censures, *smote her and wounded her* with their reproaches, and though they were the *keepers of the wall of Jerusalem*, as if they had been the breakers of it, *took away her veil* from her rudely and barbarously, as if it had been only a pretence of modesty, but a cover of the contrary. Those whose outward appearances are all good, and who yet are invidiously con-

demned and run down as hypocrites, have reason to complain, as the spouse here, of the *taking away of their veil* from them. (6.) When she was disabled by the abuses the watchmen gave her to prosecute her enquiry herself she gave charge to those about her to assist her in the enquiry (v. 8): *I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem!* all my friends and acquaintance, *if you find my beloved*, it may be you may meet with him before I shall, *what shall you tell him?* so some read. "Speak a good word for me; tell him that *I am sick of love*." Observe here, [1.] What her condition was. She loved Jesus Christ to such a degree that his absence made her sick, extremely sick, she could not bear it, and she was in pain for his return as a woman in travail, as Ahab for Naboth's vineyard, which he so passionately coveted. This is a sickness which is a sign of a healthy constitution of soul, and will certainly end well, a sickness that will be not death, but life. It is better to be sick of love to Christ than at ease in love to the world. [2.] What course she took in this condition. She did not sink into despair, and conclude she should die of her disease, but she sent after her beloved; she asked the advice of her neighbours, and begged their prayers for her, that they would intercede with him on her behalf. "Tell him, though I was careless, and foolish, and slothful, and rose not up so soon as I should have done to open to him, yet I love him; he *knows all things*, he *knows that I do*. Represent me to him as sincere, though in many instances coming short of my duty; nay, represent me to him as an object of his pity, that he may have compassion on me and help me." She does not bid them tell him how the watchmen had abused her; how unrighteous soever they were in it, she acknowledges that *the Lord is righteous*, and therefore bears it patiently. "But tell him that I am wounded with love to him." Gracious souls are more sensible of Christ's withdrawals than of any other trouble whatsoever.

Languet amans, non languet amor—

The lover languishes, but not his love.

9 What *is thy beloved more than another beloved*, O thou fairest among women? what *is thy beloved more than another beloved*, that thou dost so charge us? 10 My beloved *is white and ruddy*, the chiefest among ten thousand. 11 His head *is as the most fine gold*, his locks *are bushy, and black as a raven*. 12 His eyes *are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set*. 13 His cheeks *are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers*: his lips *like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh*. 14 His hands *are as gold*

ring's set with the beryl: his belly *as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires*. 15 His legs *are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold*: his countenance *is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars*. 16 His mouth *is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely*. This *is my beloved, and this is my friend*, O daughters of Jerusalem.

Here is, I. The question which the daughters of Jerusalem put to the spouse concerning her beloved, in answer to the charge he had given them, v. 9. Observe, 1. The respectful title they give to the spouse: *O thou fairest among women!* Our Lord Jesus makes his spouse truly amiable, not only in his person but in the eyes of all the daughters of Jerusalem. The church is the most excellent society in the world, the communion of saints the best communion, and the beauty of the sanctuary a transcendent beauty. The saints are the most excellent people; holiness is the symmetry of the soul; it is its agreement with itself; it recommends itself to all who are competent judges of it. Even those who have little acquaintance with Christ, as the daughters of Jerusalem here, cannot but see an amiable beauty in those that bear the image, which we should love wherever we see it, though in different dresses. 2. The enquiry concerning her beloved: "What *thy beloved more than another beloved?*" thou wilt have us to find him for thee, give us his marks, that we may know him when we see him." (1.) Some take it for a scornful question, blaming her for making so much ado about him: "Why shouldst thou be so passionate in enquiring after thy beloved more than others are after theirs? Why shouldst thou be so set upon him, more than others that yet have a kindness for him? Those that are zealous in religion are wondered at by such as are indifferent to it. The many careless ones laugh at the few that are solicitous and serious." "What is there in him that is so very charming, more than in another person? If he be gone, thou wilt start the *fairest among women*, wilt soon be another with an equal flame." Note, Carnal hearts see nothing excellent or extraordinary in the Lord Jesus, in his person or offices, his doctrine or in his favours; as if there were no more in the knowledge of Christ and in communion with him, than in the knowledge of the world and in its conversation. (2.) Others rather take it for a serious question, and suppose that those who put it intended, [1.] To comfort the spouse, when they knew, would recover new spirits if she did but talk awhile of her beloved; nothing would please her better, nor give a more powerful diversion to her grief, than to put upon the pleasing task of describing

auties of her beloved. [2.] To inform themselves; they had heard, in general, that was excellent and glorious, but they desired to know more particularly. They wondered what moved the spouse to charge them concerning her beloved with so much vehemence and concern, and therefore concluded there must be something more in him than another beloved, which they are willing to be convinced of. Then there begin to be the hopes of people when they begin to enquire concerning Christ and his transcendent perfections. - And sometimes the extraordinary zeal of one, in enquiring after Christ, may be a means to provoke many (2 Cor. ix. 13, as the apostle, by the faith of the Gentiles, would stir up the Jews to a holy emulation, Rom. xi. 14. See John iv. 10.

II. The account which the spouse gives her beloved in answer to this question. He should always be ready to instruct and assist those that are enquiring after Christ. Experienced Christians, who are well acquainted with Christ themselves, should do all they can to make others acquainted with him. I. She assures them, in general, that he is a being of incomparable perfections and unparalleled worth (v. 10): "Do not you know my loved? Can the daughters of Jerusalem ignorant of him that is Jerusalem's crown and crowned head? Let me tell you then," That he has every thing in him that is lovely and amiable: *My beloved is white and ruddy, the colours that make up a complete beauty.* This points not at any extraordinary beauty of his body, when he should be incarnate (it was never said of the child Jesus, of the child Moses, when he was born, that he was *exceedingly fair* (Acts vii. 20); nor, *he had no form nor comeliness*, Isa. liii. 2, but his divine glory, and the concurrence of every thing in him as Mediator, to make him truly lovely in the eyes of those that are enlightened to discern spiritual things. In him we may behold *the beauty of the Lord*; he was the *holy child Jesus*; that was his fairness. If we look upon him as made to us *dom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*, he appears, in all, very amiable. His love to us renders him lovely. He is lovely in the spotless innocence of his life, and in the bloody sufferings he went through to his death,—*white* in his glory, as God when he was transfigured his raiment was *white as the light*, *ruddy* in his assuming the nature of man, *Adam—red earth*,—*white* in his tenderness towards his people, *ruddy* in his terrible appearances against his and their enemies. His complexion is a very happy combination. (2.) That he has that loveliness in him which is not to be found in any other: *He is the chief among ten thousand, a nonsuch in beauty, fairer than the children of men, more lovely than any of them, than all of them; there is none like him, nor any to be compared with him; every thing else is to be accounted loss and dung in comparison of him*, Phil. iii. 8.

He is higher than the kings of the earth (Ps. lxxxix. 27) and has obtained a more excellent name than any of the principalities and powers of the upper or lower world, Phil. ii. 9; Heb. i. iv. He is a *standard-bearer among ten thousand* (so the word is), the tallest and comeliest of the company. He is himself *lifted up as an ensign* (Isa. xi. 10), to whom we must be gathered and must always have an eye. And there is all the reason in the world why he should have the innermost and uppermost place in our souls who is the *fairest of ten thousands* in himself and the fittest of twenty thousands for us.

2. She gives a particular detail of his accomplishments, conceals not his power or comely proportion. Every thing in Christ is amiable. Ten instances she here gives of his beauty, which we need not be nice in the application of, lest the wringing of them bring forth blood and prove the wresting of them. The design, in general, is to show that he is every way qualified for his undertaking, and has all that in him which may recommend him to our esteem, love, and confidence. Christ's appearance to John (Rev. i. 13, &c.) may be compared with the description which the spouse gives of him here, the scope of both being to represent him transcendently glorious, that is, both great and gracious, made lovely in the eyes of believers and making them happy in himself. (1.) *His head is as the most fine gold.* The head of Christ is God (1 Cor. xi. 3), and it is promised to the saints that *the Almighty shall be their gold* (Job xxii. 25), their defence, their treasure; much more was he so to Christ, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, Col. ii. 9. Christ's head bespeaks his sovereign dominion over all and his vital influence upon his church and all its members. This is as *gold, gold*; the former word in the original signifies shining gold, the latter strong solid gold; Christ's sovereignty is both beautiful and powerful. Nebuchadnezzar's monarchy is compared to a *head of gold* (Dan. ii. 38), because it excelled all the other monarchies, and so does Christ's government. (2.) *His locks are bushy and black, not black as the tents of Kedar*, whose blackness was their deformity, to which therefore the church compares herself (ch. i. 5), but *black as a raven*, whose blackness is his beauty. Sometimes Christ's hair is represented as *white* (Rev. i. 14), denoting his eternity, that he is *the ancient of days*; but here as *black and bushy*, denoting that he is ever young and that there is in him no decay, nothing that waxes old. Every thing that belongs to Christ is amiable in the eyes of a believer, even his hair is so; it was pity that it should be wet, as it was, *with the dew*, and these *locks with the drops of the night*, while he waited to be gracious, v. 2. (3.) *His eyes are as the eyes of doves*, fair and clear, and chaste and kind, *by the rivers of waters*, which doves delight in, and in which,

as in a glass, they see themselves. They are washed, to make them clean, *washed with milk*, to make them white, and *fily set*, neither starting out nor sunk in. Christ is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, for they are doves' eyes, Hab. i. 13. All believers speak with pleasure of the omniscience of Christ, as the spouse here of *his eyes*; for, though it be terrible to his enemies as a *flame of fire* (Rev. i. 14), yet it is amiable and comfortable to his friends, as *doves' eyes*, for it is a witness to their integrity. *Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee*. Blessed and holy are those that walk always as under the eye of Christ. (4.) *His cheeks* (the risings of the face) *are as a bed of spices*, raised in the gardens, which are the beauty and wealth of them, and *as sweet flowers*, or towers of sweetness. There is that in Christ's countenance which is amiable in the eyes of all the saints, in the least glimpse of him, for the cheek is but a part of the face. The half discoveries Christ makes of himself to the soul are reviving and refreshing, fragrant above the richest flowers and perfumes. (5.) *His lips are like lilies*, not white like lilies, but sweet and pleasant. Such are the words of his lips to all that are sanctified, *sweeter than honey and the honey-comb*; such are the kisses of his lips, all the communications of his grace; *grace is poured into his lips*, and those that heard him wondered at the *gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth*. *His lips are as lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh*. Never any lilies in nature dropped myrrh, but nothing in nature can fully set forth the beauty and excellency of Christ, and therefore, to do it by comparison, there must be a composition of images. (6.) *His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl*, a noted precious stone, v. 14. Great men had their hands adorned with gold rings on their fingers, set with diamonds or other precious stones, but, in her eye, *his hands themselves were as gold rings*; all the instances of his power, the works of his hands, all the performances of his providence and grace, are all rich, and pure, and precious, as gold, *as the precious onyx and the sapphire*, all fitted to the purpose for which they were designed as *gold rings* to the finger, and all beautiful and very becoming, *as rings set with beryl*. His hands, which are stretched forth both to receive his people and to give to them, are thus rich and comely. (7.) *His bowels are as bright ivory*, for so it should be rendered, rather than *his belly*, for it is the same word that was used for *bowels* (v. 4) and is often ascribed to God (as Isa. lxiii. 15; Jer. xxxi. 20), and so it denotes his tender compassion and affection for his spouse, and the love he has to her even in her desolate and deserted state. This love of his is like *bright ivory*, finely polished, and richly overlaid with *sapphires*. The love itself is strong and firm, and the instances and circumstances of it are bright and sparkling, and add much to

the inestimable value of it. (8.) *His legs as pillars of marble*, so strong, so stately, no disgrace, no, not to the *sockets of fine*, upon which they are set, v. 15. This bespeaks his stability and stedfastness; where he his foot he will fix it; he is able to bear the weight of the government that is upon his shoulders, and his legs will never under him. This sets forth the state and magnificence of the goings of our King, in his sanctuary (Ps. lxxviii. 1) and the steadiness and evenness of all dispensations towards his people. *The words of the Lord are equal*; they are all mercy and truth; these are the *pillars of marble*, lasting than the pillars of heaven. (9.) *His countenance* (his port and mien) *is as Lebanon*, that stately hill; his aspect beautiful and charming, like the prospect of that pleasant forest or park, *excellent as the cedars*, which in height and strength, excel other trees, and are of excellent use. Christ is a goodly person; the more we look upon him the more beauty we shall see in him. (10.) *His mouth is most sweet*; it is sweetness itself; it is sweetnesses (so the word is); it is pureness, nay, it is the quintessence of all lights, v. 16. The words of his mouth are all sweet to a believer, sweet as milk to babes (to whom it is agreeable), as honey to the wise (that are grown up (Ps. cxix. 103), to whom it is delicious. The kisses of his mouth, the tokens of his love, have a transcendent sweetness in them, and are most delightful to those who have their *spiritual senses exercised*. *To you that believe he is precious*.

3. She concludes with a full assurance of both of faith and hope, and so gets the mastery of her trouble. (1.) Here is a full assurance of faith concerning the complete beauty of the Lord Jesus: "*He is altogether lovely*". Why should I stand to mention particulars when throughout there is nothing amiss? She is sensible she does him wrong in particular descriptions of him, and comes short of the dignity and merit of the subject, and therefore she breaks off with this general encomium: *He is truly lovely*, he is who he is; so; there is nothing in him but what is amiable, and nothing amiable but what is in him. *He is all desires*; he has all in him that one can desire. And therefore all her desire is towards him, and she seeks him there carefully and cannot rest contented in the want of him. Who can but love him who is so lovely? (2.) Here is a full assurance of hope concerning her own interest in him: "*This is my beloved, and this is my friend*" and therefore wonder not that I thus love after him." See with what a holy boldness she claims relation to him, and then with what a holy triumph she proclaims it. It is his property that sweetens excellency. To Christ, and not to see him as ours, would rather a torture than a happiness; but to see one that is thus lovely, and to see him as ours, is a complete satisfaction. Here is

true believer, [1.] Giving an entire consent to Christ: "He is mine, *my Lord and my God* (John xx. 28), mine according to the honour of the gospel-covenant, mine in all relations, bestowed upon me, to be all that to me that my poor soul stands in need of."

[2.] Taking an entire complacency in Christ. It is spoken of here with an air of triumph: "This is he whom I have chosen, and to whom I have given up myself. None but Christ, none but Christ. This is he on whom my heart is, for he is my best-beloved; this is he in whom I trust, and from whom I expect all good, for *this is my friend*." Note, those that make Christ their beloved shall have him their friend; he has been, is, and will be, a special friend to all believers. He loves those that love him; and those that have him their friend have reason to glory in him, and speak of him with delight. "Let them be governed by the love of the world, and seek their happiness in its friendship and favours, *This is my beloved and this is my friend*. Others may do as they please, but this is my soul's choice, my soul's rest, my life, my joy, my all; this is he whom I desire to live and die with."

CHAP. VI.

IN this chapter, I. The daughters of Jerusalem, moved with the description which the church had given of Christ, enquire after him, ver. 1. II. The church directs them where they may meet with him, ver. 2, 3. III. Christ is now found of those that sought him, and very highly applauds the beauty of his spouse, as one extremely smitten with it (ver. 4-7), preferring her before all others (ver. 8, 9), recommending her to the love and esteem of all her neighbours (ver. 10), and, lastly, acknowledging the impressions which her beauty had made upon him and the great delight he took in it, ver. 11-13.

WHITHER is thy beloved gone,

O thou fairest among women?

Whither is thy beloved turned aside?

That we may seek him with thee. 2

My beloved is gone down into his

garden, to the beds of spices, to feed

in the gardens, and to gather lilies. 3

I am my beloved's, and my beloved

is mine: he feedeth among the lilies.

Here is, I. The enquiry which the daughters of Jerusalem made concerning Christ,

1. They still continue their high thoughts of the church, and call her, as before, the

fairest among women; for true sanctity is true beauty. And now they raise their thoughts

higher concerning Christ: *Whither has thy*

beloved gone, that we may seek him with thee?

This would be but an indecent, unacceptable,

compliment, if the song were not to be understood spiritually; for love is jealous of a rival,

would monopolize the beloved, and cares

not that others should join in seeking him;

but those that truly love Christ are desirous

that others should love him too, and be joined

to him; nay, the greatest instance of duty

and respect that the church's children can

show to their mother is to join with her in

seeking Christ. The daughters of Jerusalem,

who had asked (ch. v. 9), *What is thy beloved*

more than another beloved? wondering that

the spouse should be so passionately in love with him, are now of another mind, and are themselves in love with him; for, 1. The spouse had described him, and shown them his excellencies and perfections; and therefore, though they have not seen him, yet, believing, they love him. Those that undervalue Christ do so because they do not know him; when God, by his word and Spirit, discovers him to the soul, with that ray of light the fire of love to him will be kindled.

2. The spouse had expressed her own love to him, her rest in that love, and had triumphed in it: *This is my beloved*; and that flame in her breast scattered sparks into theirs. As sinful lusts, when they break out, defile many, so the pious zeal of some may *provoke many*, 2 Cor. ix. 2. 3. The spouse had bespoken their help in seeking her beloved (ch. v. 8); but now they beg hers, for they perceive that now the cloud she had been under began to scatter, and the sky to clear up, and, while she was describing her beloved to them, she herself retrieved her comfort in him. Drooping Christians would find benefit themselves by talking of Christ, as well as do good to others. Now here, (1.) They enquire concerning him, "*Whither has thy beloved gone?*" which way must we steer our course in pursuit of him?" Note, Those that are made acquainted with the excellencies of Christ, and the comfort of an interest in him, cannot but be inquisitive after him and desirous to know where they may meet with him. (2.) They offer their service to the spouse to accompany her in quest of him: *We will seek him with thee*. Those that would find Christ must seek him, seek him early, seek him diligently; and it is best seeking Christ in concert, to join with those that are seeking him. We must seek for communion with Christ in communion with saints. We know *whither our beloved has gone*; he has gone to heaven, to his Father, and our Father. He took care to send us notice of it, that we might know how to direct to him, John xx.

17. We must by faith see him there, and by prayer seek him there, with boldness *enter into the holiest*, and herein must join with the generation of those that seek him (Ps. xxiv. 6), even with *all that in every place call upon him*, 1 Cor. i. 2. We must pray with and for others.

II. The answer which the spouse gave to this enquiry, v. 2, 3. Now she complains not any more, as she had done (ch. v. 6), "He is gone, he is gone," that she knew not where to find him, or doubted she had lost him for ever; no,

1. Now she knows very well where he is (v. 2): "*My beloved* is not to be found in the streets of the city, and the crowd and noise that are there; there I have in vain looked for him" (as his parents sought him among their kindred and acquaintance, and found him not); "but he has gone down to his garden, a place of privacy and retire-

ment." The more we withdraw from the hurry of the world the more likely we are to have acquaintance with Christ, who took his disciples into a garden, there to be witnesses of the agonies of his love. Christ's church is a garden enclosed, and separated from the open common of the world; it is *his garden*, which he has planted as he did the garden of Eden, which he takes care of, and delights in. Though he has gone up to the paradise above, yet he comes down to his garden on earth; it lies low, but he condescends to visit it, and wonderful condescension it is. *Will God in very deed dwell with man upon the earth?* Those that would find Christ may expect to meet with him in *his garden* the church, for *there he records his name* (Exod. xx. 24); they must attend upon him in the ordinances which he has instituted, the word, sacraments, and prayer, wherein he will be with us *always, even to the end of the world*. The spouse here refers to what Christ had said (ch. v. 1), *I have come into my garden*. It is as if she had said, "What a fool was I to fret and fatigue myself in seeking him where he was not, when he himself had told me where he was!" Words of direction and comfort are often out of the way when we have occasion to use them, till the blessed Spirit brings them to our remembrance, and then we wonder how we overlooked them. Christ has told us that he would *come into his garden*; thither therefore we must go to seek him. *The beds*, and smaller gardens, in this greater, are the particular churches, the *synagogues of God in the land* (Ps. lxxiv. 8); the *spices and lilies* are particular believers, the planting of the Lord, and pleasant in his eyes. When Christ comes down to his church it is, (1.) *To feed among the gardens*, to feed his flock, which he feeds not, as other shepherds, in the open fields, but in his garden, so well are they provided for, Ps. xxiii. 2. He comes to feed his friends, and entertain them; there you may not only find him, but find his table richly furnished, and a hearty welcome to it. He comes to feed himself, that is, to please himself with the products of his own grace in his people; *for the Lord takes pleasure in those that fear him*. He has many gardens, many particular churches of different sizes and shapes; but, while they are his, he feeds in them all, manifests himself among them, and is well pleased with them. (2.) *To gather lilies*, wherewith he is pleased to entertain and adorn himself. He picks the lilies one by one, and gathers them to himself; and there will be a general harvest of them at the great day, when he will send forth his angels, to gather all his lilies, that he may be for ever glorified and admired in them.

2. She is very confident of her own interest in him (v. 3): "*I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine*; the relation is mutual, and the knot is tied, which cannot be loosed; *for he feeds among the lilies*, and my commu-

nion with him is a certain token of my interest in him." She had said this before (ch. ii. 16); but, (1.) Here she repeats it as that which she resolved to abide by, and which she took an unspeakable pleasure and satisfaction in; she liked her choice too well to change. Our communion with God is very much maintained and kept up by the frequent renewing of our covenant with him and joining in it. (2.) She had occasion to repeat it, for she had acted unkindly to her beloved and, for her so doing, he had justly withdrawn himself from her, and therefore there was occasion to take fresh hold of the covenant which continues firm between Christ and believers, notwithstanding their failings and his frowns, Ps. lxxxix. 30—35. "I have been careless and wanting in my duty, and yet *am my beloved's*;" for every transgression the covenant does not throw us out of covenant. "He has justly hidden his face from me and denied me his comforts, and yet *my beloved is mine*;" for rebukes and chastenings are not only consistent with, but the flow from covenant-love. (3.) When we have not a full assurance of Christ's love we must live by a faithful adherence to him. "Though I have not the sensible consolation I used to have, yet I will cleave to this, *Christ is mine and I am his*." (4.) Though she had said this same before, yet now she inverts the order and asserts his interest in her first: *I am my beloved's*, entirely devoted and dedicated to him; and then her interest in him and in his grace: "*My beloved is mine*, and I am happy truly happy in him." If our own hearts cannot witness for us that we are his, there is no room left to question his being ours; for the covenant never breaks on his side. (5.) It is now her comfort, as it was then, that *he feeds among the lilies*, that he takes delight in his people and converses freely with them as we do with those with whom we feed; and therefore, though at present he be withdrawn, "I shall meet with him again. *shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance, and my God*."

4 Thou art beautiful, O my love as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners. 5 Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me: thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead. 6 Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep which go up from the washing, whereof every one beareth twins and there is not one barren among them. 7 As a piece of a pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks. 8 There are threescore queens, and four score concubines, and virgins without number. 9 My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her

mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her. The daughters saw her, and blessed her; *yea*, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her. 10 Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?

Now we must suppose Christ graciously returned to his spouse, from whom he had withdrawn himself, returned to converse with her (for he speaks to her and makes her to fear joy and gladness), returned to favour her, having forgiven and forgotten all her unkindness, for he speaks very tenderly and respectfully to her.

I. He pronounces her truly amiable (v. 4): *Thou art beautiful, O my love! as Tirzah*, a city in the tribe of Manasseh, whose name signifies pleasant, or acceptable, the situation, no doubt, being very happy and the building fine and uniform. *Thou art comely as Jerusalem*, a city compact together (Ps. cxxii.), and which Solomon had built and beautified, *the joy of the whole earth*; it was an honour to the world (whether they thought so or no) that there was such a city in it. It was the holy city, and that was the greatest beauty of it; and fitly is the church compared to it, for it was figured and typified by it. The gospel-church is the Jerusalem that is above (Gal. iv. 26), the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb. xii. 22); in it God has his sanctuary, and is, in a special manner, present; thence he has the tribute of praise issuing; it is his rest for ever, and therefore it is comely as Jerusalem, and, being so, is terrible as an army with banners. Church-censures, duly administered, strike an awe upon men's consciences; the word (the weapons of his warfare) casts down imaginations (2 Cor. x. 5), and even an unbeliever is convinced and judged by the solemnity of holy ordinances, (1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. The saints by faith overcome the world (1 John v. 4); nay, like Jacob, they have power with God and prevail, Gen. xxxii. 28.

II. He owns himself in love with her, v. 5. Though, for a small moment, and in a little while, he had hid his face from her, yet now he gathers her with very surprising instances of everlasting lovingkindness, Isa. liv. 8. *Turn thy eyes towards me* (so some read it), "turn the eyes of faith and love towards me, for they have lifted me up; look unto me, and be comforted." When we are calling to God to turn the eye of his favour towards us he is calling to us to turn the eye of our obedience towards him. We read it as a strange expression of love, "Turn away thy eyes from me, for I cannot bear the brightness of them; they have quite overcome me, and I am prevailed with to overlook all that is past;" as God said to Moses, when he interceded for Israel, "Let me alone, or I must yield," Exod.

xxxii. 10. Christ is pleased to borrow these expressions of a passionate lover only to express the tenderness of a compassionate Redeemer, and the delight he takes in his redeemed and in the workings of his own grace in them.

III. He repeats, almost word for word, part of the description he had given of her beauty (ch. iv. 1—3), her hair, her teeth, her temples (v. 5—7), not because he could not have described it in other words, and by other similitudes, but to show that he had still the same esteem for her since her unkindness to him, and his withdrawals from her, that he had before. Lest she should think that, though he would not quite cast her off, yet he would think the worse of her while he knew her, he says the same of her now that he had done; for those to whom much is forgiven will love the more, and, consequently, will be the more beloved, for Christ has said, *I love those that love me*. He is pleased with his people, notwithstanding their weaknesses, when they sincerely repent of them and return to their duty, and commends them as if they had already arrived at perfection.

IV. He prefers her before all competitors, and sees all the beauties and perfections of others meeting and centering in her (v. 8, 9). "There are, it may be, threescore queens, who, like Esther, have by their beauty attained to the royal state and dignity, and fourscore concubines, whom kings have preferred before their own queens, as more charming, and these attended by their maids of honour, virgins without number, who, when there is a ball at court, appear in great splendour, with beauty that dazzles the eyes of the spectators; but my dove, my undefiled, is but one, a holy one." 1. She excels them all. Go through all the world, and view the societies of men that reckon themselves wise and happy, kingdoms, courts, senates, councils, or whatever incorporations you may think valuable, they are none of them to be compared with the church of Christ; their honours and beauties are nothing to hers. *Who is like unto thee, O Israel!* Deut. xxxiii. 29; iv. 6, 7. There are particular persons, as virgins without number, who are famed for their accomplishments, the beauties of their address, language, and performances, but the beauty of holiness is beyond all other beauty: "My dove, my undefiled, is one, has that one beauty that she is a dove, an undefiled dove, and mine, and that makes her excel the queens and virgins, though they were ever so many." 2. She includes them all. "Other kings have many queens, and concubines, and virgins, with whose conversation they entertain themselves, but my dove, my undefiled, is to me instead of all; in that one I have more than they have in all theirs." Or, "Though there are many particular churches, some of greater dignity, others of less, some of longer, others of shorter, standing, and many particular believers, of different gifts and attainments,

some more eminent, others less so, yet they all constitute but one catholic church, are all but parts of that whole, and that is *my dove, my undefiled*." Christ is the centre of the church's unity; all the children of God that are scattered abroad are gathered by him (John xi. 52), and meet in him (Eph. i. 10), and are all his doves.

V. He shows how much she was esteemed, not by him only, but by all that had acquaintance with her and stood in relation to her. It would add to her praise to say, 1. That she was her mother's darling; she had that in her, from a child, which recommended her to the particular affection of her parents. As Solomon himself is said to have been *tender and an only one in the sight of his mother* (Prov. iv. 3), so was she *the only one of her mother*, as dear as if she had been an only one, and, if there were many more, yet she was *the choice one of her that bore her*, more excellent than all the societies of men this world ever produced. All the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, are nothing, in Christ's account, compared with the church, which is made up of *the excellent ones of the earth, the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, and more excellent than their neighbours*. 2. That she was admired by all her acquaintance, not only *the daughters*, who were her juniors, but even *the queens and the concubines*, who might have reason to be jealous of her as a rival; *they all blessed her, and wished well to her, praised her, and spoke well of her*. The *daughters of Jerusalem* called her *the fairest among women*; all agreed to give her the pre-eminence for beauty, and every sheaf bowed to hers. Note, (1.) Those that have any correct sense of things cannot but be convinced in their consciences (whatever they say) that godly people are excellent people; many will give them their good word, and more their good-will. (2.) Jesus Christ takes notice what people think and speak of his church, and is well pleased with those that honour such as fear the Lord, and takes it ill of those that despise them, particularly when they are under a cloud, that *offend any of his little ones*.

VI. He produces the encomium that was given of her, and makes it his own (v. 10): *Who is she that looks forth as the morning?* This is applicable both to the church in the world and to grace in the heart.

1. They are amiable as the light, the most beautiful of all visible things. Christians are, or should be, the lights of the world. The patriarchal church *looked forth as the morning* when the promise of the Messiah was first made known, and *the day-spring from on high visited* this dark world. The Jewish church was *fair as the moon*; the ceremonial law was an imperfect light; it shone by reflection; it was changing as the moon, did not make day, nor had *the sun of righteousness yet risen*. But the Christian church is *clear as the sun*, exhibits a great light to those that sat in dark-

ness. Or we may apply it to the kingdom of grace, the gospel-kingdom. (1.) In its rise it *looks forth as the morning* after a dark night; it is discovering (Job xxxviii. 12, 13) and very acceptable, *looks forth pleasantly* as a clear morning; but it is small in its beginnings, and scarcely perceptible at first. (2.) It is, at the best, in this world, but *fair as the moon*, which shines with a borrowed light, which has her changes and eclipses, and spots too, and, when at the full, does but shine by night. But, (3.) When it is perfected in the kingdom of glory then it will be *clear as the sun, the church clothed with the sun*, with Christ *the sun of righteousness*, Rev. xii. Those that love God will then be *as the sun when he goes forth in his strength* (Judg. v. 31; Matt. xiii. 43); they shall shine in inexpressible glory, and that which is perfect will then come; there shall be no darkness, no spots, Isa. xxx. 26.

2. The beauty of the church and of believers is not only amiable, but *awful as an army with banners*. The church, in this world, is *as an army*, as the camp of Israel in the wilderness; its state is militant; it is in the midst of enemies, and is engaged in a constant conflict with them. Believers are soldiers in this army. It has its *banners*; the gospel of Christ is an ensign (Isa. xi. 12), the love of Christ, ch. ii. 4. It is marshalled and kept in order and under discipline. It is *terrible* to its enemies, as Israel in the wilderness was, Exod. xv. 14. When Balaam saw Israel encamped according to their tribes by their standards, with colours displayed, he said, *How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob* (Num. xxiv. 5). When the church preserves her purity she secures her honour and victory; when she is *fair as the moon*, and *clear as the sun*, she is truly great and formidable.

11 I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded. 12 Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib. 13 Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee. What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies.

Christ having now returned to his spouse, and the breach being entirely made up, and the falling out of these lovers being the renewing of love, Christ here gives an account both of the distance and of the reconciliation.

I. That when he had withdrawn from his church as his spouse, and did not comfort her, yet even then he had his eye upon it as his garden, which he took care of (v. 11): *"went down into the garden of nuts, or nutmegs, to see the fruits of the valley, with complacency and concern, to see them as m"*

own." When he was out of sight he was no further off than the garden, hid among the trees of the garden, in a low and dark valley; at then he was observing *how the vine flourished*, that he might do all that to it which was necessary to promote its flourishing, and might delight himself in it as a man does in fruitful garden. He went to see whether the pomegranates budded. Christ observes the first beginnings of the good work of grace in the soul and the early buddings of devout affections and inclinations there, and well pleased with them, as we are with the blossoms of the spring.

I. That yet he could not long content himself with this, but suddenly felt a powerful, irresistible, inclination in his own bosom to return to his church, as his spouse, being moved with her lamentations after him, and her languishing desire towards him (v. 12): *Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib*; I could not any longer keep at a distance; my repentings were kindled together, and I presently resolved to fly back to the arms of my love, my church. Thus Joseph made himself strange to his brethren, for a while, to chastise them for their former unkindnesses, and make trial of their present temper, till he could no longer restrain himself, but, *or ever he was aware*, burst out into tears, and said, *I am Joseph*, Gen. xlv. 1, 3. And now the spouse perceives, as David did (Ps. xxxi. 22), that though she said in her haste, *I am cut off from before thy eyes*, yet, at the same time, he heard the voice of her supplications, and became like the chariots of Ammi-nadib, which were noted for their beauty and swiftness. *My soul put me into the chariots of my willing people* (so we read it), "the chariots of their faith, hope, and love, their desires, and prayers, and expectations, which they sent after me, to fetch me back, as chariots of fire with messages of fire." Note, 1. Christ's people are, ought to be, a willing people. 2. If they continue seeking Christ and longing after him, even when he seems to withdraw from them, he will graciously return to them in due time, perhaps sooner than they think of with a pleasing surprise. No chariots of fire for Christ shall return empty. 3. All Christ's gracious returns to his people take place from himself. It is not they, it is his own soul, that puts him into the chariots of his people; for he is gracious because he will be gracious, and loves his Israel because he would love them; not for their sakes, but of his own to them.

III. That he, having returned to her, kindly comforted her return to him, notwithstanding the discouragements she laboured under. Let us not despair of obtaining as much comfort as ever she had before this distance happened, but take the comfort of the return of her beloved, v. 13. Here, 1. The church is called the *Shulamite*, referring either to Solomon, or the bridegroom in type, by whose name she

is called, in token of her relation to him and union with him (thus believers are called *Christians* from *Christ*), or referring to *Salem*, the place of her birth and residence, as the woman of *Shunem* is called the *Shunamite*. Heaven is the Salem whence the saints have their birth, and where they have their citizenship; those that belong to Christ, and are bound for heaven, shall be called *Shulamites*.

2. She is invited to return, and the invitation most earnestly pressed: *Return, return*; and again, "*Return, return*; recover the peace thou hast lost and forfeited; come back to thy former composedness and cheerfulness of spirit." Note, Good Christians, after they have had their comfort disturbed, are sometimes hard to be pacified, and need to be earnestly persuaded to return again to their rest. As revolting sinners have need to be called to again and again (*Turn you, turn you, why will you die?*) so disquieted saints have need to be called to again and again, *Turn you, turn you, why will you droop; Why art thou cast down, O my soul?* 3. Having returned, she is desired to show her face: *That we may look upon thee*. Go no longer with thy face covered like a mourner. Let those that have made their peace with God *lift up their faces without spot* (Job xxii. 26); let them come boldly to his throne of grace. Christ is pleased with the cheerfulness and humble confidence of his people, and would have them look pleasant. "*Let us look upon thee*, not I only, but the holy angels, who rejoice in the consolation of saints as well as in the conversion of sinners; not I only, but all the daughters." Christ and believers are pleased with the beauty of the church. 4. A short account is given of what is to be seen in her. The question is asked, *What will you see in the Shulamite?* And it is answered, *As it were the company of two armies*. (1.) Some think she gives this account of herself; she is shy of appearing, unwilling to be looked upon, having, in her own account, no form nor comeliness. Alas! says she, *What will you see in the Shulamite?* nothing that is worth your looking upon, nothing but *as it were the company of two armies* actually engaged, where nothing is to be seen but blood and slaughter. The watchmen had smitten her, and wounded her, and she carried in her face the marks of those wounds, looked as if she had been fighting. She had said (ch. i. 6), *Look not upon me because I am black*; here she says, "*Look not upon me because I am bloody*." Or it may denote the constant struggle that is between grace and corruption in the souls of believers; they are in them *as two armies* continually skirmishing, which makes her ashamed to show her face. (2.) Others think her beloved gives this account of her. "I will tell you what you shall see in the *Shulamite*; you shall see as noble a sight as that of two armies, or two parts of the same army, drawn out in rank and file; not only *as an army with banners*,

but as *two armies*, with a majesty double to what was before spoken; she is as *Mahannaim*, as the two hosts which Jacob saw (Gen. xxxii. 1, 2), a host of saints and a host of angels ministering to them; the church militant, the church triumphant." Behold *two armies*; in both the church appears beautiful.

CHAP. VII.

In this chapter, 1. Christ, the royal bridegroom, goes on to describe the beauties of his spouse, the church, in many instances, and to express his love to her and the delight he has in her conversation, ver. 1-2. 11. The spouse, the church, expresses her great delight in him, and the desire that she had of communion and fellowship with him, ver. 10-13. Such mutual esteem and endearment are there between Christ and believers. And what is heaven but an everlasting interchanging of loves between the holy God and holy souls?

HOW beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter! the joints of thy thighs *are* like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman. 2 Thy navel *is like* a round goblet, *which* wanteth not liquor: thy belly *is like* a heap of wheat set about with lilies. 3 Thy two breasts *are* like two young roes *that are* twins. 4 Thy neck *is* as a tower of ivory; thine eyes *like* the fishpools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim: thy nose *is as* the tower of Lebanon which looketh toward Damascus. 5 Thine head upon thee *is* like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple; the king *is* held in the galleries. 6 How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights! 7 This thy stature is like to a palm tree, and thy breasts to clusters of grapes. 8 I said, I will go up to the palm tree, I will take hold of the boughs thereof: now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine, and the smell of thy nose like apples; 9 And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine for my beloved, that goeth *down* sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.

The title which Jesus Christ here gives to the church is new: *O prince's daughter!* agreeing with Ps. xlv. 13, where she is called *the king's daughter*. She is so in respect of her new birth, born from above, begotten of God, and his workmanship, bearing the image of the King of kings, and guided by his Spirit. She is so by marriage; Christ, by betrothing her to himself, though he found her mean and despicable, has made her a *prince's daughter*. She has a princely disposition, something in her truly noble and generous; she is daughter and heir to the prince of the kings of the earth. *If children, then heirs*. Now here we have,

I. A copious description of the beauty of the spouse, which, some think, is given by

the virgins her companions, and that they were they who called upon her to return; seems rather to be given by Christ himself, and to be designed to express his love to her, and delight in her, as before, *ch. iv. 1, & ch. vi. 5, 6*. The similitudes are here different from what they were before, to show that the beauty of holiness is such as nothing in nature can reach; you may still say more of it, and yet still come short of it.

The commendation of the spouse, *ch. iv.*, was immediately upon the espousals (*ch. iii. 11*), then upon her return from a by-path (*ch. vi. 13*); yet this exceeds that, to show the constancy of Christ's love to his people; *he loves thee to the end*, since he made them *precious* in his sight and honourable. The spouse here described the beauty of her beloved in particulars (*ch. v. 11, &c.*); and now he describes her in as many, for he will not be behindhand with her in respects and endowments. Those that honour Christ he will certainly honour, and make honourable. The prophet, in describing the corruptions of degenerate Israel, reckons *from the sole of the foot even unto the head* (Isa. i. 6), so here the beauties of the church are reckoned from foot to head, that, as the apostle speaks, when he is comparing the church, as here, to the natural body (1 Cor. xii. 23), *more abundantly* honour might be bestowed on those parts *the body which we think to be less honourable*, and which therefore *lacked honour*, v. 24.

Her feet are here praised; the feet of Christ's ministers are beautiful in the eyes of the church (Isa. lii. 7), and her feet are here said to be beautiful in the eyes of Christ. *How beautiful are thy feet with shoes!* When believers, being made free from the captivity of sin (Acts xii. 8), *stand fast in the liberty wherewith they are made free*, preserve the token of their enfranchisement, have their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and walk steadily according to the rule of the gospel, then their feet are beautiful with shoes; they tread firmly, being well armed against the troubles they meet with in this way. When we rest not in good affection, but they are accompanied with sincere endeavours and resolutions, then our feet are beautified with shoes. See Ezek. xvi. 10. The joints of the thighs are here said to be like jewels, and those curiously wrought by a cunning workman. This is explained by Eph. iv. 16 and Col. ii. 19, where the mystical body of Christ is said to be held together by joints and bands, as the hips and knees (both which are the joints of the thighs) serve the natural body in its strength and motion. The church is then comely in Christ's eyes when the joints are kept firm by holy love and unity, and the communion of saints. When believers act in religion from good principle, and are steady and regular in their whole conversation, and turn themselves easily to every duty in its time and place, then their joints are like jewels. 3. The navel is here

compared to a round cup or goblet, that wants not any of the agreeable liquor that one would wish to find in it, such as David's cup that is set over (Ps. xxiii. 5), well shaped, and not as that miserable infant whose navel was not cut, Ezek. xvi. 4. The fear of the Lord is said to be health to the navel. See Prov. iii.

When the soul wants not that fear then the navel wants not liquor. 4. The belly is like a heap of wheat in the store-chamber, which perhaps was sometimes, to make show, adorned with flowers. The wheat is useful, the lilies are beautiful; there is every thing in the church which may be to the members that body either for use or for ornament. The body is nourished from the belly; it notes the spiritual prosperity of a believer and the healthful constitution of the soul, in good plight. 5. The breasts are like two young roes that are twins, v. 3. By the breasts of the church's consolations those are nourished who are born from its belly (Isa. vi. 3), and by the navel received nourishment in the womb. This comparison we had before, ch. iv. 5. 6. The neck, which before was compared to the tower of David (ch. iv. 4), here compared to a tower of ivory, so white, precious; such is the faith of the saints, which they are joined to Christ their head. The name of the Lord, improved by faith, is the saints as a strong and impregnable tower. 7. The eyes are compared to the fish-pools in Heshbon, or the artificial fish-ponds, a gate, either of Jerusalem or of Heshbon, which is called Bath-rabbim, the daughter of multitude, because a great thoroughfare. The understanding, the intentions of a believer, are clear and clear as these ponds. The eyes, weeping for sin, are as fountains (Isa. ix. 1), and comely with Christ. 8. The face is like the tower of Lebanon, the forehead face set like a flint (Isa. l. 7), undaunted that tower was impregnable. So it denotes the magnanimity and holy bravery of the church, or (as others) a spiritual sagacity to discern things that differ, as animals are easily distinguish by the smell. This prophet looks towards Damascus, the head city of Syria, denoting the boldness of the church facing its enemies and not fearing them. The head like Carmel, a very high hill near the sea, v. 5. The head of a believer is lifted above his enemies (Ps. xxvii. 6), above the mountains of the lower region, as the top of Carmel was, pointing heaven-ward. The more he get above this world, and the nearer to heaven, and the more secure and serene we come by that means, the more amiable we are in the eyes of the Lord Jesus. 10. The crown of the head is said to be like purple. It denotes the universal amiableness of a believer in the eyes of Christ, even to the hair, (as some understand it) the pins with which the hair is dressed. Some by the head and the hair understand the governors of the church, who, if they be careful to do their duty, add much to her comeliness. The head

like crimson (so some read it) and the hair like purple, the two colours worn by great men.

II. The complacency which Christ takes in his church thus beautified and adorned. She is lovely indeed if she be so in his eyes; as he puts the comeliness upon her, so it is his love that makes this comeliness truly valuable, for he is an unexceptionable judge. 1. He delighted to look upon his church, and to converse with it, rejoicing in that habitable part of his earth: *The king is held in the galleries, and cannot leave them.* This is explained by Ps. cxxxii. 13, 14, *The Lord has chosen Zion, saying, This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell;* and Ps. cxlvii. 11, *The Lord takes pleasure in those that fear him.* And, if Christ has such delight in the galleries of communion with his people, much more reason have they to delight in them, and to reckon a day there better than a thousand. 2. He was even struck with admiration at the beauty of his church (v. 6): *How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love! How art thou made fair!* (so the word is), "not born so, but made so with the comeliness which I have put upon thee." Holiness is a beauty beyond expression; the Lord Jesus is wonderfully pleased with it; the outward aspect of it is fair; the inward disposition of it is pleasant and highly agreeable, and the complacency he has in it is inexpressible. *O my dearest for delights!* so some read it. 3. He determined to keep up communion with his church. (1.) To take hold of her as of the boughs of a palm-tree. He compares her stature to a palm-tree (v. 7), so straight, so strong, does she appear, when she is looked upon in her full proportion. The palm-tree is observed to flourish most when it is loaded; so the church, the more it has been afflicted, the more it has multiplied; and the branches of it are emblems of victory. Christ says, "I will go up to the palm-tree, to entertain myself with the shadow of it (v. 8) and I will take hold of its boughs and observe the beauty of them." What Christ has said he will do, in favour to his people; we may be sure he will do it, for his kind purposes are never suffered to fall to the ground; and if he take hold of the boughs of his church, take early hold of her branches, when they are young and tender, he will keep his hold and not let them go. (2.) To refresh himself with her fruits. He compares her breasts (her pious affections towards him) to clusters of grapes, a most pleasant fruit (v. 7), and he repeats it (v. 8): *They shall be (that is, they shall be to me) as clusters of the vine, which make glad the heart.* "Now that I come up to the palm-tree thy graces shall be exerted and excited." Christ's presence with his people kindles the holy heavenly fire in their souls, and then their breasts shall be as clusters of the vine, a cordial to themselves and acceptable to him. And since God, at first, breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and breathes the breath of the new life still,

the smell of their nostrils is like the smell of apples, or oranges, which is pleasing and reviving. The Lord smelt a sweet savour from Noah's sacrifice, Gen. viii. 21. And, lastly, the roof of her mouth is like the best wine (v. 9); her spiritual taste and relish, or the words she speaks to God and man, which come not from the teeth outward, but from the roof of the mouth, these are pleasing to God. The prayer of the upright is his delight. And, when those that fear the Lord speak one to another as becomes them, the Lord hearkens, and hears with pleasure, Mal. iii. 16. It is like that wine which is, [1.] Very palatable and grateful to the taste. It goes down sweetly; it goes straightly (so the margin reads it); it moves itself aright, Prov. xxiii. 31. The pleasures of sense seem right to the carnal appetite, and go down smoothly, but they are often wrong, and, compared with the pleasure of communion with God, they are harsh and rough. Nothing goes down so sweetly with a gracious soul as the wine of God's consolations. [2.] It is a great cordial. The presence of Christ by his Spirit with his people shall be reviving and refreshing to them, as that strong wine which makes the lips even of those that are asleep (that are ready to faint away in a deliquium), to speak. Unconverted sinners are asleep; saints are often drowsy, and listless, and half asleep; but the word and Spirit of Christ will put life and vigour into the soul, and out of the abundance of the heart that is thus filled the mouth will speak. When the apostles were filled with the Spirit they spoke with tongues the wonderful works of God (Acts ii. 10, 12); and those who in opposition to being drunk with wine, wherein is excess, are filled with the Spirit, speak to themselves in psalms and hymns, Eph. v. 18, 19. When Christ is thus commending the sweetness of his spouse's love, excited by the manifestation of his, she seems to put in that word, for my beloved, as in a parenthesis. "Is there any thing in me that is pleasant or valuable? As it is from, so it is for my beloved." Then he delights in our good affections and services, when they are all for him and devoted to his glory.

10 *I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me.* 11 *Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages.* 12 *Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves.* 13 *The mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.*

These are the words of the spouse, the church, the believing soul, in answer to the

kind expressions of Christ's love in the foregoing verses.

I. She here triumphs in her relation to Christ and her interest in him, and in his name will she boast all the day long. What a transport of joy and holy exultation does she say (v. 10), "*I am my beloved's, my own, but entirely devoted to him, and owned by him.*" If we can truly say that Christ is our *best beloved*, we may be confident that we are his and he will save us, Ps. cxxxix. 94. The gracious discoveries of Christ's love to us should engage us greatly to rejoice in the hold he has of us, his sovereignty over us and property in us, which is no less a spring of comfort than a bond of duty. Intimacy of communion with Christ should help to clear up our interest in him. Glorifying in that that she is his, to serve him, and reckoning that her honour, she comforts herself with this, that his desire is towards her, that is, is her husband; it is a periphrasis of the conjugal relation, Gen. ii. 16. Christ's desire was strongly towards his chosen remnant when he came from heaven to earth to save and save them; and when, in pursuance of his undertaking, he was even straitened by the baptism of blood he was to pass through for them *was accomplished*, Luke xii. 50. He desired Zion for a habitation; this is a comfort to believers that, whosoever slight the Christ has a desire towards them, such a desire as will again bring him from heaven to earth to receive them to himself; for he longs to have them all with him, John xv. 24; xiv. 3.

II. She humbly and earnestly desires communion with him (v. 11, 12): "*Come, my beloved, let us take a walk together, that I may receive counsel, instruction, and comfort from thee, and may make known my wants and grievances to thee, with freedom, and without interruption.*" Thus Christ walked with the two disciples that were going to the village called *Emmaus*, and talked with them till he made their hearts burn within them. Observe here, 1. Having received the tokens of his love, and full assurances of his interest in him, she presses forward towards further acquaintance with him; as blessed Paul, who desired yet more and more of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. Phil. iii. 8. Christ has made it to appear how much his desire is towards us, and we are very ungrateful if ours be not towards him. Note, Communion with Christ is that which all that are sanctified earnestly breathe after, and the clearer discoveries he makes to them of his love the more earnestly do they desire it. Sensual pleasures pall the carnal appetite, and soon give it a surfeit, but spiritual delights whet the desires, the language of which is, *Nothing more than God*, but *more and more of him*. Christ had said, *will go up to the palm-tree. Come, saith he, let us go.* The promises Christ has made of communion with him are not to superse-

quicken and encourage, our prayers for communion. 2. She desires to go forth to the fields and villages to have this communion with him. Those that would converse with Christ must go forth from the world and the amusements of it, must avoid every thing that would divert the mind and a hindrance to it when it should be wholly taken up with Christ; we must contrive how *attend upon the Lord without distraction* (Cor. vii. 35), for therefore the spouse here sets to get out of the noise of the town. *Let us go forth to him without the camp*, Heb. xiii. 13. Solitude and retirement befriend communion with God; therefore *Isaac went into the field to meditate and pray. Enter thy closet, and shut thy door*. A believer is never less alone than when alone with Christ, where no eye sees. 3. Having business to go abroad, to look after the grounds, she desires the company of her beloved. Wherever we are, we may keep up our communion with God, if it be not our own fault, for he is always at our right hand, his eye always upon us, and both his word and his ear always nigh us. By going about worldly affairs with heavenly holy hearts, keeping pious thoughts with common actions, having our eyes ever towards the Lord, we may take Christ along with us whithersoever we go. Nor should we go any whither where we cannot in faith ask him to go along with us. 4. She is willing to rise betimes, to go along with her beloved: *Let us up early to the vineyards*. It intimates her desire to improve opportunities of conversing with her beloved; when the time appointed to come, we must lose no time, but, as the man (Mark xvi. 2), *go very early*, though he be to a sepulchre, if we be in hopes to meet him there. Those that will go abroad with Christ must begin betimes with him, early in the morning of their days, must begin every day with him, seek him early, seek him diligently. 5. She will be content to take up her lodging in the villages, the huts or cottages which the country people built for their shelter when they attended their business in the fields; there, in these mean and cold dwellings, she will gladly reside, if she may have her beloved with her. His presence makes them fine and pleasant, and converts them into palaces. A gracious soul can reconcile itself to the poorest accommodations, if it may have communion with God in them. 6. The most pleasant delightful fields, even in the spring-time, when the country is so pleasant, will not satisfy her, unless she be with her beloved with her. No delights on earth can make a believer easy, unless he be with God in all.

II. She desires to be better acquainted with the state of her own soul and the present posture of its affairs (v. 12): *Let us see the vine flourish*. Our own souls are our vineyards; they are, or should be, planted with vines and pomegranates, choice and

useful trees. We are made keepers of these vineyards, and therefore are concerned often to look into them, to examine the state of our own souls, to seek whether the *vine flourishes*, whether our graces be in act and exercise, whether we be fruitful in the fruits of righteousness, and whether our fruit abound. And especially let us enquire whether *the tender grape appear* and whether *the pomegranates bud forth*, what good motions and dispositions there are in us that are yet but young and tender, that they may be protected and cherished with a particular care, and may not be nipped, or blasted, or rubbed off, but cultivated, that they may bring forth fruit unto perfection. In this enquiry into our own spiritual state, it will be good to take Christ along with us, because his presence will make the *vine flourish* and the *tender grape appear*, as the returning sun revives the gardens, and because to him we are concerned to approve ourselves. If he sees the *vine flourish*, and the *tender grape appear*—if we can appeal to him, *Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee*,—if his Spirit witness with our spirit that our souls prosper, it is enough. And, if we would be acquainted with ourselves, we must beg of him to search and try us, to help us in the search, and discover us to ourselves.

IV. She promises to her beloved the best entertainment she can give him at her country seat; for he will come in to us, and sup with us, Rev. iii. 20. 1. She promises him her best affections; and, whatever else she had for him, it would utterly be contemned if her heart were not entire for him: *“There therefore will I give thee my love; I will repeat the professions of it, honour thee with the tokens of it; and the out-goings of my soul towards thee in adorations and desires shall be quickened and enlarged, and my heart offered up to thee in a holy fire.”* 2. She promises him her best provision, v. 13. *“There we shall find pleasant odours, for the mandrakes give a smell;”* the *love-flowers* or *lovely ones* (so the word signifies), or the *love-fruits*; it was something that was in all respects very grateful, so valuable that Rachel and Leah had like to have fallen out above it, Gen. xxx. 14. *“We shall also find that which is good for food, as well as pleasant to the eye, all the rarities that the country affords: At our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits.”* Note, (1.) The fruits and exercises of grace are pleasant to the Lord Jesus. (2.) These must be carefully laid up for him, devoted to his service and honour, must be always ready to us when we have occasion for them, as that is which is laid up at our gates, that, by our bringing forth much fruit, he may be glorified, John xv. 18. (3.) There is a great variety of these pleasant fruits, with which our souls should be well stocked; we must have all sorts of them, grace for all occasions, *new and old*, as the good householder has in his treasury, not only the products of this year,

but remainders of the last, Matt. xiii. 52. We must not only have that ready to us, for the service of Christ, which we have heard, and learned, and experienced lately, but must retain that which we have formerly gathered; nor must we content ourselves only with what we have laid up in store in the days of old, but, as long as we live, must be still adding something new to it, that our stock may increase, and we may be *thoroughly furnished for every good work*. (4.) Those that truly love Christ will think all they have, even their most *pleasant fruits*, and what they have treasured up most carefully, too little to be bestowed upon him, and he is welcome to it all; if it were more and better, it should be at his service. It is all from him, and therefore it is fit it should be all for him.

CHAP. VIII.

The affections between Christ and his spouse are as strong and lively here, in this closing chapter of the song, as ever, and rather more so. I. The spouse continues her importunity for a more intimate communion and fellowship with him, ver. 1-3. II. She charges the daughters of Jerusalem not to interrupt her communion with her beloved (ver. 4); and they, thereupon, admire her dependence on him, ver. 5. III. She begs of her beloved, whom she raises up by her prayers (ver. 5), that he would by his grace confirm that blessed union with him to which she was admitted, ver. 6, 7. IV. She makes intercession for others also, that care might be taken of them (ver. 8, 9), and pleases herself with the thoughts of her own interest in Christ and his affection to her, ver. 10. V. She owns herself his tenant for a vineyard she held of him at Basal-hamon, ver. 11, 12. VI. The song concludes with an interchanging of parting requests. Christ charges his spouse that she should often let him hear from her (ver. 13), and she begs of him that he would hasten his return to her, ver. 14.

O THAT thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! *when* I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised. 2 I would lead thee, *and* bring thee into my mother's house, *who* would instruct me: I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate. 3 His left hand *should be* under my head, and his right hand should embrace me. 4 I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake *my* love, until he please.

Here, 1. The spouse wishes for a constant intimacy and freedom with the Lord Jesus. She was already betrothed to him, but, the nuptials being not yet solemnized and published (the bride, the Lamb's wife, will not be completely ready till his second coming), she was obliged to be shy and to keep at some distance; she therefore wishes she may be taken for his sister, he having called her so (*ch.* v. 1), and that she might have the same chaste and innocent familiarity with him that a sister has with a brother, an own brother, that *sucked the breasts of the same mother* with her, who would therefore be exceedingly tender of her, as Joseph was of his brother Benjamin. Some make this to be the prayer of the Old-Testament saints for the hastening of Christ's incarnation, that the church might be the better acquainted with

him, when, *forasmuch as the children are takers of flesh and blood*, he should also himself likewise take part of the same, and be ashamed to call them brethren. It is rather the wish of all believers for a more intimate communion with him, that they may *receive the Spirit of sanctification*, and Christ might be as their brother, that is, they might be as his brethren, which they are when by grace they are made takers of a divine nature, and *he that soifies, and those that are sanctified, are both one*, Heb. ii. 11, &c. It becomes brethren and sisters, the children of the same parent that have been nursed at the same breast, be very loving to and tender of one another: such a love the spouse desires might be between her and her beloved, that she might call him brother. 2. She promises her then the satisfaction of making a more open profession of her relation to him than at present she could make: "*When I shall find thee without, any where, even before company, I would kiss thee, as a sister does own brother, especially her little brother is now sucking the breasts of her mother*" (so some understand it); "I would use all decent freedom with thee that could be, *should not be despised* for it, as doing something unbecoming the modesty of my sister. The church, since Christ's incarnation, better own him than she could before, *when* she would have been laughed at for being too much in love with one that was not yet Christ; but now that Christ has become as our brother; where we find him, therefore, let us be ready to own our relation to him and affection to him, and not fear being despised for it, as David did when he danced before the ark. *If this be too vile, I will be yet more vile*. Nay, let us hope that we shall not be despised so much as some imagine. *Of the maid-servants of whom thou hast spoken I shall be had in honour*. Wherever we find the image of Christ, though it be without, among those that do not know him with us, we must love it, and treasure that love, and we *shall not be despised* for it, but catholic charity will gain us respect. She promises to improve the opportunity should then have for cultivating an acquaintance with him (v. 2): "*I would lead thee, my brother, by the arm, and hang upon thee*. I would show thee all the house of my precious things, would bring thee into my mother's house, into the church, into the sole assemblies (*ch.* iii. 4), into my closet" (where the saints have most familiar communion with Christ), "*and there thou wouldst instruct me*" (so some read it), as brethren inform their sisters of what they desire to be instructed in. Those that know Christ should be taught of him; and therefore we should desire communion with Christ that we may receive instruction from him. He has condescended that he might give us an understanding. "*My mother would instruct me when I have*

with me." It is the presence of Christ and with his church that makes the word ordinances instructive to her children, so shall all be taught of God. 4. She presses him to bid him welcome to the best she had; she would cause him to drink of her spiced wine and the juice of her pomegranate, and bid him welcome to it, wishing it better for his sake. The exercise of grace and the performance of duty are spiced wine to the Lord Jesus, very acceptable to him, as expressive of a grateful sense of his favours. Those that are pleased with Christ must be pleasing to him; and they will find him hard to be pleased. He reckons every welcome his best entertainment; and, to have that, he will bring his entertainment along with him. 5. She doubts not but to experience his tender care of her and affection to her (v. 3), that she should be supported by his power and kept from fainting the hardest services and sufferings (*His right hand shall be under my head*) and that she should be comforted with his love—*His left hand should embrace me*. Thus Christ holds his right hand upon John when he was ready to die away, Rev. i. 17. See also Dan. x. 10, 18. It may be read as it is *ch. ii. 6, 7*, *His left hand is under my head* (for the words are the same in the original) and so it expresses an immediate answer to her prayer; and was answered with *strength in her soul*, xxxviii. 3. While we are following hard after Christ his *right hand sustains us*, Ps. lxxviii. 8. *Underneath are the everlasting arms*. She charges those about her to take heed of doing any thing to interrupt the pleasing communion she now had with her beloved (v. 4), as she had done before, when he thus strengthened and comforted her with his presence (*ch. ii. 7*): *Let me charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, and reason with me, Why should you stir up, and why should you awake, my love, until he will?* The church, our common mother, charges all her children that they never do any thing to provoke Christ to withdraw, which we are very prone to do. Why should you put such an affront upon him? Why should you be such enemies to yourselves? We should thus reason with ourselves when we are tempted to do that which will grieve the Spirit. What! Am I weary of Christ's presence, that I affront him and provoke him to depart from me? Why should I do that which he will take so unkindly and which I shall certainly repent of?

5. *Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?* I raised thee up under the apple tree: there thy mother brought thee forth: there she brought thee forth that bare thee. 6 Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death;

jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. 7 Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.

Here, I. The spouse is much admired by those about her. It comes in in a parenthesis, but in it gospel-grace lies as plain, and as much above ground, as any where in this mystical song: *Who is this that comes up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?* Some make these the words of the bridegroom, expressing himself well pleased with her reliance on him and resignation of herself to his guidance. They are rather the words of the daughters of Jerusalem, to whom she spoke (v. 4); they see her, and bless her. The angels in heaven, and all her friends on earth, are the joyful spectators of her bliss. The Jewish church came up from the wilderness supported by the divine power and favour, Deut. xxxii. 10, 11. The Christian church was raised up from a low and desolate condition by the grace of Christ relied on, Gal. iv. 27. Particular believers are amiable, nay, admirable, and divine grace is to be admired in them, when by the power of that grace they are brought up from the wilderness, leaning with a holy confidence and complacency upon Jesus Christ their beloved. This bespeaks the beauty of a soul, and the wonders of divine grace, 1. In the conversion of sinners. A sinful state is a wilderness, remote from communion with God, barren and dry, and in which there is no true comfort; it is a wandering wanting state. Out of this wilderness we are concerned to come up, by true repentance, in the strength of the grace of Christ, supported by our beloved and carried in his arms. 2. In the consolation of saints. A soul convinced of sin, and truly humbled for it, is in a wilderness, quite at a loss; and there is no coming out of this wilderness but leaning on Christ as our beloved, by faith, and not leaning to our own understanding, nor trusting to any righteousness or strength of our own as sufficient for us, but going forth, and going on, in the strength of the Lord God, and making mention of his righteousness, even his only, who is the Lord our righteousness. 3. In the salvation of those that belong to Christ. We must go up from the wilderness of this world having our conversation in heaven; and, at death, we must remove thither, leaning upon Christ, must live and die by faith in him. *To me to live is Christ*, and it is he that is gain in death.

II. She addresses herself to her beloved.

1. She puts him in mind of the former experience which she and others had had of comfort and success in applying to him. (1.) For her own part: *"I raised thee up under the apple-tree, that is, I have many a time*

wrestled with thee by prayer and have prevailed. When I was alone in the acts of devotion, retired in the orchard, under the *apple-tree*" (which Christ himself was compared to, *ch. ii. 3*), as *Nathanael under the fig-tree* (*John i. 48*), "meditating and praying, then I raised thee up, to help me and comfort me," as the disciples raised him up in the storm, saying, *Master, carest thou not that we perish?* (Mark iv. 38), and the church (*Ps. xlv. 23*), *Awake, why sleepest thou?* Note, The experience we have had of Christ's readiness to yield to the importunities of our faith and prayer should encourage us to continue instant in our addresses to him, to strive more earnestly, and not to faint. *I sought the Lord, and he heard me*, *Ps. xxxiv. 4*. (2.) Others also had had like experience of comfort in Christ, as it follows there (*Ps. xxxiv. 5*), *They looked unto him*, as well as I, *and were lightened*. There thy mother brought thee forth, the universal church, or believing souls, in whom Christ was formed, *Gal. iv. 15*. They were in pain for the comfort of an interest in thee, and *travailed in pain with great sorrow* (so the word here signifies); but they brought thee forth; the pangs did not continue always; those that had *travailed* in convictions at last brought forth in consolations, and the pain was forgotten for joy of the Saviour's birth. By this very similitude our Saviour illustrates the joy which his disciples would have in his return to them, after a mournful separation for a time, *John xvi. 21, 22*. After the bitter pangs of repentance many a one has had the blessed birth of comfort; why then may not I?

2. She begs of him that her union with him might be confirmed, and her communion with him continued and made more intimate (*v. 6*): *Set me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm*. (1.) "Let me have a place in thy heart, an interest in thy love." This is that which all those desire above any thing that know how much their happiness is bound up in the love of Christ. (2.) "Let me never lose the room I have in thy heart; let thy love to me be ensured, as that deed which is sealed not to be revoked, that cabinet which is sealed up not to be robbed. Let nothing ever prevail either to separate me from thy love, or, by suspending the communications of it, to deprive me of the comfortable sense of it." (3.) "Let me be always near and dear to thee, as the *signet on thy right hand*, not to be parted with (*Jer. xxii. 24*), *engraven upon the palms of thy hands* (*Isa. xlix. 14*), be loved with a peculiar love." (4.) "Be thou my high priest; let my name be written on thy breast-plate, nearer thy heart, as the names of all the tribes were engraven like the engravings of a signet in twelve precious stones on the breast-plate of Aaron, and also on two precious stones on the two shoulders or arms of the ephod," *Exod. xxviii. 11, 12, 21*. (5.) "Let thy power be engaged for me, as an evidence of thy love to

me; let me be not only a *seal upon thy heart* but a *seal upon thy arm*; let me be borne up in thy arms, and know it to comfort." Some make these to be the words of Christ to his spouse, commanding her to be ever mindful of him and of his love to her; however, if we desire and expect Christ should set us as a *seal on his heart*, surely we cannot do less than set him as a seal on ours.

3. To enforce this petition, she pleads the power of love, of her love to him, which constrained her to be thus pressing for tokens of his love to her.

(1.) Love is a violent vigorous passion. [1.] *It is strong as death*. The pains of a disappointed lover are like the pains of death; nay, the pains of death are slighted, made nothing of, in pursuit of the beloved object. Christ's love to us was *strong as death*, for it broke through death itself. *Loved us, and gave himself for us*. The love of true believers to Christ is *strong as death*, for it makes them dead to every thing else, it even parts between soul and body, with the soul, upon the wings of devout affections, soars upwards to heaven, and forgets that it is yet clothed and clogged with flesh. Paul, in a rapture of this love, knew not whether he was in the *body or of the body*. By it a believer is crucified to the world. [2.] *Jealousy is cruel as a grave*, which swallows up and devours those that truly love Christ are jealous of every thing that would draw them from him, and especially jealous of themselves, they should do any thing to provoke him to withdraw from them, and, rather than do so, would *pluck out a right eye and cut off a right hand*, than which what can be more cruel? Weak and trembling saints, will you conceive a jealousy of Christ, doubting his love to them, find that jealousy to prevail upon them like the grave; nothing was the spirits more; but it is an evidence of the strength of their love to him. [3.] *Coals thereof*, its lamps, and flames, its beams, are very strong, and burn with incredible fury and irresistible force, as *coals of fire that have a most vehement flame* of the Lord (so some read it), a powerful piercing flame, as the lightning. *Ps. xxix. 7*. Holy love is a fire that begins a vehement heat in the soul, and consumes the dross and chaff that are in it, melts down like wax into a new form, and carries it upwards as the sparks towards God in heaven.

(2.) Love is a valiant victorious passion. Holy love is so; the reigning love of God in the soul is constant and firm, and will not be drawn off from him either by fair means or foul, by *life or death*, *Rom. viii. 38*. [1.] Death, and all its terrors, will not frighten a believer from loving Christ: *Many waters cannot quench fire, cannot drown this love*, no, nor the floods drown it, *v.*

noise of these waters will strike no upon it; let them do their worst, it shall still be the best beloved. The owing of these waters will strike no upon it, but it will enable a man to e in tribulation. *Though he slay me, I ove him and trust in him.* No waters quench Christ's love to us, nor any drown it; he waded through the greatest alties, even seas of blood. Love sat king the floods; let nothing then abate our o him. [2.] Life, and all its comforts, ot entice a believer from loving Christ: an could hire him with *all the substance house*, to take his love off from Christ et it upon the world and the flesh e would reject the proposal with the st disdain; as Christ, when the king- of this world and the glory of them offered him, to buy him off from his taking, said, *Get thee hence, Satan.* It utterly be contemned. Offer those s to those that know no better. Love enable us to repel and triumph over ations from the smiles of the world, ch as from its frowns. Some give this of it: *If a man would give all: the sub- of his house* to Christ, as an equivalent d of love, to excuse it, *it would be con- d.* He seeks not ours, but us, the not the wealth. *If I give all my goods ed the poor, and have not love, it is g,* 1 Cor. xiii. 1. Thus believers stand to Christ: the gifts of his providence satisfy them without the assurances of love.

We have a little sister, and she no breasts: what shall we do for sister in the day when she shall oken for? 9 If she *be* a wall, ill build upon her a palace of sil- and if she *be* a door, we will n- her with boards of cedar. 10 I wall, and my breasts like towers: was I in his eyes as one that d favour. 11 Solomon had a ard at Baal-hamon; he let out ineyard unto keepers; every one he fruit thereof was to bring a and *pieces* of silver. 12 My ard, which is mine, is before me: O Solomon, *must have* a thou- and those that keep the fruit of two hundred.

ist and his spouse having sufficiently ned their love to each other, and agreed e on both sides *strong as death* and inle, they are here, in these verses, like ng husband and his wife, consulting er about their affairs, and considering hey should do. Yoke-fellows, having heir hearts together, lay their heads to-

gether, to contrive about their relations and about their estates; and, accordingly, this happy pair are here advising with one another about a sister, and a vineyard.

I. They are here consulting about their sister, their little sister, and the disposing of her.

1. The spouse proposes her case with a compassionate concern (v. 8): *We have a little sister and she has no breasts* (she has not grown up to maturity); *what shall we do for this little sister of ours in the day that she shall be spoken for*, so as that we may do well for her? (1.) This may be understood as spoken by the Jewish church concerning the Gentile world. God had espoused the church of the Jews to himself, and she was richly endowed, but what shall become of the poor Gentiles, *the barren that has not borne, and the desolate?* Isa. liv. 1. Their condition (say the pious Jews) is very deplorable and forlorn; they are *sisters*, children of the same fathers, God and Adam, but they are *little*, because not dignified with the knowledge of God; they *have no breasts*, no divine revelation, no scriptures, no ministers, no breasts of consolation drawn out to them, whence they might suck, being *strangers to the covenants of promise*, no breasts of instruction themselves to draw out to their children, to nourish them, 1 Pet. ii. 2. *What shall we do for them?* We can but pity them, and pray for them. Lord, what wilt thou do for them? The saints, in Solomon's time, might know, from David's psalms, that God had mercy in store for them, and they begged it might be hastened to them. Now the tables are turned; the Gentiles are betrothed to Christ, and ought to return the kindness by an equal concern for the bringing in of the Jews again, our eldest sister, that once had breasts, but now has none. If we take it in this sense, the unbelieving posterity of these pious Jews contradicted this prayer of their fathers; for, when the day came that the Gentiles should be *spoken for* and courted to Christ, instead of considering what to do for them they plotted to do all they could against them, which filled up the measure of their iniquity, 1 Thess. ii. 16. Or, (2.) It may be applied to any other that belong to the election of grace, but are yet uncalled. They are remotely related to Christ and his church, and sisters to them both, *other sheep that are not of this fold*, John x. 16; Acts xviii. 10. They *have no breasts*, none yet fashioned (Ezek. xvi. 7), no affection to Christ, no principle of grace. *The day will come when they shall be spoken for*, when the chosen shall be called, shall be courted for Christ, by the ministers, the friends of the bridegroom. A blessed day it will be, a day of visitation. What shall we do, in that day, to promote the match, to conquer their coyness, and persuade them to consent to Christ and present themselves chaste virgins to him? Note, Those that through grace are brought to Christ them-

selves should contrive what they may do to help others to him, to carry on the great design of his gospel, which is to espouse souls to Christ and convert sinners to him from whom they have departed.

2. Christ soon determines what to do in this case, and his spouse agrees with him in it (v. 9): "*If she be a wall*, if the good work be once begun with the Gentiles, with the souls that are to be called in, if the *little sister*, when she shall be spoken for by the gospel, will but receive the word, and build herself upon Christ the foundation, and frame her doings to turn to the Lord, as the wall is in order to the house, *we will build upon her a palace of silver*, or build her up into such a palace; we will carry on the good work that is begun, till the wall become a palace, the wall of stone a palace of silver," which goes beyond the boast of Augustus Cæsar, that what he found brick he left marble. This *little sister*, when once she is joined to the Lord, shall be made to *grow into a holy temple, a habitation of God through the Spirit*, Eph. ii. 21, 22. *If she be a door*, when this palace comes to be finished, and the doors of this wall set up, which was the last thing done (Neh. vii. 1), then *we will enclose her with boards of cedar*; we will carefully and effectually protect her, that she shall receive no damage. *We will do it*; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, all concur in contriving, carrying on, and crowning, the blessed work when the time comes. Whatever is wanting shall be set in order, and the work of faith shall be fulfilled with power. Though the beginnings of grace be small, the latter end shall greatly increase. The church is in care concerning those that are yet uncalled. "Let me alone," says Christ; "I will do all that which is necessary to be done for them. Trust me with it."

3. The spouse takes this occasion to acknowledge with thankfulness his kindness to her, v. 10. She is very willing to trust him with her *little sister*, for she herself had had great experience of his grace, and, for her part, she owed her all to him. *I am a wall, and my breasts like towers*. This she speaks, not as upbraiding her little sister that had no breasts, but comforting herself concerning her, that he who had made her what she was, who had built her up upon himself and made her to grow up to maturity, could and would do the same kindness for those whose case she bore upon her heart. *Then was I in his eyes as one that found favour*. See, (1.) What she values herself upon, her having found favour in the eyes of Jesus Christ. Those are happy, truly happy, and for ever so, that have the favour of God and are accepted of him. (2.) How she ascribes the good work of God in her to the good-will of God towards her: "He has *made me a wall and my breasts as towers*, and then, in that instance more than in any thing, I experienced his love to me." *Hail, thou that art highly favoured*, for in thee Christ is formed.

(3.) What pleasure God takes in the work of his own hands. When we are made as *as a brazen wall* (Jer. i. 18; xv. 20), that so firmly against the blast of the terrible (Isa. xxv. 4), then God takes delight in doing us good. (4.) With what joy and trust we ought to speak of God's grace towards us, and with what satisfaction we should look upon the special times and seasons when *were in his eyes as those that find favour*; were days never to be forgotten.

II. They are here consulting about a *yard* they had in the country, the church of Christ on earth considered under the name of a *vineyard* (v. 11, 12): *Solomon had a yard at Baal-hamon*, had a kingdom in possession of a multitude, a numerous people. As he was a type of Christ, so his vineyard was a type of the church of Christ. Our Saviour has given us a key to these verses. The parable of the vineyard let out to unthrifts, Matt. xxi. 33. The *baal* was that, every one of the tenants having much of the vineyard assigned him as a vineyard, contain 1000 vines, he was to pay the owner a rent of 1000 *pieces of silver*; for we read (vii. 23) that in a fruitful soil there were *vines at 1000 siberlings*. Observe, 1. Christ's church is his vineyard, a pleasant and fruitful place, privileged with many honourable delights to walk in it, as a man in his own yard, and is pleased with its fruits. 2. He has entrusted each of us with his vineyard, *keepers of it*. The privileges of the church are that good thing which he has committed to us, to be kept as a sacred trust. The service of the church is to be our business, acting as our capacity is. *Son, go work in my vineyard*. Adam, in innocence, was to *dress the garden, and to keep it*. 3. He excludes from those that are employed in his vineyard and entrusted with it. *He comes, so fruit*, and requires gospel-duty of all that enjoy gospel-privileges. Every one, of what rank or degree soever, must bring forth and honour to Christ, and do some service to the interest of his kingdom in the world, in consideration of what benefit and advantage they enjoy by their share of the privileges of the vineyard. 4. Though Christ has *his vineyard to keepers*, yet still it is his; he has his eye always upon it for good, if he did not watch over it *night and day* (xxvii. 1, 2), *the watchmen*, to whom he has entrusted it, would keep it *but in vain*, Ps. cxx. Some take these for Christ's words (v. 11): *My vineyard, which is mine, is before me*; they observe how he dwells upon his property in it: *It is my vineyard, which is so dear* is his church to him, it is *his of the world* (John xiii. 1), and therefore he always have it under his protection; it is his own, and he will look after it. 5. The church that enjoys the privileges of the vineyard must have them always before her. The management of the vineyard requires constant diligence. They are rather the words

use: *My vineyard, which is mine, is before me*. She had lamented her fault and folly in keeping her own vineyard (ch. i. 6), but now she resolves to reform. Our hearts are like vineyards, which we must keep with all diligence; and therefore we must have a watchful jealous eye upon them at all times. 6. A great care must be to pay our rent for that we hold of Christ's vineyard, and to see that we do not go behind-hand, nor disappoint the messengers of Christ to receive their hire (Matt. xxi. 34): *Thou, O Solomon! must be 1000, and shalt have*. The main of the fruits belong to Christ; to him and his praise our fruits must be dedicated. 7. If we be careful to give Christ the praise of our church-privileges, we may then take to ourselves the comfort and benefit of them. If the owner of the vineyard have had his due, the keepers shall be well paid for their care and pains; they shall have 200, which sum, no doubt, was paid upon as good profit. Those that work for Christ are working for themselves, and will be unspeakable gainers by it.

3. Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it. 14. Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.

Christ and his spouse are here parting for a while; she must stay below in the gardens of earth, where she has work to do for him; must remove to the mountains of spices in heaven, where he has business to attend for as an advocate with the Father. Now observe with what mutual endearments they part.

He desires to hear often from her. She is ready at her pen; she must be sure to write him; she knows how to direct (v. 13): *Thou that, for the present, dwellest in the gardens*, dressing and keeping them till thou come from the garden below to the paradise above—*thou, O believer! whoever thou that dwellest in the gardens of solemn ordinances, in the gardens of church-fellowship and communion, the companions are so happy to hear thy voice, cause me to hear it too*." Verse 1. Christ's friends should keep a due correspondence one with another, and, as companions, speak often to one another (1. iii. 16) and hearken to one another's voice; they should edify, encourage, and reprove one another. They are companions in kingdom and patience of Christ, and therefore, as fellow-travellers, should keep up mutual freedom, and not be shy of, nor strange to one another. *The communion of saints is an article of our covenant, as well as an article of our creed, to exhort one another daily, and to be exhorted one by another. Hearken to the voice of the church, as far as it agrees to the voice of Christ; his companions will do so*. 2. In the midst of our communion with one another we must not neglect our

communion with Christ, but let him see our countenance and hear our voice; he here bespeaks it: *"The companions hearken to thy voice; it is a pleasure to them; cause me to hear it. Thou makest thy complaints to them when any thing grieves thee; why dost thou not bring them to me, and let me hear them? Thou art free with them; be as free with me; pour out thy heart to me."* Thus Christ, when he left his disciples, ordered them to send to him upon every occasion. *Ask, and ye shall receive*. Note, Christ not only accepts and answers, but even courts his people's prayers, not reckoning them a trouble to him, but an honour and a delight, Prov. xv. 8. We cause him to hear our prayers when we not only pray, but wrestle and strive in prayer. He loves to be pressingly importuned, which is not the manner of men. Some read it, *"Cause me to be heard; thou hast often an opportunity of speaking to thy companions, and they hearken to what thou sayest; speak of me to them; let my name be heard among them; let me be the subject of thy discourse."* "One word of Christ" (as archbishop Usher used to say) "before you part." No subject is more becoming, or should be more pleasing.

II. She desires his speedy return to her (v. 14): *Make haste, my beloved, to come again, and receive me to thyself; be thou like a roe, or a young hart, upon the mountains of spices; let no time be lost; it is pleasant dwelling here in the gardens, but to depart, and be with thee, is far better; that therefore is what I wish, and wait, and long for. Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly*. Observe, 1. Though Jesus Christ be now retired, he will return. The heavens, those high mountains of sweet spices, must contain him till the times of refreshing shall come; and those times will come, when every eye shall see him, in all the pomp and power of the upper and better world, the mystery of God being finished and the mystical body completed. 2. True believers, as they are looking for, so they are hastening to, the coming of that day of the Lord, not that they would have him make more haste than good speed, but that the intermediate counsels may all be fulfilled, and then that the end may come—the sooner the better. Not that they think him slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but thus they express the strength of their affections to him and the vastness of their expectations from him when he comes again. 3. Those only that can in sincerity call Christ their beloved, their best beloved, can, upon good grounds, desire him to hasten his second coming. As for those whose hearts go a whoring after the world, and who set their affections on the things of the earth, they cannot love his appearing, but dread it rather, because then the earth, and all the things of it which they have chosen for their portion, will be burnt up. But those that truly love Christ long for his second coming, because it will be the crown both of his glory and their bliss. 4. The com-

fort and satisfaction which we sometimes have in communion with God in grace here should make us breathe the more earnestly after the immediate vision and complete fruition of him in the kingdom of glory. The spouse, after an endearing conference with her beloved, finding it must break off, concludes with this affectionate request for the perfecting and perpetuating of this happiness in the future state. The clusters of grapes that meet us in this wilderness should make us long for the full vintage in Canaan. If a day in his courts be so sweet, what then will an eternity within the veil be! If this be heaven, O that I were there! 5. It is good to conclude our devotions with a joyful expectation of the glory to be revealed, and holy humble breathings

towards it. We should not part but with prospect of meeting again. It is good to conclude every sabbath with thoughts of the lasting sabbath, which shall have no night the end of it, nor any week-day to come it. It is good to conclude every sacrifice with thoughts of the everlasting feast, where we shall sit down with Christ at his table in his kingdom, to rise no more, and drink the wine new there, and to break up the religious assembly in hopes of the general assembly of the church of the first-born, where time and days shall be no more. Let the blessed Jesus hasten that blessed day. *Why are the wheels of his chariot-wheels so long a coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariots?*

EXPOSITION,

WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET

I S A I A H.

PROPHET is a title that sounds very great to those that understand it, though, in the eye of the world, many of those that were dignified with it appeared very mean. A prophet is one that has a great intimacy with Heaven and a great interest there, and consequently a commanding authority upon earth. Prophecy is put for all divine revelation (2 Pet. i. 20, 21), because that was most commonly by dreams, voices, or visions, communicated to prophets first, and by them to the children of men, Num. xii. 6. Once indeed God himself spoke to all the thousands of Israel from the top of Mount Sinai; but the effect was so intolerably dreadful that they entreated God would for the future speak to them as he had done before, by men like themselves, *whose terror should not make them afraid, nor their hands be heavy upon them*, Job xxxiii. 7. God approved the motion (*they have well said*, says he, Deut. v. 27, 28), and the matter was then settled by consent of parties, that we must never expect to hear from God any more in that way, but by prophets, who received their instructions immediately from God, with a charge to deliver them to his church. Before the sacred canon of the Old Testament began to be written there were prophets, who were instead of Bibles to the church. Our Saviour seems to reckon Abel among the prophets, Matt. xxiii. 31. 35. Enoch was a prophet; and by him *that* was first in prediction which is to be last in execution—the judgment of the great day. Jude 14, *Behold, the Lord comes with his holy myriads*. Noah was a preacher of righteousness. God said of Abraham, *He is a prophet*, Gen. xx. 7. Jacob foretold things to come, Gen. xlix. 1. Nay, all the patriarchs are called *prophets*. Ps. cv. 15, *Do my prophets no harm*. Moses was, beyond all comparison, the most illustrious of all the Old-Testament prophets, for with him the Lord spoke *face to face*. Deut. xxxiv. 10. He was the first writing prophet, and by his hand the first foundations of holy writ were laid. Even those that were called to be his assistants in the government had the spirit of prophecy, such a plentiful effusion was there of that spirit at that time, Num. xi. 25. But after the death of Moses, for some ages, the Spirit of the Lord appeared and acted in the church of Israel more as a martial spirit than as a spirit of prophecy, and inspired men more for acting than speaking. I mean in the time of the judges. We find the Spirit of the Lord coming upon Othniel, Gideon, Samson, and others, for the service of their country, with their swords, not with their pens. Messages were then sent from heaven by angels, as to Gideon and Manoah, and to the people, Judges ii. 1. In all the book of Judges there is never once mention of a prophet, only Deborah is called a prophetess. Then the word of the Lord was precious; there was no open vision, 1 Sam. iii. 1. They had the law of Moses, recently written; let them study that. But in Samuel prophecy revived, and in him a famous epocha, or period, of the church began, a time of great light in a constant uninterrupted succession of prophets, till some time after the captivity, when the canon of the Old Testament was completed in Malachi, and then prophecy ceased for nearly 400 years, till the coming of the great prophet and his forerunner. Some prophets were divinely inspired to write the histories of the church. But they did not put their names to their writings; they only referred for proof to the authentic records of those times, which were known to be drawn up by prophets, as Gad, Iddo, &c. David and others were prophets, to write sacred songs for the use of the church. After them we often read of prophets sent on particular errands, and raised up for special public services, among whom the most famous were Elijah and Elisha in the kingdom of Israel. But none of these put their prophecies in writing, nor have we any remains of them but some fragments in the histories of their times; there was nothing of their own writing (that I remember) but one epistle of Elijah's, 2 Chron. xxi. 12

But, towards the latter end of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, it pleased God to direct his servants the prophets to write and publish some of their sermons, or abstracts of them. The date of many of their prophecies are uncertain, but the earliest of them was in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and Jeroboam the second, his contemporary, king of Israel, about 200 years before the captivity, and not long after Joash had slain Zechariah the son of Jehoiada in the courts of the temple. If they begin to murder the prophets, yet they shall not murder their prophecies; these shall remain as witnesses against them. Hosea was the first of the writing prophets; and Joel, Amos, and Obadiah, published their prophecies about the same time. Isaiah began some time after, and not long; but his prophecy is placed first, because it is the largest of them all, and has most in it of him to whom all the prophets bore witness; and indeed so much of Christ that he is justly styled the *Evangelical Prophet*, and, by some of the ancients, a *fifth Evangelist*. We shall have the general title of this book (v. 1) and therefore shall here only observe some things,

- I. Concerning the prophet himself. He was (if we may believe the tradition of the Jews) of the royal family, his father being (they say) brother to king Uzziah. He was certainly much at court, especially in Hezekiah's time, as we find in his story, to which many think it is owing that his style is more curious and polite than that of some other of the prophets, and, in some places, exceedingly lofty and soaring. The Spirit of God sometimes served his own purpose by the particular genius of the prophet; for prophets were not speaking trumpets, through which the Spirit spoke, but speaking men, by whom the Spirit spoke, making use of their natural powers, in respect both of light and flame, and advancing them above themselves.
- II. Concerning the prophecy. It is transcendently excellent and useful; it was so to the church of God then, serving for conviction of sin, direction in duty, and consolation in trouble. Two great distresses of the church are here referred to, and comfort prescribed in reference to them, that by Sennacherib's invasion, which happened in his own time, and that of the captivity in Babylon, which happened long after; and in the supports and encouragements laid up for each of these times of need we find abundance of the grace of the gospel. There are not so many quotations in the gospels out of any, perhaps not out of all, the prophecies of the Old Testament, as out of this; nor such express testimonies concerning Christ, witness that of his being born of a virgin (*ch. vii.*) and that of his sufferings, *ch. liii.* The beginning of this book abounds most with reproofs for sin and threatenings of judgment; the latter end of it is full of good words and comfortable words. This method the Spirit of Christ took formerly in the prophets and does still, first to convince and then to comfort; and those that would be blessed with the comforts must submit to the convictions. Doubtless Isaiah preached many sermons, and delivered many messages to the people, which are not written in this book, as Christ did; and probably these sermons were delivered more largely and fully than they are here related, but so much is left on record as Infinite Wisdom thought fit to convey to us *on whom the ends of the world have come*; and these prophecies, as well as the histories of Christ, are written *that we might believe on the name of the Son of God, and that, believing, we might have life through his name*; for to us is the gospel here preached as well as unto those that lived then, and more clearly. O that it may be mixed with faith!

CHAP. I.

The first verse of this chapter is intended for a title to the whole book, and it is probable that this was the first sermon that this prophet was appointed to publish and to affix in writing (as Calvin thinks the custom of the prophets was) to the door of the temple, as with us proclamations are fixed to public places, that all might read them (*Isab. ii. 2*), and those that would might take out authentic copies of them, the original being, after some time, laid up by the priests among the records of the temple. The sermon which is contained in this chapter has in it, I. A high charge exhibited, in God's name, against the Jewish church and nation, 1. For their ingratitude, *ver. 2, 3.* 2. For their incorrigibility, *ver. 5.* 3. For the universal corruption and degeneracy of the people, *ver. 4, 6, 21, 22.* 4. For the perversion of justice by their rulers, *ver. 23.* II. A sad complaint of the judgments of God, which they had brought upon themselves by their sins, and of which they were brought almost to utter ruin, *ver. 7, —9.* III. A just rejection of those shows and shadows of religion which they kept up among them, notwithstanding this general defection and apostasy, *ver. 10—15.* IV. An earnest call to repentance and reformation, setting before them life and death, life if they complied with the call and death if they did not, *ver. 16—20.* V. A threatening of ruin to those that would not be reformed, *ver. 24, 25—31.* VI. A promise of a happy reformation at last, and a return to their primitive purity and prosperity, *ver. 25—27.* And all this is to be applied by us, not only to the communities we are members of, in their public interests, but to the state of our own souls.

THE vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning

Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

Here is, I. The name of the prophet, *Isaiah*, or *Jesiahiah* (for so it is in the Hebrew), which, in the New Testament, is read *Esaias*. His name signifies the *salvation of the Lord*—a proper name for a prophet by whom God gives knowledge of salvation to his people, especially for this prophet, who prophesies so much of Jesus the Saviour and of the great salvation wrought out by him. He is said to be the son of Amoz, not Amos the prophet (the two names in the Hebrew differ more than in the English), but, as the Jews think, of Amoz the brother, or son, of Amaziah king of Judah, a tradition as uncertain as that rule which they give. That, where a prophet's father is named, he also was himself a prophet. The prophets' pupils and successors are indeed often called their sons, but we have few instances

any, of their own sons being their successors

II. The nature of the prophecy. It is a vision, being revealed to him in a vision, when he was *awake, and heard the words of God, and saw the visions of the Almighty* (as Salaam speaks, Num. xxiv. 4), though perhaps it was not so illustrious a vision at first as that afterwards, *ch. vi. 1*. The prophets were called *seers*, or seeing men, and therefore their prophecies are fitly called *visions*. It was what he saw with the eyes of his mind, and foresaw as clearly by divine revelation, as was well assured of it, as fully apprised of it, and as much affected with it, as if he had seen it with his bodily eyes. Note 1. God's prophets saw what they spoke of, knew what they said, and require our belief of nothing: but what they themselves believed and were sure of, John vi. 69; 1 John i. 1. 2. They could not but speak what they saw, because they saw how much all about them were concerned in it, Acts iv. 20; 2 Cor. v. 13.

III. The subject of the prophecy. It was what he saw concerning *Judah and Jerusalem*, the country of the two tribes, and that city which was their metropolis; and there is little in it relating to Ephraim, or the ten tribes, of whom there is so much in the prophecy of Hosea. Some chapters there are in this book which relate to Babyion, Egypt, Tyre, and some other neighbouring nations; but it takes its title from that which is the main substance of it, and is therefore said to be *concerning Judah and Jerusalem*, the other nations spoken of being such as the people of the Jews had concerns with. Isaiah brings to them in a special manner, 1. Instruction; for it is the privilege of Judah and Jerusalem that to them pertain the oracles of God. 2. Reproof and threatening; for if in Judah, where God is known, if in Salem, where his name is great, iniquity be found, they, sooner than any other, shall be reckoned with for it. 3. Comfort and encouragement in evil times; for the children of Zion shall be joyful in their king.

IV. The date of the prophecy. Isaiah prophesied in the days of *Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah*. By this it appears, 1. That he prophesied long, especially if (as the Jews say) he was at last put to death by Manasseh, to a cruel death, being sawn under, to which some suppose the apostle refers, Heb. xi. 37. From the year that king Uzziah died (*ch. vi. 1*) to Hezekiah's sickness and recovery was forty-seven years; how much before, and after, he prophesied, is not certain; some reckon sixty, others eighty years in all. It was an honour to him, and a happiness to his country, that he was continued so long in his usefulness; and we must suppose both that he began young and that he held out to old age; for the prophets were not tied, as the priests were, to a cer-

tain age, for the beginning or ending of their ministration. 2. That he passed through variety of times. Jotham was a good king, and Hezekiah a better, and no doubt gave encouragement to and took advice from this prophet, were patrons to him, and he a privy-counsellor to them; but between them, and when Isaiah was in the prime of his time, the reign of Ahaz was very profane and wicked; then, no doubt, he was frowned upon at court, and, it is likely, forced to abscond. Good men and good ministers must expect bad times in this world, and prepare for them. Then religion was run down to such a degree that the *doors of the house of the Lord were shut up* and idolatrous altars were erected in every corner of Jerusalem; and Isaiah, with all his divine eloquence and messages immediately from God himself, could not help it. The best men, the best ministers, cannot do the good they would do in the world.

2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. 3 The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. 4 Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. 5 Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. 6 From the sole of the foot even unto the head *there is* no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. 7 Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and *it is* desolate, as overthrown by strangers. 8 And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. 9 Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

We will hope to meet with a brighter and

more pleasant scene before we come to the end of this book; but truly here, in the beginning of it, every thing looks very bad, very black, with Judah and Jerusalem. What is the wilderness of the world, if the church, the vineyard, has such a dismal aspect as this?

I. The prophet, though he speaks in God's name, yet, despairing to gain audience with the children of his people, addresses himself to the heavens and the earth, and bespeaks their attention (v. 2): *Hear, O heavens! and give ear, O earth!* Sooner will the inanimate creatures hear, who observe the law and answer the end of their creation, than this stupid senseless people. Let the lights of heaven shame their darkness, and the fruitfulness of the earth their barrenness, and the strictness of each to its time their irregularity. Moses begins thus in Deut. xxxii. 1, to which the prophet here refers, intimating that now those times had come which Moses there foretold, Deut. xxxi. 29. Or this is an appeal to heaven and earth, to angels and then to the inhabitants of the upper and lower world. Let them judge between God and his vineyard: can either produce such an instance of ingratitude? Note, God will be justified when he speaks, and both heaven and earth shall declare his righteousness, Mic. vi. 1, 2; Ps. 1. 6.

II. He charges them with base ingratitude, a crime of the highest nature. Call a man ungrateful, and you can call him no worse. Let heaven and earth hear and wonder at, 1. God's gracious dealings with such a peevish provoking people as they were: "I have nourished and brought them up as children; they have been well fed and well taught" (Deut. xxxii. 6); "I have magnified and exalted them" (so some), "not only made them grow, but made them great—not only maintained them, but preferred them—not only trained them up, but raised them high." Note, We owe the continuance of our lives and comforts, and all our advancements, to God's fatherly care of us and kindness to us. 2. Their ill-natured conduct towards him, who was so tender of them: "*They have rebelled against me,*" or (as some read it) "they have revolted from me; they have been deserters, nay traitors, against my crown and dignity." Note, All the instances of God's favour to us, as the God both of our nature and of our nurture, aggravate our treacherous departures from him and all our presumptuous oppositions to him—children, and yet rebels!

III. He attributes this to their ignorance and inconsideration (v. 3): *The ox knows, but Israel does not.* Observe, 1. The sagacity of the ox and the ass, which are not only brute creatures, but of the dullest sort; yet the ox has such a sense of duty as to know his owner and to serve him, to submit to his yoke and to draw in it; the ass has such a sense of interest as to know his mas-

ter's crib, or manger, where he is fed, and to abide by it; he will go to that of himself if he be turned loose. A fine pass man has come to when he is shamed even in knowledge and understanding by these silly animals, and is not only sent to school to them (Prov. vi. 6, 7), but set in a form below them (Jer. viii. 7), *taught more than the beasts of the earth* (Job xxxv. 11) and yet knowing less. 2. The sottishness and stupidity of Israel. God is their owner and proprietor. He made us, and his we are more than our cattle are ours; he has provided well for us; providence is our Master's crib: yet many that are called the people of God do not know and will not consider this, but ask, "*What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?*" He is not our owner; and *what profit shall we have if we pray unto him?* He has no crib for us to feed at." He had complained (v. 2) of the obstinacy of their wills: *They have rebelled against me.* Here he runs it up to its cause: "*Therefore they have rebelled because they do not know, they do not consider.*" The understanding is darkened, and therefore the whole soul is alienated from the life of God, Eph. iv. 18. "*Israel does not know,* though their land is a land of light and knowledge; *in Judah is God known,* yet because they do not live up to what they know, it is in effect as if they did not know. They know; but their knowledge does them no good, because they do not consider what they know; they do not apply it to their case, nor their minds to it." Note, (1.) Even among those that profess themselves God's people, that have the advantages and lie under the engagements of his people, there are many that are very careless in the affairs of their souls. (2.) Inconsideration of what we do know is as great an enemy to us in religion as ignorance of what we should know. (3.) *Therefore men revolt from God, and rebel against him,* because they do not know and consider their obligations to God, in duty, gratitude, and interest.

IV. He laments the universal pravity and corruption of their church and kingdom. The disease of sin was epidemic, and all orders and degrees of men were infected with it: *Ah sinful nation!* v. 4. The prophet bemoans those that would not bemoan themselves: Alas for them! woe to them! He speaks with a holy indignation at their degeneracy, and a dread of the consequences of it. See here,

1. How he aggravates their sin, and shows the malignity that there was in it, v. 4. (1.) The wickedness was universal. They were a sinful nation; the generality of the people were vicious and profane. They were so in their national capacity. In the management of their public treaties abroad, and in the administration of public justice at home, they were corrupt. Note, It is ill with a people when sin becomes national. (2.) In

was very great and heinous in its nature. They were *laden with iniquity*; the guilt of it, and the curse incurred by that guilt, lay very heavily upon them. It was a heavy charge that was exhibited against them, and one which they could never clear themselves from; their wickedness was upon them as *a talent of lead*, Zech. v. 7, 8. Their sin, as it did easily beset them and they were prone to it, was a weight upon them, Heb. xii. 1. (3) They came of a bad stock, were *a seed of evil-doers*. Treachery ran in the blood; they had it by kind, which made the matter so much the worse, more provoking and less curable. They rose up in their fathers' stead, and trod in their fathers' steps, *to fill up the measure of their iniquity*, Num. xxxii. 14. They were a race and family of rebels. (4) Those that were themselves debauched did what they could to debauch others. They were not only corrupt children, born tainted, but *children that were corrupters*, that propagated vice, and infected others with it—not only sinners, but tempters—not only actuated by Satan, but agents for him. If those that are called *children, God's children*, that are looked upon as belonging to his family, be wicked and vile, their example is of the most malignant influence. (5) Their sin was a treacherous departure from God. They were deserters from their allegiance: "*They have forsaken the Lord, to whom they had joined themselves; they have gone away backward, are alienated or separated from God, have turned their back upon him, deserted their colours, and quitted their service.*" When they were urged forward, they ran backward, *as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, as a backsliding heifer*, Hos. iv. 16. (6) It was an impudent and daring defiance of him: "*They have provoked the Holy One of Israel into anger wilfully and designedly; they new what would anger him, and that they did.*" Note, The backslidings of those that have professed religion and relation to God are in a special manner provoking to him.

2. How he illustrates it by a comparison taken from a sick and diseased body, all overspread with leprosy, or, like Job's, with sore boils, v. 5, 6. (1.) The distemper has seized the vitals, and so threatens to be mortal. Diseases in the head and heart are most dangerous; now the head, the whole head, is sick—the heart, the whole heart, is faint. They had become corrupt in their judgment: the leprosy was in their head. They were utterly unclean; their affection to God and religion was cold and gone; the *things which remained were ready to die away*, Rev. iii. 2. (2.) It has overspread the whole body, and so becomes exceedingly noisome: *From the sole of the foot even to the head, from the meanest peasant to the greatest peer, there is no soundness, no good principles, no religion (for that is*

the health of the soul), nothing but *wounds and bruises, guilt and corruption*, the sad effects of Adam's fall, noisome to the holy God, painful to the sensible soul; they were so to David when he complained (Ps. xxxviii. 5), *My wounds stink, and are corrupt, because of my foolishness*. See Ps. xxxii. 3, 4. No attempts were made for reformation, or, if they were, they proved ineffectual: *The wounds have not been closed, nor bound up, nor mollified with ointment*. While sin remains unrepented of the wounds are unsearched, unwashed, the proud flesh in them not cut out, and while, consequently, it remains unpardoned, the wounds are not mollified or closed up, nor any thing done towards the healing of them and the preventing of their fatal consequences.

V. He sadly bewails the judgments of God which they had brought upon themselves by their sins, and their incorrigibleness under those judgments. 1. Their kingdom was almost ruined, v. 7. So miserable were they that both their towns and their lands were wasted, and yet so stupid that they needed to be told this, and to have it shown to them. "*Look and see how it is; your country is desolate; the ground is not cultivated, for want of inhabitants, the villages being deserted*, Judg. v. 7. And thus the fields and vineyards become like deserts, *all grown over with thorns*, Prov. xxiv. 31. *Your cities are burned with fire, by the enemies that invade you*" (fire and sword commonly go together); "*as for the fruits of your land, which should be food for your families, strangers devour them; and, to your greater vexation, it is before your eyes, and you cannot prevent it; you starve while your enemies surfeit on that which should be your maintenance.*" The overthrow of your country is as the overthrow of strangers; it is used by the invaders, as one might expect it should be used by strangers." Jerusalem itself, which was as the daughter of Zion (the temple built on Zion was a mother, a nursing mother, to Jerusalem), or Zion itself, the holy mountain, which had been dear to God as a daughter, was now lost, deserted, and exposed *as a cottage in a vineyard*, which, when the vintage is over, nobody dwells in or takes any care of, and looks as mean and despicable as *a lodge, or hut, in a garden of cucumbers*; and every person is afraid of coming near it, and solicitous to remove his effects out of it, as if it were *a besieged city*, v. 8. And some think it is the calamitous state of the kingdom that is represented by a diseased body, v. 6. Probably this sermon was preached in the reign of Ahaz, when Judah was invaded by the kings of Syria and Israel, the Edomites and the Philistines, who slew many, and carried many away into captivity, 2 Chron. xxviii. 5, 17, 18. Note, National impiety and immorality bring national desolation, Canaan, the glory of all lands, Mount Zion, the joy

of the whole earth, both became a reproach and a ruin; and sin made them so, that great mischief-maker. 2 Yet they were not at all reformed, and therefore God threatens to take another course with them (v. 5): "*Why should you be stricken any more, with any expectation of doing you good by it, when you increase revolts as your rebukes are increased? You will revolt more and more, as you have done,*" as Ahaz particularly did, who, in his distress, trespassed yet more against the Lord, 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. Thus the physician, when he sees the patient's case desperate, troubles him no more with physic; and the father resolves to correct his child no more when, finding him hardened, he determines to disinherit him. Note, (1.) There are those who are made worse by the methods God takes to make them better; the more they are stricken the more they revolt; their corruptions, instead of being mortified, are irritated and exasperated by their afflictions, and their hearts more hardened. (2.) God sometimes, in a way of righteous judgment, ceases to correct those who have been long incorrigible, and whom therefore he designs to destroy. The reprobate silver shall be cast, not into the furnace, but to the dung-hill, Jer. vi. 29, 30. See Ezek. xxiv. 13; Hos. iv. 14. He that is filthy, let him be filthy still.

VI. He comforts himself with the consideration of a remnant that should be the monuments of divine grace and mercy, notwithstanding this general corruption and desolation, v. 9. See here, 1. How near they were to an utter extirpation. They were almost like Sodom and Gomorrah in respect both of sin and ruin, had grown almost so bad that there could not have been found *ten righteous men among them*, and almost as miserable as if none had been left alive, but their country turned into a sulphureous lake. Divine Justice said, *Make them as Admah; set them as Zeboim*; but Mercy said, *How shall I do it?* Hos. xi. 8, 9. 2. What it was that saved them from it: *The Lord of hosts left unto them a very small remnant*, that were kept pure from the common apostasy and kept safe and alive from the common calamity. This is quoted by the apostle (Rom. ix. 27), and applied to those few of the Jewish nation who in his time embraced Christianity, when the body of the people rejected it, and in whom the promises made to the fathers were accomplished. Note, (1.) In the worst of times there is a remnant preserved from iniquity and reserved for mercy, as Noah and his family in the deluge, Lot and his in the destruction of Sodom. Divine grace triumphs in distinguishing by an act of sovereignty. (2.) This remnant is often a very small one in comparison with the vast numbers of revolting ruined sinners. Multitude is no mark of the true church. Christ's is a little

flock. (3.) It is God's work to sanctify and save some, when others are left to perish in their impurity. It is the work of his power as the Lord of hosts. Except he had left us that remnant, there would have been none left; the corrupters (v. 4) did what they could to debauch all, and the devourers (v. 7) to destroy all, and they would have prevailed if God himself had not interposed to secure to himself a remnant, who were bound to give him all the glory. (4.) It is good for a people that have been saved from utter ruin to look back and see how near they were to it, just upon the brink of it, to see how much they owed to a few good men that stood in the gap, and that that was owing to a good God, who left them these good men. *It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed.*

10 Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. 11 To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. 12 When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? 13 Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; *it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.* 14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. 15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

Here, I. God calls to them (but calls in vain) to hear his word, v. 10. 1. The title he gives them is very strange: *You rulers of Sodom, and people of Gomorrah.* This intimates what a righteous thing it would have been with God to make them like Sodom and Gomorrah in respect of ruin (v. 9) because they had made themselves like Sodom and Gomorrah in respect of sin. The men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly (Gen. xiii. 13) and so were the men of Judah. When the rulers were bad, no wonder the people were so. Vice overpowered virtue, for it had the rulers, the men of figure, on its side; and it out-polluted it, for it had the people, the men of number, on its side. The stream

being thus strong, no less a power than that of the Lord of hosts could secure a remnant, v. 9. The rulers are boldly attacked here by the prophet as rulers of Sodom; for he knew not how to give flattering titles. The tradition of the Jews is that for this he was impeached long after, and put to death, as having cursed the gods and *spoken evil of the ruler of his people*. 2. His demand upon them is very reasonable: "*Hear the word of the Lord, and give ear to the law of our God; attend to that which God has to say to you, and let his word be a law to you.*" The following declaration of dislike to their sacrifices would be a kind of new law to them, though really it was but an explication of the old law; but special regard is to be had to it, as is required to the like, Ps. l. 7, 8. "*Hear this, and tremble; hear, and take warning.*"

II. He justly refuses to hear their prayers and accept their services, their sacrifices and burnt-offerings, the fat and blood of them (v. 11), their attendance in his courts (v. 12), their oblations, their incense, and their solemn assemblies (v. 13), their new moons and their appointed feasts (v. 14), their devoutest addresses (v. 15); they are all rejected, because their hands were full of blood. Now observe,

1. There are many who are strangers, nay, enemies, to the power of religion, and yet seem very zealous for the show and shadow and form of it. This sinful nation, this seed of evil-doers, these rulers of Sodom and people of Gomorrah, brought, not to the altars of false gods (they are not here barged with that), but to the altar of the God of Israel, sacrifices, a multitude of them, as many as the law required and rather more—not only peace-offerings, which they themselves had their share of, but burnt-offerings, which were wholly consecrated to the honour of God; nor did they bring the torn, and lame, and sick, but fed beasts, and the fat of them, the best of the kind. They did not send others to offer their sacrifices for them, but came themselves to appear before God. They observed the instituted *places* (not in high places or groves, but in God's own courts), and the instituted *time*, the new moons, and feasts, and appointed feasts, none of which they omitted. Nay, it should seem, they called extraordinary assemblies, and held solemn meetings for religious worship, besides those that God had appointed. Yet it was not all: they applied to God, not only by their ceremonial observances, but by the exercises of devotion. They prayed, they prayed often, made many prayers, thinking they should be heard for their much speaking; nay, they were fervent and importunate in prayer, they spread forth their hands to men in earnest. Now we should have sought these, and, no doubt, they thought themselves, a pious religious people; and

yet they were far from being so, for (1.) Their hearts were empty of true devotion. They came to *appear* before God (v. 12), to be seen before him (so the margin reads it); they rested in the outside of the duties; they looked no further than to be seen of men, and went no further than that which men see. (2.) Their hands were full of blood. They were guilty of murder, rapine, and oppression, under colour of law and justice. The people shed blood, and the rulers did not punish them for it; the rulers shed blood, and the people were aiding and abetting, as the elders of Jezreel were to Jezebel in shedding Naboth's blood. Malice is heart-murder in the account of God; he that hates his brother in his heart has, in effect, his hands full of blood.

2. When sinners are under the judgments of God they will more easily be brought to fly to their devotions than to forsake their sins and reform their lives. Their country was now desolate, and their cities were burnt (v. 7), which awakened them to bring their sacrifices and offerings to God more constantly than they had done, as if they would bribe God Almighty to remove the punishment and give them leave to go on in the sin. *When he slew them, then they sought him*, Ps. lxxviii. 34. *Lord, in trouble have they visited thee*, ch. xxvi. 16. Many that will readily part with their sacrifices will not be persuaded to part with their sins.

3. The most pompous and costly devotions of wicked people, without a thorough reformation of the heart and life, are so far from being acceptable to God that really they are an abomination to him. It is here shown in a great variety of expressions that *to obey is better than sacrifice*; nay, that sacrifice, without obedience, is a jest, an affront and provocation to God. The comparative neglect which God here expresses of ceremonial observances was a tacit intimation of what they would come to at last, when they would all be done away by the death of Christ. What was now made little of would in due time be made nothing of. "*Sacrifice and offering, and prayer made in the virtue of them, thou wouldest not; then said I, Lo, I come.*" Their sacrifices are here represented,

(1.) As fruitless and insignificant: *To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices?* v. 11. They are *vain oblations*, v. 13. *In vain do they worship me*, Matt. xv. 9. Their attention to God's institutions was all lost labour, and served not to answer any good intention; for, [1.] It was not looked upon as any act of duty or obedience to God: *Who has required these things at your hands?* v. 12. Not that God disowns his institutions, or refuses to stand by his own warrants; but in what they did they had not an eye to him that required it, nor indeed did he require it of those whose hands were full of blood and who continued impe-

nitent. [2.] It did not recommend them to God's favour. He delighted not in the blood of their sacrifices, for he did not look upon himself as honoured by it. [3.] It would not obtain any relief for them. They pray, but God will not hear, because they regard iniquity (Ps. lvi. 18); he will not deliver them, for, though they make many prayers, none of them come from an upright heart. All their religious services turned to no account to them. Nay,

(2.) As odious and offensive. God did not only not accept them, but he did detest and abhor them. "They are *your* sacrifices, they are none of mine; I am full of them, even surfeited with them." He needed them not (Ps. l. 10), did not desire them, had had enough of them, and more than enough. Their coming into his courts he calls *treading them*, or trampling upon them; their very attendance on his ordinances was construed into a contempt of them. Their incense, though ever so fragrant, was an abomination to him, for it was burnt in hypocrisy and with an ill design. Their solemn assemblies he could not *away with*, could not see them with any patience, nor bear the affront they gave him. *The solemn meeting is iniquity*; though the thing itself was not, yet, as they managed it, it became so. It is a *vexation* (so some read it), a provocation, to God, to have ordinances thus prostituted, not only by wicked people, but to wicked purposes: "*My soul hates them; they are a trouble to me, a burden, an incumbrance; I am perfectly sick of them, and weary of bearing them.*" God is never weary of hearing the prayers of the upright, but soon weary of the costly sacrifices of the wicked. He hides his eyes from their prayers, as that which he has an aversion to and is angry at. All this is to show, [1.] That sin is very hateful to God, so hateful that it makes even men's prayers and their religious services hateful to him. [2.] That dissembled piety is double iniquity. Hypocrisy in religion is of all things most abominable to the God of heaven. Jerome applies the passage to the Jews in Christ's time, who pretended a great zeal for the law and the temple, but made themselves and all their services abominable to God by filling their hands with the blood of Christ and his apostles, and so filling up the measure of their iniquities.

16 Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; 17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. 18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as

white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. 19 If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

Though God had rejected their services as insufficient to atone for their sins when they persisted in them, yet he does not reject them as in a hopeless condition, but here calls upon them to forsake their sins which hindered the acceptance of their services, and then all would be well. Let them not say that God picked quarrels with them, no, he proposes a method of reconciliation. Observe here,

I. A call to repentance and reformation. "If you would have your sacrifices accepted, and your prayers answered, you must begin your work at the right end: *Be converted to my law*" (so the Chaldee begins this exhortation), "make conscience of second-table duties, else expect not to be accepted in the acts of your devotion." Justice and charity will never atone for atheism and profaneness, so prayers and sacrifices will never atone for fraud and oppression; for righteousness towards men as much a branch of pure religion as religion towards God is a branch of universal righteousness.

1. They must *cease to do evil*, must do no more wrong, shed no more innocent blood. This is the meaning of washing themselves and *making themselves clean*, v. 16. It is not only sorrowing for the sin they had committed, but breaking off the practice of it for the future, and mortifying all those vicious affections and dispositions which inclined them to it. Sin is defiling to the soul. Our business is to wash ourselves from it by repenting of it and turning from it to God. We must put away not only that evil of our doings which is before the eye of the world, by refraining from the gross acts of sin, but that which is before God's eyes, the roots and habits of sin, that are in our hearts; these must be crushed and mortified.

2. They must *learn to do well*. This is necessary to the completing of their repentance. Note, It is not enough that we cease to do evil, but we must learn to do well. (1.) We must be doing, not cease to do evil and then stand idle. (2.) We must be doing good, the good which the Lord God requires and which will turn to a good account. (3.) We must do it well, in a right manner and for a right end; and (4.) We must learn to do well; we must take pains to get the knowledge of our duty, be inquisitive concerning it, in care about it, and accustom ourselves to it, that we may readily turn our hands to our work and

some masters of this holy art of doing well. He urges them particularly to those instances of well-doing wherein they had been defective, to second-table duties: "*Seek judgment; enquire what is right, that you may do it; be solicitous to be found in the way of your duty, and do not walk carelessly. Seek opportunities of doing good: Relieve the oppressed, those whom you yourselves have oppressed; ease them of their burdens, ch. lviii. 6. You, that have power in your hands, use it for the relief of those whom others do oppress, for that is your business. Avenge those that suffer wrong, in a special manner concerning yourselves or the fatherless and the widow, whom, because they are weak and helpless, proud men trample upon and abuse; do you appear for them at the bar, on the bench, as there is occasion. Speak for those that know not how to speak for themselves and that have not wherewithal to gratify you for your kindness.*" Note, We are truly honouring God when we are doing good in the world; and acts of justice and charity are more pleasing to him than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices.

II. A demonstration, at the bar of right reason, of the equity of God's proceedings with them: "*Come now, and let us reason together (v. 18); while your hands are full of blood I will have nothing to do with you, though you bring me a multitude of sacrifices; but if you wash, and make yourselves clean, you are welcome to draw nigh to me; come now, and let us talk the matter over.*" Note, Those, and those only, that break off their league with sin, shall be welcome into covenant and communion with God; he says, *Come now, who before forbade them his courts. See Jam. iv. 8. Or rather us: There were those among them who looked upon themselves as affronted by the rights God put upon the multitude of their sacrifices, as ch. lviii. 3, Wherefore have we sinned (say they) and thou seest not? They presented God as a hard Master, whom it was impossible to please. "Come," says God, "let us debate the matter fairly, and doubt not but to make it out that my ways are equal, but yours are unequal," Ezek. xviii. 5. Note, Religion has reason on its side; there is all the reason in the world why we should do as God would have us do. The God of heaven condescends to reason the case with those that contradict him and find fault with his proceedings; for he will be justified when he speaks, Ps. li. 4. The case needs only to be stated (as it is here very clearly) and it will determine itself. God shows here upon what terms they stood (as he does, Ezek. xviii. 21—24; xxxiii. 18, 19) and then leaves it to them to judge whether these terms are not fair and reasonable.*

1. They could not in reason expect any more than that, if they repented and reformed, they should be restored to God's favour,

notwithstanding their former provocations. "This you may expect," says God, and it is very kind; who could have the face to desire it upon any other terms? (1.) It is very little that is required, "only that you be willing and obedient, that you consent to obey" (so some read it), "that you subject your wills to the will of God, acquiesce in that, and give up yourselves in all things to be ruled by him who is infinitely wise and good." Here is no penance imposed for their former stubbornness, nor the yoke made heavier or bound harder on their necks; only, "Whereas hitherto you have been perverse and refractory, and would not comply with that which was for your own good, now be tractable, be governable." He does not say, "If you be perfectly obedient," but, "If you be willingly so;" for, if there be a willing mind, it is accepted. (2.) That is very great which is promised hereupon. [1.] That all their sins should be pardoned to them, and should not be mentioned against them. "Though they be as red as scarlet and crimson, though you lie under the guilt of blood, yet, upon your repentance, even that shall be forgiven you, and you shall appear in the sight of God as white as snow." Note, The greatest sinners, if they truly repent, shall have their sins forgiven them, and so have their consciences pacified and purified. Though our sins have been as scarlet and crimson, a deep dye, a double dye, first in the wool of original corruption and afterwards in the many threads of actual transgression—though we have been often dipped, by our many backslidings, into sin, and though we have lain long soaking in it, as the cloth does in the scarlet dye, yet pardoning mercy will thoroughly discharge the stain, and, being by it purged as with hyssop, we shall be clean, Ps. li. 7. If we make ourselves clean by repentance and reformation (v. 16), God will make us white by a full remission. [2.] That they should have all the happiness and comfort they could desire. "Be but willing and obedient, and you shall eat the good of the land, the land of promise; you shall have all the blessings of the new covenant, of the heavenly Canaan, all the good of that land." Those that go on in sin, though they dwell in a good land, cannot with any comfort eat the good of it; guilt embitters all; but, if sin be pardoned, creature-comforts become comforts indeed.

2. They could not in reason expect any other than that, if they continued obstinate in their disobedience, they should be abandoned to ruin, and the sentence of the law should be executed upon them; what can be more just? (v. 20): "*If you refuse and rebel, if you continue to rebel against the divine government and refuse the offers of divine grace, you shall be devoured with the sword, with the sword of your enemies, which shall be commissioned to destroy you*

—with the sword of God's justice, his wrath, and vengeance, which shall be drawn against you; for this is that which *the mouth of the Lord has spoken*, and which he will make good, for the maintaining of his own honour." Note, Those that will not be governed by God's sceptre will certainly and justly be devoured by his sword.

"And now life and death, good and evil, are thus set before you. *Come, and let us reason together.* What have you to object against the equity of this, or against complying with God's terms?"

21 How is the faithful city become an harlot! It was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. 22 Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water: 23 Thy princes *are* rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them. 24 Therefore saith the LORD, the LORD of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies: 25 And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin: 26 And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city. 27 Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness. 28 And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners *shall be* together, and they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed. 29 For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen. 30 For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water. 31 And the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them.

Here, I. The woeful degeneracy of Judah and Jerusalem is sadly lamented. See, 1. What the royal city had been, a faithful city, faithful to God and the interests of his kingdom among men, faithful to the nation and its public interests. *It was full*

of judgment; justice was duly administered upon the thrones of judgment which were set there, the *thrones of the house of David*. Ps. cxxii. 5. Men were generally honest in their dealings, and abhorred to do an unjust thing. *Righteousness lodged in it*, was constantly resident in their palaces and in their dwellings, not called in now and then to serve a turn, but at home there. Neither holy cities nor royal ones, nor places where religion is professed nor places where government is administered, are faithful to their trust if religion do not dwell there. 2. What it had now become. The beautiful virtuous spouse was now debauched, and become an adulteress; righteousness no longer dwelt in Jerusalem (*terras Astræa reliquit—Astræa left the earth*); even murderers were unpunished and undisturbed there; nay, the princes themselves were so cruel and oppressive that they had become no better than murderers; and a innocent man might better guard himself against a troop of banditti or assassins than against a bench of such judges. Note, It is a great aggravation of the wickedness of any father or people that their ancestors were famous for virtue and probity; and commonly that that thus degenerate prove the most wicked of all men. *Corruptio optimi est pessima*. That which was originally the best becomes when corrupted the worst, Luke xi. 26; Ps. iii. 16; See Jer. xxii. 15—17. The degeneracy of Jerusalem is illustrated, (1.) By similitude (v. 22): *Thy silver has become dross*. This degeneracy of the magistrates, whose character is the reverse of that of their predecessors, as great a reproach and injury to the king as the debasing of their coin would be, and turning of their silver into dross. Righteous princes and righteous cities are as silver for treasure, but unrighteous ones are as dross in the dunghill. *How has the gold become dross*. Lam. iv. 1. *Thy wine is mixed with water* and so has become flat and sour. Some understand both these literally: the wine that was sold was adulterated, it was half water; the money they paid was counterfeit, and they cheated all they dealt with. But rather to be taken figuratively: justice perverted by their princes, and religion, the word of God were sophisticated by the priests, and made to serve what turn they pleased. Dross may shine like silver, the wine that is mixed with water may retain the colour of wine, but neither is worth anything. Thus they retained a show and pretence of virtue and justice, but had no sense of either. (2.) By some instances (v. 23): "Thy princes, that should keep others in their allegiance to God and subjection to his law, are themselves rebellious and set God and his law at defiance. Those that should restrain thieves (princes and rich oppressors, those worst of robbers) and those that designedly cheat their creditors, who are no better), are themselves

companions of thieves, connive at them, do as they do, and with greater security and success, because they are princes, and have power in their hands; they share with the thieves they protect in their unlawful gain (Ps. l. 18) and *cast in their lot among them*, (Ps. i. 13, 14. [1.] The profit of their offices is all their aim, to make the best of them, and they can of them, right or wrong. They love gifts, and follow after rewards; they set their hearts upon their salary, the fees and perquisites of their offices, and are greedy of them, and never think they have got enough; nay, they will do anything, though ever so contrary to law and justice, for a gift in secret. Presents and gratuities will blind their eyes at any time, and make them pervert judgment. These they love and are eager in the pursuit of, (Ps. iv. 18. [2.] The duty of their places is none of their care. They ought to protect those that are injured, and take cognizance of the appeals made to them; why were they preferred? But they judge of the fatherless, take no care to guard the orphans, nor does the cause of the widow come unto them, because the poor widow has no bribe to give, with which to make way for her and to bring her cause on." Those will have a great deal to answer for who, when they should be the patrons of the oppressed, are their greatest oppressors.

II. A resolution is taken up to redress these grievances (v. 24): *Therefore saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel*—who has power to make good what he says, who has hosts at command for the executing of his purposes, and whose power is engaged for his Israel—*Ah! I will ease me my adversaries*. Observe,

1. Wicked people, especially wicked rulers that are cruel and oppressive, are God's enemies, his adversaries, and shall so be accounted and so dealt with. If the holy and corrupt themselves, they are the foes of their own house.

2. They are a burden to the God of heaven, which is implied in his easing himself of them. The *Mighty One of Israel*, that can bear any thing, nay, that upholds all things, complains of his being wearied with men's iniquities, (ch. xliii. 24. Amos ii. 13.

3. God will find out a time and a way to ease himself of this burden, by avenging himself on those that thus bear hard upon his patience. He here speaks as one tripping in the foresight of it: *Ah! I will ease me*. He will ease the earth of the burden under which it groans (Rom. viii. 21, 22), will ease his own name of the reproaches with which it is loaded. He will be eased of his adversaries, by taking vengeance on his enemies; he will spue them out of his mouth, and so be eased of them, (v. iii. 16. He speaks with pleasure of the execution of vengeance being in his heart, ch. lxiii. 1. If God's professing people conform not

to his image, as the Holy One of Israel (v. 4), they shall feel the weight of his hand as the Mighty One of Israel: his power, which was wont to be engaged for them, shall be turned against them. In two ways God will ease himself of this grievance:—

(1.) By reforming his church, and restoring good judges in the room of those corrupt ones. Though the church has a great deal of dross in it, yet it shall not be thrown away, but refined (v. 25): *"I will purely purge away thy dross. I will amend what is amiss. Vice and profaneness shall be suppressed and put out of countenance, oppressors displaced and deprived of their power to do mischief."* When things are ever so bad God can set them to rights, and bring about a complete reformation; when he begins he will make an end, will take away all the tin. Observe, [1.] The reformation of a people is God's own work, and, if ever it be done, it is he that brings it about: *"I will turn my hand upon thee; I will do that for the reviving of religion which I did at first for the planting of it."* He can do it easily, with the turn of his hand; but he does it effectually, for what opposition can stand before the arm of the Lord revealed? [2.] He does it by blessing them with good magistrates and good ministers of state (v. 26): *"I will restore thy judges as at the first, to put the laws in execution against evil-doers, and thy counsellors, to transact public affairs, as at the beginning,"* either the same persons that had been turned out or others of the same character. [3.] He does it by restoring judgment and righteousness among them (v. 27), by planting in men's minds principles of justice and governing their lives by those principles. Men may do much by external restraints; but God does it effectually by the influences of his Spirit, as a Spirit of judgment, (ch. iv. 4; xxviii. 6. See Ps. lxxxv. 10, 11. [4.] The reformation of a people will be the redemption of them and their converts, for sin is the worst captivity, the worst slavery, and the great and eternal redemption is that by which Israel is redeemed from all his iniquities (Ps. cxxx. 8), and the blessed Redeemer is he that turns away ungodliness from Jacob (Rom. xi. 26), and saves his people from their sins, (Matt. i. 21. All the redeemed of the Lord shall be converts, and their conversion is their redemption: *"Her converts, or those that return of her* (so the margin), *shall be redeemed with righteousness."* God works deliverance for us by preparing us for it with judgment and righteousness. [5.] The reviving of a people's virtue is the restoring of their honour: *Afterwards thou shalt be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city*; that is, First, *"Thou shalt be so;"* the reforming of the magistracy is a good step towards the reforming of the city and the country too. Secondly, *"Thou shalt have the praise of*

being so ;" and a greater praise there cannot be to any city than to *be called the city of righteousness*, and to retrieve the ancient honour which was lost when *the faithful city became a harlot*, v. 21.

(2.) By cutting off those that hate to be reformed, that they may not remain either as snares or as scandals to the faithful city.

[1.] It is an utter ruin that is here threatened. They shall be destroyed and consumed, and not chastened and corrected only. The extirpation of them will be necessary to the redemption of Zion. [2.] It is a universal ruin, which will involve the transgressors and the sinners together, that is, the openly profane that have quite cast off all religion, and the hypocrites that live wicked lives under the cloak of a religious profession—they shall both be destroyed together, for they are both alike an abomination to God, both those that contradict religion and those that contradict themselves in their pretensions to it. *And those that forsake the Lord*, to whom they had formerly joined themselves, *shall be consumed*, as the water in the conduit-pipe is soon consumed when it is cut off from the fountain. [3.] It is an inevitable ruin ; there is no escaping it.

First, Their idols shall not be able to help them, *the oaks which they have desired*, and *the gardens which they have chosen* ; that is, the images, the dunghill-gods, which they have worshipped in their groves and under the green trees, which they were fond of and wedded to, for which they forsook the true God, and which they worshipped privately in their own gardens even when idolatry was publicly discountenanced. "This was the practice of the transgressors and the sinners ; but they shall be ashamed of it, not with a show of repentance, but of despair, v. 29. They shall have cause to be ashamed of their idols ; for, after all the court they have made to them, they shall find no benefit by them ; but the idols themselves *shall go into captivity*," ch. xlv. 1, 2. Note, Those that make creatures their confidence are but preparing confusion for themselves. "You were fond of the oaks and the gardens ; but you yourselves shall be, 1. *Like an oak without leaves*, withered and blasted, and stripped of all its ornaments." Justly do those wear no leaves that bear no fruit ; as the fig-tree that Christ cursed. 2. *Like a garden without water*, that is neither rained upon nor watered with the foot (Deut. xi. 10), that has no fountain (Cant. iv. 15), and consequently is parched, and all the fruits of it gone to decay." Thus shall those be that trust in idols, or in an *arm of flesh*, Jer. xvii. 5, 6. But those that trust in God never find him as a wilderness, or as waters that fail, Jer. ii. 31. *Secondly*, They shall not be able to help themselves (v. 31) : "Even the strong man shall be as tow, not only soon broken and pulled to pieces, but easily catching fire ;

and *his work* (so the margin reads it), *by which he hopes to fortify and secure himself*, shall be as a spark to his own tow, shall set him on fire, and he and his work shall burn together. His own counsels shall be his ruin ; his own sin kindles the fire. God's wrath, which shall burn to the lowest hell, and none shall quench it." When the sinner has made himself as tow and stubble and God makes himself to him as a consuming fire, what can prevent the utter ruin of the sinner ?

Now all this is applicable, 1. To the blessed work of reformation which was wrought in Hezekiah's time after the abominable corruptions of the reign of Ahaz. Then good men came to be preferred, and the faces of the wicked were filled with shame. 2. To their return out of the captivity in Babylon, which had thoroughly cured them of idolatry. 3. To the gospel kingdom and the pouring out of the Spirit by which the New-Testament church should be made a new Jerusalem, a city of righteousness. 4. To the second coming of Christ, when he shall thoroughly purge his floor, his field, shall gather the wheat into his barn, into his garner, and burn the chaff and the tares, with unquenchable fire.

CHAP. II.

With this chapter begins a new sermon, which is continued in two following chapters. The subject of this discourse is Jerusalem, ver. 1. In this chapter the prophet speaks of the glory of the Christians, Jerusalem, the gospel-church in latter days, in the accession of many to it (ver. 2, 3), and great peace it should introduce into the world (ver. 4), whence infers the duty of the house of Jacob, ver. 5. II. Of the shame the Jews, Jerusalem, as it then was, and as it would be after rejection of the gospel and being rejected of God. 1. Their was their shame, ver. 6—9. 2. God by his judgments would burn them and put them to shame, ver. 10—17. 3. They should themselves be ashamed of their confidence in their idols and in an arm of flesh, ver. 18—22. And now which of these Jerusalems will be the inhabitants of—that which is full of the knowledge of God, which will be our everlasting honour, or that which is full of idols and chariots, and silver and gold, and such idols, which will be the end of our shame ?

THE word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. 2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills ; and all nations shall flow unto it. 3 And many people shall say, and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob ; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths : for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people : and they shall beat their swords

to ploughshares, and their spears
to pruning-hooks: nation shall not
lift up sword against nation, neither
shall they learn war any more. 5
O house of Jacob, come ye, and let
us walk in the light of the LORD.

The particular title of this sermon (v. 1) is the same with the general title of the book (ch. i. 1), only that what is there called the *vision* is here called *the word which Isaiah saw* (or the matter, or thing, which he saw), the truth of which he had as full an assurance of in his own mind as if he had seen it with his bodily eyes. Or this word was brought to him in a vision; something he saw when he received this message from God. John turned to see *the voice* that spoke with him. Rev. i. 12.

This sermon begins with the prophecy relating to the last days, the days of the Messiah, when his kingdom should be set up in the world, at the latter end of the Mosaic economy. In the last days of the earthly Jerusalem, just before the destruction of it, this heavenly Jerusalem should be erected, Heb. xii. 22; Gal. iv. 26. Note, Gospel times are the last days. For, 1. They were long in coming, were a great while waited for by the Old-Testament saints, and came at last. 2. We are not to look for any dispensation of divine grace but what we have in the gospel, Gal. i. 8, 9. 3. We are to look for the second coming of Jesus Christ at the end of time, as the Old-Testament saints did for his first coming; *this is the last time*, 1 John ii. 18.

Now the prophet here foretels,

I. The setting up of the Christian church, and the planting of the Christian religion, in the world. Christianity shall then be the mountain of the Lord's house; where that is professed God will grant his presence, receive his people's homage, and grant instruction and blessing, as he did of old in the temple on Mount Zion. The gospel church, incorporated by Christ's charter, shall then be the rendezvous of all the spiritual seed of Abraham. Now it is here promised, 1. That Christianity shall be openly preached and professed; it shall be *prepared* (so the margin reads it) in the top of the mountains, in the view and hearing of all. Hence Christ's disciples are compared to a city on a hill, which *cannot be hid*, Matt. v. 14. They had many eyes upon them. Christ himself *spoke openly to the world*, John xviii. 20. What the apostles did was *not done in a corner*, Acts xxvi. 26. It was the lighting of a beacon, the setting up of a standard. Its being every where spoken against supposes that it was every where spoken of. 2. That it shall be firmly fixed and rooted; it shall be established on the top of the everlasting mountains, built upon *rock*, so that the *gates of hell shall not pre-*

vail against it, unless they could pluck up mountains by the roots. He that dwells safely is said to *dwell on high*, ch. xxxiii. 16. *The Lord has founded the gospel Zion*. 3. That it shall not only overcome all opposition, but overtop all competition; it shall be *exalted above the hills*. This *wisdom of God in a mystery* shall outshine all the wisdom of this world, all its philosophy and all its politics. The spiritual worship which it shall introduce shall put down the idolatries of the heathen; and all other institutions in religion shall appear mean and despicable in comparison with this. See Ps. lxxviii. 16. *Why leap ye, ye high hills? This is the hill which God desires to dwell in.*

II. The bringing of the Gentiles into it. 1. The nations shall be admitted into it, even the uncircumcised, who were forbidden to come into the courts of the temple at Jerusalem. The partition wall, which kept them out, kept them off, shall be taken down. 2. *All nations shall flow into it*; having liberty of access, they shall improve their liberty, and multitudes shall embrace the Christian faith. They shall flow into it, as streams of water, which denotes the abundance of converts that the gospel should make and their speed and cheerfulness in coming into the church. They shall not be forced into it, but shall naturally flow into it. *Thy people shall be willing*, all volunteers, Ps. cx. 3. To Christ shall the *gathering of the people be*, Gen. xlix. 10. See ch. lx. 4, 5.

III. The mutual assistance and encouragement which this confluence of converts shall give to one another. Their pious affections and resolutions shall be so intermixed that they shall come in in one full stream. As, when the Jews from all parts of the country went up thrice a year to worship at Jerusalem, they called on their friends in the road and excited them to go along with them, so shall many of the Gentiles court their relations, friends, and neighbours, to join with them in embracing the Christian religion (v. 3): "*Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord*; though it be uphill and against heart, yet it is *the mountain of the Lord*, who will assist the ascent of our souls towards him." Note, Those that are entering into covenant and communion with God themselves should bring as many as they can along with them; it becomes Christians to provoke one another to good works, and to further the communion of saints by inviting one another into it: not, "*Do you go up to the mountain of the Lord*, and pray for us, and we will stay at home;" nor, "*We will go, and do you do as you will*;" but, "*Come, and let us go*, let us go in concert, that we may strengthen one another's hands and support one another's reputation:" not, "*We will consider of it, and advise about it, and go hereafter*;" but, "*Come, and let us go forthwith*." See Ps.

cxvii. 1. Many shall say this. Those that have had it said to them shall say it to others. The gospel church is here called, not only the mountain of the Lord, but the house of the God of Jacob; for in it God's covenant with Jacob and his praying seed is kept up and has its accomplishment; for to us now, as unto them, he never said, *Seek you me in vain*, ch. xlv. 19. Now see here, 1. What they promise themselves in going up to the mountain of the Lord: There he will teach us of his ways. Note, God's ways are to be learned in his church, in communion with his people, and in the use of instituted ordinances—the ways of duty which he requires us to walk in, the ways of grace in which he walks towards us. It is God that teaches his people, by his word and Spirit. It is worth while to take pains to go up to his holy mountain to be taught his ways, and those who are willing to take that pains shall never find it labour in vain. Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord. 2. What they promise for themselves and one another: "If he will teach us his ways, we will walk in his paths; if he will let us know our duty, we will by his grace make conscience of doing it." Those who attend God's word with this humble resolution shall not be sent away without their lesson.

IV. The means by which this shall be brought about: *Out of Zion shall go forth the law*, the New-Testament law, the law of Christ, as of old the law of Moses from Mount Sinai, even the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. The gospel is a law, a law of faith; it is the word of the Lord; it went forth from Zion, where the temple was built, and from Jerusalem. Christ himself began in Galilee, Matt. iv. 23; Luke xxiii. 5. But, when he commissioned his apostles to preach the gospel to all nations, he appointed them to begin at Jerusalem, Luke xxiv. 47. See Rom. xv. 19. Though most of them had their home in Galilee, yet they must stay at Jerusalem, there to receive the promise of the Spirit, Acts i. 4. And in the temple on Mount Zion they preached the gospel, Acts v. 20. This honour was allowed to Jerusalem, even after Christ was crucified there, for the sake of what it had been. And it was by this gospel, which took rise from Jerusalem, that the gospel church was established on the top of the mountains. This was the rod of divine strength, that was sent forth out of Zion, Ps. cx. 2.

V. The erecting of the kingdom of the Redeemer in the world: *He shall judge among the nations*. He whose word goes forth out of Zion shall by that word not only subdue souls to himself, but rule in them, v. 4. He shall, in wisdom and justice, order and overrule the affairs of the world for the good of his church, and rebuke and restrain those that oppose his interest. By his Spirit working on men's consciences he

shall judge, and rebuke shall try men and check them; his kingdom is spiritual, and not of this world.

VI. The great peace which should be the effect of the success of the gospel in the world (v. 4): *They shall beat their sword into ploughshares*; their instruments of war shall be converted into implements of husbandry; as, on the contrary, when war is proclaimed, *ploughshares are beaten into swords*, Joel iii. 10. *Nation shall then lift up sword against nation*, as now they do; *neither shall they learn war any more*, for they shall have no more occasion for it. This does not make all war absolutely unlawful among Christians, nor is it a prophecy that in the days of the Messiah there shall be no wars. The Jews urge this against Christians as an argument that Jesus is not the Messiah, because this promise is not fulfilled. But, 1. It was in part fulfilled in the peaceableness of the time in which Christ was born, when wars had in a great measure ceased, witness the taxing, Luke ii. 1. 2. The design and tendency of the gospel are to make peace and to slay animosities. It has in it the most powerful obligations and inducements to peace; so that one might reasonably have expected it should have this effect, and it would have had it if it had not been for those lusts of men from which come wars and fightings. 3. Jews and Gentiles were reconciled and brought together by the gospel, and there were no more such wars between them as there had been; for they became *one sheepfold under one shepherd*. See Eph. ii. 13. 4. The gospel of Christ, as far as it prevails, disposes men to be peaceable, softens men's spirits, and sweetens them; and the love of Christ, shed abroad in the heart, constrains men to love one another. 5. The primitive Christians were famous for brotherly love, their very adversaries took notice of it. 6. We have reason to hope that this promise shall yet have a more full accomplishment in the latter times of the Christian church, when the Spirit shall be poured out more plentifully from on high. Then there shall be on earth peace. *Who shall live when God doeth this?* But do it he will in due time, for he is not a man that he should lie.

Lastly, Here is a practical inference drawn from all this (v. 5): *O house of Jacob! come you, and let us walk in the light of the Lord*. By the house of Jacob is meant either, 1. Israel according to the flesh. Let them be provoked by this to a holy emulation, Rom. xi. 14. "Seeing the Gentiles are thus reared and resolved for God, thus forward to go up to the house of the Lord, let us stir up ourselves to go too. Let it never be said that the sinners of the Gentiles were better friends to the holy mountain than the house of Jacob." Thus the zeal of some should provoke many. Or, 2. Spiritual Israel, a church that are brought to the God of Jacob

shall there be such great knowledge in gospel times (v. 3) and such great peace (v. 4), and shall we share in these privileges? Come then, and let us live accordingly. Whatever others do, come, O come! let us walk in the light of the Lord. (1.) Let us walk circumspectly in the light of this knowledge. Will God teach us his ways? Will he show us his glory in the face of Christ? Let us then walk as the children of the light and of the day, Eph. v. 8; 1 Thess. v. 8; Rom. xiii. 12. (2.) Let us walk comfortably in the light of this peace. Shall there be no more war? Let us then go on our way rejoicing, and let this joy terminate in God, and be our strength, Neh. viii. 10. Thus shall we walk in the beams of the Sun of righteousness.

6 Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers. Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots: 8 Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made: 9 And the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself: therefore forgive them not.

The calling in of the Gentiles was accompanied with the rejection of the Jews; it was their fall, and the diminishing of them, that was the riches of the Gentiles; and the casting off of them was the reconciling of the world (Rom. xi. 12—15); and it should seem that these verses have reference to that, and are designed to justify God therein, and yet it is probable that they are primarily intended for the convincing and awakening of the men of that generation in which the prophet lived, it being usual with the prophets to speak of the things that then were, both in mercy and judgment, as types of the things that should be hereafter. Here is,

I. Israel's doom. This is set forth in two words, the first and the last of this paragraph; but they are two dreadful words, and which speak, 1. Their case sad, very sad (v. 6): *Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people.* Miserable is the condition of that people whom God has forsaken, and great certainly must the provocation be if he forsake those that have been his own people. This was the deplorable case of the Jewish church after they had rejected Christ. *Migrenus hinc—let us go hence. Your house is left unto*

you desolate. Matt. xxiii. 38. Whenever any sore calamity came upon the Jews thus far the Lord might be said to forsake them that he withdrew his help and succour from them, else they would not have fallen into the hands of their enemies. But God never leaves any till they first leave him: 2. Their case desperate, wholly desperate (v. 9): *Therefore forgive them not.* This prophetic prayer amounts to a threatening that they should not be forgiven, and so some think it may be read: *And thou wilt not forgive them.* This refers not to particular persons (many of them repented and were pardoned), but to the body of that nation, against whom an irreversible doom was passed, that they should be wholly cut off and their church quite dismantled, never to be formed into such a body again, nor ever to have their old charter restored to them.

II. Israel's desert of this doom, and the reasons upon which it is grounded. In general, it is sin that brings destruction upon them; it is this, and nothing but this, that provokes God to forsake his people. The particular sins which the prophet specifies are such as abounded among them at that time, which he makes mention of for the conviction of those to whom he then preached, rather than that which afterwards proved the measure-filling sin, their crucifying Christ and persecuting his followers; for the sins of every age contributed towards the making up of the dreadful account at last. And there was a partial and temporary rejection of them by the captivity in Babylon hastening on, which was a type of their final destruction by the Romans, and which the sins here mentioned brought upon them. Their sins were such as directly contradicted all God's kind and gracious designs concerning them.

1. God set them apart for himself, as a peculiar people, distinguished from, and dignified above, all other people (Num. xxiii. 9); but they were replenished from the east; they naturalized foreigners, not proselyted, and encouraged them to settle among them, and mingled with them, Hos. vii. 8. Their country was peopled with Syrians and Chaldeans, Moabites and Ammonites, and other eastern nations, and with them they admitted the fashions and customs of those nations, and pleased themselves in the children of strangers, were fond of them, preferred their country before their own, and thought that the more they conformed to them the more polite and refined they were; thus did they profane their crown and their covenant. Note, Those are in danger of being estranged from God who please themselves with those who are strangers to him, for we soon learn the ways of those whose company we love.

2. God gave them his oracles, which they might ask counsel of, not only the scriptures and the seers, but the breast-plate of

judgment; but they slighted these, and became soothsayers like the Philistines, introduced their arts of divination, and hearkened to those who by the stars, or the clouds, or the flight of birds, or the entrails of beasts, or other magic superstitions, pretended to discover things secret or foretold things to come. The Philistines were noted for diviners, 1 Sam. vi. 2. Note, Those who slight true divinity are justly given up to lying divinations; and those will certainly be forsaken of God who thus forsake him and their own mercies for lying vanities.

3. God encouraged them to put their confidence in him, and assured them that he would be their wealth and strength; but, distrusting his power and promise, they made gold their hope, and furnished themselves with horses and chariots, and relied upon them for their safety, v. 7. God had expressly forbidden even their kings to multiply horses to themselves and *greatly to multiply silver and gold*, because he would have them to depend upon himself only; but they did not think their interest in God made them a match for their neighbours unless they had as full treasures of silver and gold, and as formidable hosts of chariots and horses, as they had. It is not having silver and gold, horses and chariots, that is a pro- vocation to God, but, (1.) Desiring them insatiably, so that there is no end of the treasures, no end of the chariots, no bounds or limits set to the desire of them. Those shall never have enough in God (who alone is all-sufficient) that never know when they have enough of this world, which at the best is insufficient. (2.) Depending upon them, as if we could not be safe, and easy, and happy, without them, and could not but be so with them.

4. God himself was their God, the sole object of their worship, and he himself instituted ordinances of worship for them; but they slighted both him and his institutions, v. 8. Their land was full of idols; every city had its god (Jer. xi. 13); and, according to the goodness of their lands, they made goodly images, Hos. x. 1. Those that think one God too little will find two too many, and yet hundreds not sufficient; for those that love idols will multiply them; so sottish were they, and so wretchedly infatuated, that they *worshipped the work of their own hands*, as if that could be a god to them which was not only a creature, but their creature and that which their own fancies had devised and *their own fingers had made*. It was an aggravation of their idolatry that God had enriched them with silver and gold, and yet of that silver and gold they made idols; so it was, *Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked*, see Hos. ii. 8.

5. God had advanced them, and put honour upon them; but they basely diminished and disparaged themselves (v. 9): *The*

mean man boweth down to his idol, a thing below the meanest that has any spark of reason left. Sin is a disparagement to the poorest and those of the lowest rank. It becomes the mean man to bow down to his superiors, but it ill becomes him to bow down to the stock of a tree, ch. xlv. 19. No is it only the illiterate and poor-spirited that do this, but even the great man forgets his grandeur and humbles himself to worship idols, deifies men no better than himself and consecrates stones so much baser than himself. Idolaters are said to *debase themselves even to hell*, ch. lvii. 9. What a shame is it that great men think the service of the true God below them and will not stoop to it, and yet will humble themselves to bow down to an idol! Some make this a threatening that the mean men shall be brought down, and the great men humbled, by the judgments of God, when they come with commission.

10 Enter into the rock, and hid thee in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty. 11 The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. 12 For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low: 13 And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan, 14 And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, 15 And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, 16 And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures. 17 And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. 18 And the idols he shall utterly abolish. 19 And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. 20 In that day man shall cast his idols of silver and his idols of gold, which they have made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; 21 To go into the clefts of the rocks,

d into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth and shake terribly the earth. 22 Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?

The prophet here goes on to show what a consolation would be brought upon their land when God should have forsaken them. This he refers particularly to their destruction by the Chaldeans first, and afterwards by the Romans, or it may have a general respect to the method God takes to awaken and humble proud sinners, and to put them out of conceit with that which they delighted in and depended on more than God. We are here told that sooner or later God will find a way,

I. To startle and awaken secure sinners, who cry peace to themselves, and bid defiance to God and his judgments (v. 10): *Enter into the rock*; God will attack you with such terrible judgments, and strike you with such terrible apprehensions of them, that you shall be forced to *enter into the rock, and hide yourself in the dust, for fear of the wrath of the Lord*. You shall lose all your courage, and be humble at the shaking of a leaf; your heart shall *fail you for fear* (Luke xxi. 26), and you shall *flee when none pursues*," Prov. viii. 1. To the same purport, v. 19. *They will go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, the darkest the deepest recesses; they shall call to the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and rather crush them than not cover them*, Hos. x. 8. It was so particularly at the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans (Luke xxiii. 30) and of the persecuting pagan powers, Rev. vi. 16. And *for fear of the Lord, and of the glory of his majesty*, looking upon him then to be a consuming fire and themselves as stubble before him, when he arises to shake terribly the earth, *shake the wicked out of it* (Job xxxviii. 1), and to shake all those earthly props and supports with which they have buoyed themselves up, to shake them from under them. Note, 1. *With God is terrible majesty*, and the glory of it is such as sooner or later will oblige us all to flee before him. 2. Those that will not fear God and flee to him will be forced to fear him and flee from him to a refuge of lies. 3. It is folly for those that are pursued by the wrath of God to think to escape it, and to hide or shelter themselves from it. 4. The things of the earth are things that will be shaken; they are subject to concussions, and hastening towards a dissolution. 5. The shaking of the earth is, and will be, a terrible thing to those who set their affections wholly on the things of the earth. 6. It will be in vain to think of finding refuge in the caves of the earth when the earth itself is shaken; there

will be no shelter then but in God and in things above.

II. To humble and abase proud sinners, that look big, and think highly of themselves, and scornfully of all about them (v. 11): *The lofty looks of man shall be humbled*. The eyes that aim high, the countenance in which the pride of the heart shows itself, shall be cast down in shame and despair. And the *haughtiness of men shall be bowed down*, their spirits shall be broken, and they shall be crest-fallen, and those things which they were proud of they shall be ashamed of. It is repeated (v. 17), *The loftiness of man shall be bowed down*. Note, Pride will, one way or other, have a fall. Men's haughtiness will be brought down, either by the grace of God convincing them of the evil of their pride, and clothing them with humility, or by the providence of God depriving them of all those things they were proud of and laying them low. Our Saviour often laid it down for a maxim that *he who exalts himself shall be abased*; he shall either abase himself in true repentance or God will abase him and pour contempt upon him. Now here we are told,

1. Why this shall be done: because the *Lord alone will be exalted*. Note, Proud men shall be vilified because the Lord alone will be magnified. It is for the honour of God's power to humble the proud; by this he proves himself to be God, and disproves Job's pretensions to rival with him, Job xl. 11—14. *Behold every one that is proud, and abase him; then will I also confess unto thee*. It is likewise for the honour of his justice. Proud men stand in competition with God, who is jealous for his own glory, and will not suffer men either to take to themselves or give to another that which is due to him only. They likewise stand in opposition to God; they resist him, and therefore he resists them; for he *will be exalted among the heathen* (Ps. xlv. 10), and there is a day coming in which he alone will be exalted, when he shall have put down all opposing rule, principality, and power, 1 Cor. xv. 24.

2. How this shall be done: by humbling judgments, that shall mortify men, and bring them down (v. 12): *The day of the Lord of hosts*, the day of his wrath and judgment, *shall be upon every one that is proud*. He now laughs at their insolence because he sees that his day is coming, this day, which will be upon them ere they are aware, Ps. xxxvii. 13. This day of the Lord is here said to be upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up. Jerome observes that the cedars are said to praise God (Ps. cxlviii. 9) and are *trees of the Lord* (Ps. civ. 16), of his planting (Isa. xli. 19), and yet here God's wrath fastens upon the cedars, which denotes (says he) that some of every rank of men, some great men, will be saved, and some perish. It is brought

in as an instance of the strength of God's voice that it *breaks the cedars* (Ps. xxix. 5), and here the day of the Lord is said to be *upon the cedars*, those of Lebanon, that were the straightest and stateliest,—upon the oaks, those of Bashan, that were the strongest and sturdiest,—upon the natural elevations and fortresses, *the high mountains and the hills that are lifted up* (v. 14), that overtop the valleys and seem to push the skies,—and upon the artificial fastnesses, *every high tower and every fenced wall*, v. 15. Understand these, (1.) As representing the proud people themselves, that are in their own apprehensions like the cedars and the oaks, firmly rooted, and not to be stirred by any storm, and looking on all around them as shrubs; these are the high mountains and the lofty hills that seem to fill the earth, that are gazed on by all, and think themselves immovable, but lie most obnoxious to God's thunderstrokes. *Feriantque summos fulmina montes*—*The highest hills are most exposed to lightning*. And before the power of God's wrath these mountains are scattered and these hills bow and *melt like wax*, Hab. iii. 6; Ps. lxxviii. 8. These vaunting men, who are as high towers in which the noisy bells are hung, on which the thundering murdering cannon are planted—these fenced walls, that fortify themselves with their native hardness, and intrench themselves in their fastnesses—shall be brought down. (2.) As particularizing the things they are proud of, in which they trust, and of which they make their boast. The day of the Lord shall be upon those very things in which they put their confidence as their strength and security; he will *take from them all their armour wherein they trusted*. Did the inhabitants of Lebanon glory in their cedars, and those of Bashan in their oaks, such as no country could equal? The day of the Lord should rend those cedars, those oaks, and the houses built of them. Did Jerusalem glory in the mountains that were round about it, as its impregnable fortifications, or in its walls and bulwarks? These should be levelled and laid low in the day of the Lord. Besides those things that were for their strength and safety they were proud, [1.] Of their trade abroad; but the day of the Lord shall be *upon all the ships of Tarshish*; they shall be broken as Jehoshaphat's were, shall founder at sea or be shipwrecked in the harbour. Zebulun was a haven of ships, but should now no more rejoice in his going out. When God is bringing ruin upon a people he can sink all the branches of their revenue. [2.] Of their ornaments at home; but the day of the Lord shall be *upon all pleasant pictures*, the painting of their ships (so some understand it) or the curious pieces of painting they brought home in their ships from other countries, perhaps from Greece, which afterwards was

famous for painters. Upon every thing it is beautiful to behold; so some read. Perhaps they were the pictures of their relations, and for that reason pleasant, or their gods, which to the idolaters were respectable things; or they admired the fineness of their colours or strokes. There is no harm in making pictures, nor adorning our rooms with them, provided they transgress not either the second or seventh commandment. But to place pictures among our pleasant things, to be fond of them and proud of them, to speck that upon them which should be laid out in charity, and to set our hearts upon them, it ill becomes those who have so many substantial things to take pleasure in, so tends to provoke God to strip us of all our vain ornaments.

III. To make idolaters ashamed of their idols, and of all the affection they have for them and the respect they have paid them (v. 18): *The idols he shall utterly abolish*. When the Lord alone shall be exalted (v. 17) he will not only pour contempt upon proud men, who like Pharaoh exalted themselves against him, but much more upon all pretended deities, who are rivalled with him for divine honours. They shall be abolished, utterly abolished. Their friends shall desert them; their enemies shall destroy them; so that, one way or other, an utter riddance shall be made of them. See here, 1. The vanity of false gods; they cannot secure themselves, so are they from being able to secure their worshippers. 2. The victory of the true God over them; for *great is the truth and it will prevail*. Dagon fell before the ark, and Baal before the Lord God of Elijah. The gods of the heathen shall be famished (Zeph. ii. 11), and by degrees shall perish (Jer. x. 11). The rightful Sovereign will triumph over all pretenders. And, as God will abolish idols, so their worshippers shall abandon them, either from a gracious conviction of their vanity and falsehood (as Ephraim when he said, *What have I to do any more with idols?*) or from a late and sensible experience of their inability to help them, and a woeful despair of relief by them, v. 20. When men are themselves frightened by the judgments of God into the holes of the rocks and the caves of the earth, and find that they do thus in vain shift for their own safety, they shall cast their idols, which they have made their gods and hoped to make their friends in the time of need, the moles and to the bats, any where out of sight, that, being freed from the incumbrance of them, they may go into the clefts of the rocks, for fear of the Lord, v. 21. Note, (1.) Those that will not be reasoned out of their sins sooner or later shall be frightened out of them. (2.) God can make men sick of those idols that they have been most fond of, even the idols of silver and the idols

old, the most precious. Covetous men make silver and gold their idols, money their god; but the time may come when they may feel it as much their burden as ever they made it their confidence, and may find themselves as much exposed by it as ever they hoped they should be guarded by it. When it tempts their enemy, sinks their ship, or retards their flight. There was a time when the mariners threw the wares, and even the *wheat, into the sea* (Jonah i. 5; Acts xxvii. 38), and the *Syrians cast away their garments for haste*, 2 Kings vii. 15. Or even may cast it away out of indignation at themselves for leaning upon such a broken reed. See Ezek. vii. 19. The idolaters were throw away their idols because they were ashamed of them and of their own folly in trusting to them, or because they are afraid of having them found in their possession when the judgments of God are abroad; the thief throws away his stolen goods when he is searched for or pursued. (3.) The darkest holes, where the moles and the bats lodge, are the fittest places for idols, that have eyes and see not; and God can force men to cast their own idols there (ch. xxx. 22), when they are *ashamed of the oaks which they have desired*, ch. i. 29. *Moab shall be ashamed of Chemosh, as the house of Israel was ashamed of Bethel*, Jer. xlviii. 13. (4.) It is possible that sin may be both bathed and left and yet not truly repented. Bathed because surfeited on, left because there is no opportunity of committing it, yet not repented of out of any love to God, but only from a slavish fear of his wrath.

IV. To make those that have trusted in the arm of flesh ashamed of their confidence (ch. 22): "*Cease from man*. The providences of God concerning you shall speak this aloud to you, and therefore take warning beforehand, that you may prevent the unbusiness and shame of a disappointment; and consider, 1. How weak man is: *His breath is in his nostrils*, puffed out every moment, soon gone for good and all." Man is a dying creature, and may die quickly; our nostrils, in which our breath is, are of the outward parts of the body; what is there is like one standing at the door, ready to depart; nay, the doors of the nostrils are always open, the breath in them may slip away ere we are aware, in a moment. Wherein then is man to be accounted of? alas! no reckoning is to be made of him, for he is not what he seems to be, what he pretends to be, what we fancy him to be. Man is like vanity, nay, he is vanity, he is altogether vanity, he is less, he is lighter, than vanity, when weighed in the balances of the sanctuary. "2. How wise therefore those are that cease from man;" it is our duty, it is our interest, to do so. "*Put not your trust in man*, nor make even the greatest and mightiest of men your confidence; cease to do so. Let not your eye be to the

power of man, for it is finite and limited, derived and depending; it is not from him that your judgment proceeds. Let not him be your fear, let not him be your hope; but look up to the power of God, to which all the powers of men are subject and subordinate; dread his wrath, secure his favour, take him for your help, and let your *hope be in the Lord your God*."

CHAP. III.

The prophet, in this chapter, goes on to foretell the desolations that were coming upon Judah and Jerusalem for their sins, both that by the Babylonians and that which completed their ruin by the Romans, with some of the grounds of God's controversy with them. God threatens, I. To deprive them of all the supports both of their life and of their government, ver. 1-3. II. To leave them to fall into confusion and disorder, ver. 4, 5, 12. III. To deny them the blessing of magistracy, ver. 6-8. IV. To strip the daughters of Zion of their ornaments, ver. 17-24. V. To lay all waste by the sword of war, ver. 25, 26. The sins that provoked God to deal thus with them were, 1. Their defiance of God, ver. 8. 2. Their impudence, ver. 9. 3. The abuse of power to oppression and tyranny, ver. 12-15. 4. The pride of the daughters of Zion, ver. 16. In the midst of the chapter the prophet is directed how to address particular persons. (1.) To assure good people that it should be well with them, notwithstanding those general calamities, ver. 10. (2.) To assure wicked people that, however God might, in judgment, remember mercy, yet it should go ill with them, ver. 11. O that the nations of the earth, at this day, would hearken to the rebukes and warnings which this chapter gives!

FOR, behold, the LORD, the LORD of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water, 2 The mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient, 3 The captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator. 4 And I will give children *to be* their princes, and babes shall rule over them. 5 And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour: the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable. 6 When a man shall take hold of his brother of the house of his father, *saying*, Thou hast clothing, be thou our ruler, and *let this ruin be* under thy hand: 7 In that day shall he swear, *saying*, I will not be an healer; for in my house *is* neither bread nor clothing: make me not a ruler of the people. 8 For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen: because their tongue and their doings *are* against the LORD, to provoke the eyes of his glory.

The prophet, in the close of the foregoing chapter, had given a necessary caution to all not to put confidence in man, or any creature; he had also given a general reason for that

caution, taken from the frailty of human life and the vanity and weakness of human powers. Here he gives a particular reason for it—God was now about to ruin all their creature-confidences, so that they should meet with nothing but disappointments in all their expectations from them (v. 1): *The stay and the staff* shall be taken away, all their supports, of what kind soever, all the things they trusted to and looked for help and relief from. Their church and kingdom had now grown old and were going to decay, and they were (after the manner of aged men, Zech. viii. 4) leaning on a staff: now God threatens to take away their staff, and then they must fall of course, to take away the stays both of the city and of the country, of Jerusalem and of Judah, which are indeed stays to one another, and, if one fail, the other feels from it. He that does this is *the Lord, the Lord of hosts—Adon*, the Lord that is himself the stay or foundation; if that stay depart, all other stays certainly break under us, for he is the strength of them all. He that is the Lord, the ruler, that has authority to do it, and the Lord of hosts that has ability to do it, he shall take away the stay and the staff. St. Jerome refers this to the sensible decay of the Jewish nation after they had crucified our Saviour, Rom. xi. 9, 10. I rather take it as a warning to all nations not to provoke God; for, if they make him their enemy, he can and will thus make them miserable. Let us view the particulars.

I. Was their plenty a support to them? It is so to any people; bread is the staff of life: but God can take away the whole stay of bread and the whole stay of water; and it is just with him to do so when fulness of bread becomes an iniquity (Ezek. xvi. 49), and that which was given to be provision for the life is made provision for the lusts. He can take away the bread and the water by withholding the rain, Deut. xxviii. 23, 24. Or, if he allow them, he can take away the stay of bread and the stay of water by withholding his blessing, by which man lives, and not by bread only, and which is the staff of bread (Matt. iv. 4), and then the bread is not nourishing nor the water refreshing, Hag. i. 6. Christ is the bread of life and the water of life; if he be our stay, we shall find that this is a good part not to be taken away, John iv. 14; vi. 27.

II. Was their army a support to them—their generals, and commanders, and military men? These shall be taken away, either cut off by the sword or so discouraged with the defeats they meet with that they shall throw up their commissions and resolve to act no more; or they shall be disabled by sickness, or dispirited, so as to be unfit for business: *The mighty man, and the man of war*, and even the inferior officer, *the captain of fifty*, shall be removed. It bodes ill with a people when their valiant men

are lost. Let not the strong man the fore glory in his strength, nor any people trust too much to their mighty men; but the strong people glorify God and the city the terrible nations fear him, who can make them weak and despicable, ch. xxv. 3.

III. Were their ministers of state a support to them—their learned men, their politicians, their clergy, their wits and virtuos. These also should be taken away—the *judges*, who were skilled in the laws, and expert administering justice,—the *prophets*, who they used to consult in difficult cases,—the *prudent*, who were celebrated as men of sense and sagacity above others and were assistants to the judges, the *diviners* (so the word is), those who used unlawful arts, who, though rotten stays, yet were stays on (but it may be taken, as we read it, in good sense),—the *ancients*, elders in age, office,—the *honourable man*, the gravity whose aspect commands reverence, whose age and experience make him fit to be a counsellor. Trade is one great support to a nation, even manufactures and handicraft trades; and therefore, when the whole stay is to be broken, the *cunning artificer* shall be taken away; and the last is the *eloquent orator*, the man skilful of speech, who in some cases may do good service, though he be none of the prudent or the ancient, by putting the sense of others in good language. Moses cannot speak well, but Aaron can. God threatens to take them away, that is, 1. To disable them for the service of their country, *making the judges fools, taking away the speech of the trustful and the understanding of the aged*, Job xlv. 17, &c. Every creature is that to us which God makes it to be; and we cannot be sure that those who have been serviceable to us shall always be so. 2. To put an end to their days; for the reason why princes are not to be trusted in is because their *breath goeth forth*, Ps. cxlvi. 3, 4. Note, The removal of useful men by death, in the midst of their usefulness, is a very threatening symptom to any people.

IV. Was their government a support to them? It ought to have been so; it is the business of the sovereign to bear up the pillars of the land, Ps. lxxv. 3. But it is here threatened that this stay should be removed: When the mighty men and the prudent are removed *children shall be the princes*—children in age, who must be unadvised and governors, who will be clashing with one another and making a prey of the young king and his kingdom—children without understanding and disposition, childish men, such as are babes in knowledge, no more fit to rule than a child in the cradle. They shall rule over them, with all the foolishness, and frowardness, of a child. *A woe unto thee, O land! when thy king is such a one!* Eccl. x. 16.

V. Was the union of the subjects among

mselves, their good order and the good understanding and correspondence that they kept one another, a stay to them? Where this be the case a people may do the better for it, though their princes be not such as they should be; but it is here threatened that there would send an evil spirit among them (as Judg. ix. 23), which would make men, 1. Injurious and unneighbourly one towards another (v. 5): "*The people shall oppress every one by his neighbour, and the princes, being children, will take no care to restrain the oppressors or relieve the oppressed, nor is it to any purpose to appeal to them (which is a temptation to every man to be his own avenger), and therefore they will devour one another and will soon consume one of another. Then homo fit lupus—man becomes a wolf to man; neque datum sceleris—wickedness receives the stamp of law; nec hospes ab hospite tutus—the guest and the host are in danger from one another.*" 2. Insolent and disorderly towards their superiors. It is as ill an omen for a people as can be when the rising generation among them are generally untractable, ungovernable, and ungovernable, when *the child becomes himself proudly against the ancient, and the young should rise up before the hoary and honour the face of the old man,* Gen. xix. 32. When young people are contumacious and pert, and behave scornfully towards their superiors, their conduct is not only a reproach to themselves, but of ill consequence to the public; it slackens the reins of government and weakens the hands that hold them. It is likewise ill with a people when persons of honour cannot support their authority, but are affronted by the base and beggarly, when judges are injured and their powers set at defiance by the mob. Those have a great deal to answer for who do this.

1. Is it some stay, some support, to hope for, though matters may be now ill-managed, yet others may be raised up, who may manage better? Yet this expectation also will be frustrated, for the case shall be so desperate that no man of sense or substance will meddle with it.

The government shall go a begging. Here, (1.) It is taken for granted that there is no way of redressing all these advances, and bringing things into order again, but by good magistrates, who shall be invested with power by common consent, shall exert that power for the good of the community. And it is probable that there was, in many places, the true origin of government; men found it necessary to be in a subjection to one who was thought of as such a trust, in order to the welfare and safety of them all, being aware that they must either be ruled or ruined. Here therefore is the original contract: "*Be thou ruler, and we will be subject to thee, let this ruin be under thy hand, to be*

repaired and restored, and then to be preserved and established, and the interests of it advanced, *ch. lviii. 12.* Take care to protect us by the sword of war from being injured from abroad, and by the sword of justice from being injurious one to another, and we will bear faith and true allegiance to thee." (2.) The case is represented as very deplorable, and things as having come to a sad pass; for, [1.] Children being their princes, every man will think himself fit to prescribe who shall be a magistrate, and will be for preferring his own relations; whereas, if the princes were as they should be, it would be left entirely to them to nominate the rulers, as it ought to be. [2.] Men will find themselves under a necessity even of forcing power into the hands of those that are thought to be fit for it: *A man shall take hold by violence of one to make him a ruler, perceiving him ready to resist the motion: nay, he shall urge it upon his brother; whereas, commonly, men are not willing that their equals should be their superiors, witness the envy of Joseph's brethren.* [3.] It will be looked upon as ground sufficient for the preferring of a man to be a ruler that he has clothing better than his neighbours—a very poor qualification to recommend a man to a place of trust in the government. It was a sign that the country was much impoverished when it was a rare thing to find a man that had good clothes, or that could afford to buy himself an alderman's gown or a judge's robes; and it was proof enough that the people were very unthinking when they had so much respect to a man in *gay clothing, with a gold ring* (Jam. ii. 2, 3), that, for the sake thereof, they would make him their ruler. It would have been some sense to have said, "*Thou hast wisdom, integrity, experience; be thou our ruler.*" But it was a jest to say, *Thou hast clothing; be thou our ruler.* A poor wise man, though in vile raiment, delivered a city, Eccl. ix. 15. We may allude to this to show how desperate the case of fallen man was when our Lord Jesus was pleased to become our brother, and, though he was not courted, offered himself to be our ruler and Saviour, and to take this ruin under his hand.

2. Those who are thus pressed to come into office will swear themselves off, because, though they are taken to be men of some substance, yet they know themselves unable to bear the charges of the office and to answer the expectations of those that choose them (v. 7): *He shall swear (shall lift up the hand, the ancient ceremony used in taking an oath) I will not be a healer; make not me a ruler.* Note, Rulers must be healers, and good rulers will be so; they must study to unite their subjects, and not widen the differences that are among them. Those only are fit for government that are of a meek, quiet, healing, spirit. They must

also heal the wounds that are given to any of the interests of their people, by suitable applications. But why will he not be a ruler? Because *in my house is neither bread nor clothing*. (1.) If he said true, it was a sign that men's estates were sadly ruined when even those who made the best appearance really wanted necessities—a common case, and a piteous one. Some who, having lived fashionably, are willing to put the best side outwards, are yet, if the truth were known, in great straits, and go with heavy hearts for want of bread and clothing. (2.) If he did not speak truth, it was a sign that men's consciences were sadly debauched, when, to avoid the expense of an office, they would load themselves with the guilt of perjury, and (which is the greatest madness in the world) would damn their souls to save their money, Matt. xvi. 26. (3.) However it was, it was a sign that the case of the nation was very bad when nobody was willing to accept a place in the government of it, as despairing to have either credit or profit by it, which are the two things aimed at in men's common ambition of preferment.

3. The reason why God brought things to this sad pass, even among his own people (which is given either by the prophet or by him that refused to be a ruler); it was not for want of good will to his country, but because he saw the case desperate and past relief, and it would be to no purpose to attempt it (v. 8): *Jerusalem is ruined and Judah is fallen*; and they may thank themselves. They have brought their destruction upon their own heads, for *their tongue and their doings are against the Lord*; in word and action they broke the law of God and therein designed an affront to him; they wilfully intended to offend him, in contempt of his authority and defiance of his justice. Their tongue was against the Lord, for they contradicted his prophets; and their doings were no better, for they acted as they talked. It was an aggravation of their sin that God's eye was upon them, and that his glory was manifested among them; but they provoked him to his face, as if the more they knew of his glory the greater pride they took in slighting it, and turning it into shame. And this, this, is it for which Jerusalem is ruined. Note, The ruin both of persons and people is owing to their sins. If they did not provoke God, he would do them no hurt, Jer. xxv. 6.

9 The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Woe unto their soul! For they have rewarded evil unto themselves. 10 Say ye to the righteous, that *it shall be well with him*: for they shall eat the fruit of their

doings. 11 Woe unto the wicked! *It shall be ill with him*: for the ward of his hands shall be given him. 12 *As for my people, children of their oppressors, and women rule over them*. O my people, they will lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths. The Lord standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the people. The Lord will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people, and the princes thereof: for ye have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses. 15 *Why mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor*? saith the Lord God of hosts.

Here God proceeds in his controversy with his people. Observe,

1. The ground of his controversy. It is for sin that God contended with them; they vex themselves, let them look a little further and they will see that they must thank themselves: *Woe unto their souls! For they have rewarded evil unto themselves. Alas for their souls!* (so it may be read a way of lamentation), *for they have cured evil to themselves*, v. 9. Note, the condition of sinners is woeful and very plorable. Note also, It is the soul that is damaged and endangered by sin. Sinners may prosper in their outward estates, and at the same time there may be a woe to their souls. Note, further, Whatever evil befalls sinners it is of their own procuring, Jer. ii. That which is here charged upon them is, That the shame which should have restrained them from their sins was quite thrown off, and they had grown impudent, v. 9. This hardens men against repentance, and ripe them for ruin, as much as any thing: *show of their countenance doth witness against them* that their minds are vain, and lewd and malicious; their eyes declare plainly that they cannot cease from sin, 2 Pet. ii. One may look them in the face and guess the desperate wickedness that there is in their hearts: *They declare their sin as Sodom*, so impetuous, so imperious, are their lusts, and so impatient of the least check, and perfectly are all the remaining sparks of virtue extinguished in them. The Sodomites declared their sin, not only by the exceeding greatness of it (Gen. xiii. 13), that it cried to heaven (Gen. xviii. 2), but by their shameless owning of that which was most shameful (Gen. xix. 5); and the Jews and Jerusalem did; they were so far from hiding it that they gloried in it, in the bold attempts they made upon virtue, and the victory they gained over their own

ons. They had a whore's forehead (iii. 3) and could not blush, Jer. vi. 15. e. Those that have grown impudent in are ripe for ruin. Those that are past ne (we say) are past grace, and then hope. 2. That their guides, who old direct them in the right way, put n out of the way (v. 12): "*Those who thee* (the princes, priests, and prophets) *lead thee; they cause thee to err.*" er they preached to them that which false and corrupt, or, if they preached which was true and good, they contra- ed it by their practices, and the people id sooner follow a bad example than a exhortation. Thus they *destroyed the of their paths*, pulling down with one d what they built up with the other. *te beatificant—Those that call thee blessed e thee to err; so some read it.* Their sts applauded them, as if nothing were ss among them, cried *Peace, peace*, to n, as if they were in no danger; and ey caused them to go on in their rs. 3. That their judges, who should patronized and protected the oppress- were themselves the greatest oppressors, 1, 15. The elders of the people, and the ces, who had learning and could not but w better things, who had great estates were not under the temptation of ne- ity to encroach upon those about them, who were men of honour and should have ned to do a base thing, yet *they have eaten the vineyard*. God's vineyard, which were appointed to be the dressers and pers of, they burnt (so the word sig-); they did as ill by it as its worst ene- s could do, Ps. lxxx. 16. Or the vine- s of the poor they wrested out of their ession, as Jezebel did Naboth's, or ured the fruits of them, fed their lusts that which should have been the ssary food of indigent families; the of the poor was hoarded up in their es; when God came to search for n goods there he found it, and it was a ess against them. It was to be had, and ight have made restitution, but would God reasons with these great men (v. "What mean you, that you beat my e in pieces? What cause have you for What good does it do you?" Or, hat hurt have they done you? Do you : you had power given you for such a ose as this?" Note, There is nothing unaccountable, and yet nothing which more certainly be accounted for, than injuries and abuses that are done to s people by their persecutors and op- rs. "You grind the faces of the : you put them to as much pain and r as if they were ground in a mill, and rtainly reduce them to dust by one act of oppression after another." Or, "Their are bruised and crushed with the blows ave given them; you have not only

ruined their estates, but have given them personal abuses." Our Lord Jesus was *smitten on the face*, Matt. xxvi. 67.

II. The management of this controversy. 1. God himself is the prosecutor (v. 13): *The Lord stands up to plead*, or he sets himself to debate the matter, and he *stands to judge the people*, to judge for those that were oppressed and abused; and he will *enter into judgment with the princes*, v. 14. Note, The greatest of men cannot exempt or secure themselves from the scrutiny and sentence of God's judgment, nor demur to the jurisdiction of the court of heaven. 2 The indictment is proved by the notorious evidence of the fact: "Look upon the oppressors, and the *show of their countenance witnesses against them* (v. 9); look upon the oppressed, and you see how their faces are battered and abused," v. 15. 3. The controversy is already begun in the change of the ministry. To punish those that had abused their power to bad purposes God sets those over them that had not sense to use their power to any good purposes: *Children are their oppressors, and women rule over them* (v. 12), men that have as weak judgments and strong passions as women and children: this was their sin, that their rulers were such, and it became a judgment upon them.

III. The distinction that shall be made between particular persons, in the prosecution of this controversy (v. 10, 11): *Say to the righteous, It shall be well with thee. Woe to the wicked; it shall be ill with him.* He had said (v. 9), *they have rewarded evil to themselves*, in proof of which he here shows that God will *render to every man according to his works*. Had they been righteous, it would have been well with them; but, if it be ill with them, it is because they are wicked and will be so. Thus God stated the matter to Cain, to convince him that he had no reason to be angry, Gen. iv. 7. Or it may be taken thus: God is threatening national judgments, which will ruin the public interests. Now, 1. Some good people might fear that they should be involved in that ruin, and therefore God bids the prophets comfort them against those fears: "Whatever becomes of the unrighteous nation, let the *righteous man* know that he shall not be lost in the crowd of sinners; the *Judge of all the earth will not slay the righteous with the wicked* (Gen. xviii. 25); no, assure him, in God's name, that *it shall be well with him*. The property of the trouble shall be altered to him, and he shall be *hidden in the day of the Lord's anger*. He shall have divine supports and comforts, which shall abound as afflictions abound, and so it shall be well with him." When the whole *stay of bread is taken away*, yet in the *day of famine the righteous shall be satisfied; they shall eat the fruit of their doings*—they shall have the testimony of their consciences for them that they kept themselves

pure from the common iniquity, and therefore the common calamity is not the same thing to them that it is to others; they brought no fuel to the flame, and therefore are not themselves fuel for it. 2. Some wicked people might hope that they should escape that ruin, and therefore God bids the prophets shake their vain hopes: "*Woe to the wicked; it shall be ill with him, v. 11.*" To him the judgments shall have a sting, and there shall be *wormwood and gall in the affliction and misery.*" There is a woe to wicked people, and, though they may think to shelter themselves from public judgments, yet it shall be ill with them; it will grow worse and worse with them if they repent not, and the worst of all will be at last; for *the reward of their hands shall be given them, in the day when every man shall receive according to the things done in the body.*

16 Moreover the LORD saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched-forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing *as* they go, and making a tinkling with their feet: 17 Therefore the LORD will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will discover their secret parts. 18 In that day the LORD will take away the bravery of *their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon,* 19 The chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, 20 The bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings, 21 The rings, and nose jewels, 22 The changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins, 23 The glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods and the veils. 24 And it shall come to pass, *that* instead of sweet smell, there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well-set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; *and burning* instead of beauty. 25 Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war. 26 And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she *being* desolate shall sit upon the ground.

The prophet's business was to show all sorts of people what they had contributed to the national guilt and what share they must

expect in the national judgments that were coming. Here he reproves and warns the daughters of Zion, tells the ladies of their faults; and Moses, in the law, having denounced God's wrath against *the tender delicate woman* (the prophets being a comment upon the law, Deut. xxviii. 56), here tells them how they shall smart by calamities that are coming upon them. Observe,

I. The sin charged upon the daughters of Zion, v. 16. The prophet expressly vouches God's authority for what he said, lest it should be thought it was unbecoming him to take notice of such things, and should be resented by the ladies: *The Lord saith.* "Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, let them know that God takes notice of, and is much displeased with, their folly and vanity of proud women, and that the law takes cognizance even of their dress. Two things they here stand indicted for: haughtiness and wantonness, directly contrary to that *modesty, shamefacedness, sobriety, with which women ought to adorn themselves,* 1 Tim. ii. 9. They discover the disposition of their mind by their carriage and gesture, and the lightness of their carriage. They are haughty, for they *walk with stretched-forth necks*, that they may seem tall, or, as thinking nobody could be enough to speak to them or to receive a word or a smile from them. Their eyes are wanton, *deceiving* (so the word is): with their amorous glances they draw men into their snares. They affect a formal starchedness of going, that people may look at them, and admire them, and know they have been at the dancing-school, and have learned minuet-step. They go *mincing*, or with a tripping, not willing to set so much as the sole of their foot to the ground, for tenderness and delicacy. They make a *tinkling with their feet*, having, as some think, chains, or little bells, upon their shoes, which made a noise: *they go as if they were fettered* (so some read it), like a horse trammelled that he may learn to pace. Thus Achan came delicately, 1 Sam. xv. 32. Such nice affected men is not only a force upon the world, but that which is natural, and ridiculous in men, men of sense; but, as it is an evidence of a vain mind, it is offensive to God. Two things aggravated it here:—1. That these were the daughters of Zion, the daughters of the mountain, who should have behaved with the gravity that becomes women professing godliness. 2. That it should seem, by the connexion, they were the wives and daughters of the princes who spoiled and oppressed the poor (v. 14, 15) that they might maintain this pride and luxury of their families.

II. The punishments threatened for their sin; and they answer the sin as face answers to face in a glass, v. 17, 18. 1. *They walk with stretched-forth necks*, but God will s

with a scab the crown of their head, which shall lower their crests, and make them ashamed to show their heads, being obliged by it to cut off their hair. Note, Loathsome diseases are often sent as the just punishment of pride, and are sometimes the immediate effect of lewdness, the flesh and the body being consumed by it. 2. They cared not what they laid out in furnishing themselves with great variety of fine clothes; but God will reduce them to such poverty and distress that they shall not have clothes sufficient to cover their nakedness, but their uncomeliness shall be exposed through their rags. 3. They were extremely fond and proud of their ornaments; but God will strip them of those ornaments, when their houses shall be plundered, their treasures rifled, and they themselves led into captivity. The prophet here specifies many of the ornaments which they used as particularly as if he had been the keeper of their wardrobe or had attended them in their dressing-room. It is not at all material to enquire what sort of ornaments these respectively were and whether the translations rightly express the original words; perhaps 100 years hence the names of some of the ornaments that are now in use in our own land will be as little understood as some of those here mentioned now are. Fashions alter, and so do the names of them; and yet the mention of them is not in vain, but is designed to expose the folly of the daughters of Zion; for, (1.) Many of these things, we may suppose, were very odd and ridiculous, and, if they had not been in fashion, would have been hooted at. They were fitter to be toys for children to play with than ornaments for grown people to go to Mount Zion in. (2.) Those things that were decent and convenient, as *the linen, the hoods, and the veils*, needed not to be provided in such abundance and variety. It is necessary to have apparel and proper that all should have it according to their rank; but that occasion was there for so many changeable suits of apparel (v. 22), that they might not be seen two days together in the same suit? "They must have (as the homily against excess of apparel speaks) one gown for the day, another for the night—one long, another short—one for the working day, another for the holy-day—one of this colour, another of that colour—one of cloth, another of silk or damask—one dress afore dinner, another after—one of the Spanish fashion, another Turkey, and never content with sufficient." All this, as it is an evidence of pride and vain curiosity, so must needs send a great deal in gratifying a base lust that ought to be laid out in works of piety and charity; and it is well if poor tenants be not racked, or poor creditors defrauded, to support it. (3.) The enumeration of

these things intimates what care they were in about them, how much their hearts were upon them, what an exact account they kept of them, how nice and critical they were about them, how insatiable their desire was of them, and how much of their comfort was bound up in them. A maid could forget none of these ornaments, though they were ever so many (Jer. ii. 32), but would report them as readily, and talk of them with as much pleasure, as if they had been things of the greatest moment. The prophet did not speak of these things as in themselves sinful (they might lawfully be had and used), but as things which they were proud of and should therefore be deprived of.

IV. They were very nice and curious about their clothes; but God would make those bodies of theirs, which they were at such expense to beautify and make easy, a reproach and burden to them (v. 24): *Instead of sweet smell* (those tablets, or boxes, of perfume, *houses of the soul or breath*, as they are called, v. 20, margin) *there shall be stink*, garments grown filthy with being long worn, or from some loathsome disease or plasters for the cure of it. *Instead of a rich embroidered girdle* used to make the clothes sit tight, there shall be a *rent*, a rending of the clothes for grief, or old rotten clothes rent into rags. *Instead of well-set hair*, curiously plaited and powdered, there shall be *baldness*, the hair being plucked off or shaven, as was usual in times of great affliction (ch. xv. 2; Jer. xvi. 6), or in great servitude, Ezek. xxix. 18. *Instead of a stomacher*, or a scarf or sash, there shall be a *girding of sackcloth*, in token of deep humiliation; and *burning instead of beauty*. Those that had a good complexion, and were proud of it, when they are carried into captivity shall be tanned and sun-burnt; and it is observed that the best faces are soonest injured by the weather. From all this let us learn, 1. Not to be nice and curious about our apparel, nor to affect that which is gay and costly, nor to be proud of it. 2. Not to be secure in the enjoyment of any of the delights of sense, because we know not how soon we may be stripped of them, nor what straits we may be reduced to.

V. They designed by these ornaments to charm the gentlemen, and win their affections (Prov. vii. 16, 17), but there shall be none to be charmed by them (v. 25): *Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war. The fire shall consume them*, and then the maidens shall not be given in marriage; as it is, Ps. lxxviii. 63. When the sword comes with commission the mighty commonly fall first by it, because they are most forward to venture. And, when Zion's guards are cut off, no marvel that Zion's gates *lament and mourn* (v. 26), the enemies having made themselves masters of them; and the city itself, being desolate, being

emptied or swept, shall *sit upon the ground* like a disconsolate widow. If sin be harboured within the walls, lamentation and mourning are near the gates.

CHAP. IV.

In this chapter we have, I. A threatening of the paucity and scarceness of men (ver. 1.), which might fitly enough have been added to the close of the foregoing chapter, to which it has a plain reference. II. A promise of the restoration of Jerusalem's peace and purity, righteousness and safety, in the days of the Messiah, ver. 2-6. Thus, in wrath, mercy is remembered, and gospel grace is a sovereign relief, in reference to the terrors of the law and the desolations made by sin.

AND in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach.

It was threatened (*ch. iii. 25*) that the *mighty men should fall by the sword in war*, and it was threatened as a punishment to the women that affected gaiety and a loose sort of conversation. Now here we have the effect and consequence of that great slaughter of men, 1. That though Providence has so wisely ordered that, *communibus annis*—on an average of years, there is nearly an equal number of males and females born into the world, yet, through the devastations made by war, there should scarcely be one man in seven left alive. As there are deaths attending the bringing forth of children, which are peculiar to the woman, who was first in the transgression, so, to balance that, there are deaths peculiar to men, those by the sword in the high places of the field, which perhaps devour more than child-bed does. Here it is foretold that such multitudes of men should be cut off that there should be *seven women to one man*. 2. That by reason of the scarcity of men, though marriage should be kept up for the raising of recruits and the preserving of the race of mankind upon earth, yet the usual method of it should be quite altered,—that, whereas men ordinarily make their court to the women, the women should now take hold of the men, foolishly fearing, (as Lot's daughters did, when they saw the ruin of Sodom and perhaps thought it reached further than it did,) that in a little time there would be none left, (*Gen. xix. 31.*)—that, whereas women naturally hate to come in sharers with others, seven should now, by consent, become the wives of one man,—and that whereas by the law the husband was obliged to provide food and raiment for his wife, (*Exod. xxi. 10.*) which with many would be the most powerful argument against multiplying wives, these women will be bound to support themselves; they will *eat bread of their own earning, and wear apparel of their own working*, and the man they court shall be at no expense upon them, only they desire to be called his wives, to *take away the reproach* of a single

life. They are willing to be wives upon any terms, though ever so unreasonable; and perhaps the rather because in the troublesome times it would be a kindness to them to have a husband for their protector. Paul, on the contrary, thinks a single state preferable in a time of distress, 1 Cor. vii. 26. It were well if there were not introduced here partly as a reflection upon the daughters of Zion, notwithstanding the humbling providence they were under (*ch. iii. 18*), they remain unhumbled, and, instead of repenting their pride and vanity, when God was contending with them for them, all their care was to get husbands—that modesty which is the greatest beauty of the female sex, was forgotten, and with them the approach of vice was nothing to the reproach of virginity, a sad symptom of the incurable desolations of virtue.

2 In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel. 3 And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem: 4 When the LORD shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning. 5 And the LORD will create upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence. 6 And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.

By the foregoing threatenings Jerusalem is brought into a very deplorable condition, everything looks melancholy. But here the sun breaks out from behind the cloud. Many exceedingly great and precious promises we have in these verses, giving assurance of comfort which may be discerned through the troubles, and of happy days which shall come after them, and these certainly point at the kingdom of the Messiah, and the great redemption to be wrought out by him under the figure and type of the restoration of Judah and Jerusalem by the reformation of Hezekiah after Ahaz and the ruin

turn out of their captivity in Babylon; to both these events the passage may have some reference, but chiefly to Christ. It is here promised, as the issue of all these troubles,

I. That God will raise up a righteous branch, which shall produce fruits of righteousness (v. 2): *In that day*, that same day, at that very time, when Jerusalem shall be destroyed and the Jewish nation exterminated and dispersed, the kingdom of the Messiah shall be set up; and then shall he be reviving of the church, when every one shall fear the utter ruin of it.

1. Christ himself shall be exalted. He is the *branch of the Lord*, the man the branch; it is one of his prophetic names, *my servant the branch* (Zech. iii. 8; vi. 12), *the branch of righteousness* (Jer. xxiii. 5; xxiii. 15), *a rod out of the stem of Jesse* and *branch out of his roots* (ch. xi. 1), and this, as some think, is alluded to when he is called a *Nazarene*, Matt. ii. 23. Here he is called *the branch of the Lord*, because planted by his power and flourishing to his praise. The ancient Chaldee paraphrase here reads it, *The Christ, or Messiah, of the Lord*. He shall be the beauty, and glory, and joy. (1.) He shall himself be advanced to the joy set before him and the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. He that was a reproach of men, and whose visage was marred more than any man's, is now, in the upper world, beautiful and glorious, as the sun in his strength, admired and adored by angels. (2.) He shall be beautiful and glorious in the esteem of all believers, shall gain an interest in the world, and a name among men above every name. To those that believe he is precious, he is an honour (1 Pet. ii. 7), *the fairest of ten thousand* (Cant. v. 10), and altogether glorious. Let us rejoice that he is so, and let him be so to us.

2. His gospel shall be embraced. The success of the gospel is the fruit of the branch of the Lord; all the graces and comforts of the gospel spring from Christ. But it is called *the fruit of the earth* because it sprang up in this world and was calculated for the present state. And Christ compares himself to a *grain of wheat*, that falls into the ground and dies, and so brings forth much fruit, John xii. 24. The success of the gospel is represented by *the earth's yielding her increase* (Ps. lxxvii. 6), and the planting of the Christian church is God's *sowing it to himself in the earth*, Hos. ii. 23. We may understand it of both the persons and the things that are the products of the gospel: they shall be excellent and comely, shall appear very agreeable and be very acceptable to those that have escaped of Israel, so that remnant of the Jews which was saved from perishing with the rest in unbelief, Rom. xi. 5. Note, If Christ be precious to us, his gospel will be so and all its truths

and promises—his church will be so, and all that belong to it. These are the good fruit of the earth, in comparison with which all other things are but weeds. It will be a good evidence to us that we are of the chosen remnant, distinguished from the rest that are called *Israel*, and marked for salvation, if we are brought to see a transcendent beauty in Christ, and in holiness, and in the saints, the excellent ones of the earth. As a type of this blessed day, Jerusalem, after Sennacherib's invasion and after the captivity in Babylon, should again flourish as a branch, and be blessed with the fruits of the earth. Compare ch. xxxvii. 31, 32. *The remnant shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward*. And, if by the fruit of the earth here we understand the good things of this life, we may observe that these have peculiar sweetness in them to the chosen remnant, who, having a covenant-right to them, have the most comfortable use of them. If the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious in our eyes, even the fruit of the earth also will be excellent and comely, because then we may take it as the fruit of the promise, Ps. xxxvii. 16; 1 Tim. iv. 8.

II. That God will reserve to himself a holy seed, v. 3: When the generality of those that have a place and a name in Zion and in Jerusalem shall be cut off as withered branches, by their own unbelief, yet some shall be left. Some shall remain, some shall still cleave to the church, when its property is altered and it has become Christian; for God will not quite cast off his people, Rom. xi. 1. There is here and there one that is left. Now, 1. This is a remnant according to the election of grace (as the apostle speaks, Rom. xi. 5), such as are written among the living, marked in the counsel and fore-knowledge of God for life and salvation, *written to life* (so the word is), designed and determined for it unalterably; for "*what I have written I have written*." Those that are kept alive in killing dying times were written for life in the book of divine Providence; and shall we not suppose those who are rescued from a greater death to be such as were *written in the Lamb's book of life*? Rev. xiii. 8. As many as were *ordained unto eternal life believed to the salvation of the soul*, Acts xiii. 48. Note, All that were *written among the living* shall be found among the living, every one; for of all that were given to Christ he will lose none. 2. It is a remnant under the dominion of grace; for every one that is *written among the living*, and is accordingly left, shall be called *holy*, shall be holy, and shall be accepted of God accordingly. Those only that are holy shall be left when the *Son of man shall gather out of his kingdom every thing that offends*; and all that are chosen to salvation are chosen to sanctification. See 2 Thess. ii. 13; Eph. i. 4.

III. That God will reform his church and

will rectify and amend whatever is amiss in it, v. 4. Then the remnant shall be called *holy, when the Lord shall have washed away their filth*, washed it from among them by cutting off the wicked persons, washed it from within them by purging out the wicked thing. They shall not be called so till they are in some measure made so. Gospel times are times of reformation (Heb. ix. 10), typified by the reformation in the days of Hezekiah and that after the captivity, to which this promise refers. Observe, 1. The places and persons to be reformed. Jerusalem, though the holy city, needed reformation; and, being the holy city, the reformation of that would have a good influence upon the whole kingdom. The daughters of Zion also must be reformed, the women in a particular manner, whom he had reproved, *ch. iii. 16.* When they were decked in their ornaments they thought themselves wondrously clean; but, 'being proud of them, the prophet calls them their *filth*, for no sin is more abominable to God than pride. Or by the daughters of Zion may be meant the country towns and villages, which were related to Jerusalem as the mother-city, and which needed reformation. 2. The reformation itself. The filth shall be washed away; for wickedness is filthiness, particularly blood-shed, for which Jerusalem was infamous (2 Kings xxi. 16), and which defiles the land more than any other sin. Note, The reforming of a city is the cleansing of it. When vicious customs and fashions are suppressed, and the open practice of wickedness is restrained, the place is made clean and sweet which before was a dunghill; and this is not only for its credit and reputation among strangers, but for the comfort and health of the inhabitants themselves. 3. The author of the reformation: *The Lord shall do it.* Reformation-work is God's work; if any thing be done to purpose in it, it is his doing. But how? By the judgment of his providence the sinners were destroyed and consumed; but it is by the Spirit of his grace that they are reformed and converted. This is work that is done, not by might, nor by power, but by the *Spirit of the Lord of hosts* (Zech. iv. 6), working both upon the sinners themselves that are to be reformed and upon magistrates, ministers, and others that are to be employed as instruments of reformation. The Spirit herein ac's, (1.) As a spirit of judgment, enlightening the mind, convincing the conscience,—as a Spirit of wisdom, guiding us to deal prudently, (Isa. li. 13),—as a discerning, distinguishing, Spirit, separating between the precious and the vile. (2.) As a Spirit of burning, quickening and invigorating the affections, and making men zealously affected in a good work. The Spirit works as fire, Matt. iii. 11. An ardent love to Christ and souls, and a flaming zeal

against sin, will carry men on with resolution in their endeavours to *turn away ungodliness from Jacob*. See Isa. xxxii. 15, 16.

IV. That God will protect his church, and all that belong to it (v. 5, 6); when they are purified and reformed they shall no longer lie exposed, but God will take a particular care of them. Those that are sanctified are well fortified; for God will be to them a guide and a guard.

1. Their tabernacles shall be defended v. 5.

(1.) This writ of protection refers to [1.] Their dwelling-places, the tabernacle of their rest, their own houses, where they worship God, alone, and with their families. That blessing which is upon the *habitation of the just* shall be a protection to it, Prov. xiii. 33. In the *tabernacles of the righteous* shall the voice of rejoicing and salvation be, Ps. cxviii. 15. Note, God takes particular cognizance and care of the dwelling-places of his people, of every one of them, the poorest cottage as well as the stateliest palace. When iniquity is *put far from the tabernacle* the Almighty shall be its defence, Job xxii. 23, 25. [2.] Their assemblies of tabernacles of meeting for religious worship. No mention is made of the temple, for the promise points at a time when not one stone of that shall be left upon another; but all the congregations of Christians, though but two or three met together in Christ's name, shall be taken under the special protection of heaven; they shall no more be scattered, no more disturbed, nor shall any *weapon formed against them prosper*. Note, we ought to reckon it a great mercy if we have liberty to worship God in public, free from the alarms of the sword of war or persecution.

(2.) This writ of protection is drawn up, [1.] In a similitude taken from the safety of the camp of Israel when they marched through the wilderness. God will give to the Christian church as real proofs, though not so sensible, of his care of them, as he then gave to Israel. The Lord will again *create a cloud and smoke by day*, to screen them from the scorching heat of the sun, and the *shining of a flaming fire by night*, to enlighten and warm the air, which in the night is cold and dark. See Exod. xiii. 21; Neh. ix. 19. This pillar of cloud and fire interposed between the Israelites and the Egyptians, Exod. xiv. 20. Note, Though miracles have ceased, yet God is the same to the New-Testament church that he was to Israel of old; the very same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. [2.] In a similitude taken from the outside cover of rams' skins and badgers' skins that was upon the curtains of the tabernacle, as if every dwelling-place of Mount Zion and every assembly were as dear to God as that tabernacle was: *Upon all the glory shall be a defence*, to save it from wind and weather. Note, The church

earth has its glory. Gospel truths and ordinances, the scriptures and the ministry, the church's glory; and upon all this there is a defence, and ever shall be, *the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church*. If God himself be the glory in the midst of it, he will himself be a wall of defence round about it, impenetrable and invulnerable. Grace in the soul is the glory, and those that have it are *kept by the power of God* as in a strong-hold, 1 Pet. i. 5. Their tabernacle shall be a defence to them, v. 6. God's tabernacle was a pavilion for the saints (Ps. xxvii. 5); but, when that is taken down, they shall not want a covert: divine power and goodness shall be a defence to all the saints. God himself shall be their hiding-place (Ps. xxxii. 7); he shall be at home in him, Ps. xci. 9. God will himself be to them as the *shadow of a great rock* (ch. xxxii. 2) and *his name as a high tower*, Prov. xviii. 10. He will be to them only a shadow from the heat in the day, but a covert from storm and rain. In this world we must expect change of weather and all the inconveniencies that attend it; we shall meet with storm and in this lower region, and at other times the heat of the day no less burdensome; God is a refuge to his people in all seasons.

CHAP. V.

The chapter the prophet, in God's name, shows the people of their transgressions, even the house of Jacob their sins, and the judgments which were likely to be brought upon them for them. I. By a parable, under the similitude of an unfruitful vineyard, representing the great favours God had bestowed upon them, their disappointing his expectations from them, and the way they had thereby deserved, ver. 1-7. II. By an enumeration of the sins that did abound among them, with a threatening of punishments that should answer to the sins. 1. Covetousness, greediness of worldly wealth, which shall be punished with ruin, ver. 8-10. 2. Rioting, revelling, and drunkenness (ver. 2, 22, 23), which shall be punished with captivity and all the evils that attend it, ver. 13-17. 3. Presumption in sin, and trusting in the justice of God, ver. 18, 19. 4. Confounding the distinction between virtue and vice, and so undermining the principles of religion, ver. 20. 5. Self-conceit, ver. 21. 6. Perverting the law, for which, and the other instances of reigning wickedness against them, a great and general desolation is threatened, which shall lay all waste (ver. 24, 25), and which should be effected by a foreign invasion (ver. 26-30), referring perhaps to the havoc wrought not long after by Sennacherib's army.

NOW will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved concerning his vineyard. My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: 2 And he fenced it, gathered under the stones thereof, planted it with the choicest vine, built a tower in the midst of it, also made a wine-press therein: he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth thorns and briers. 3 And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. 4 What could have been done more to my vineyard,

that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? 5 And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: 6 And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. 7 For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.

See what variety of methods the great God takes to awaken sinners to repentance, by convincing them of sin, and showing them their misery and danger by reason of it. To this purport he speaks sometimes in plain terms and sometimes in parables, sometimes in prose and sometimes in verse, as here. "We have tried to reason with you (ch. i. 18); now let us put your case into a poem, inscribed to the honour of my well-beloved." God the Father dictates it to the honour of Christ his well-beloved Son, whom he has constituted Lord of the vineyard. The prophet sings it to the honour of Christ too, for he is his well-beloved. The Old Testament prophets were friends of the bridegroom. Christ is God's beloved Son and our beloved Saviour. Whatever is said or sung of the church must be intended to his praise, even that which (like this) tends to our shame. This parable was put into a song that it might be the more moving and affecting, might be the more easily learned and exactly remembered, and the better transmitted to posterity; and it is an exposition of the song of Moses (Deut. xxxii.), showing that what he then foretold was now fulfilled. Jerome says, Christ the well-beloved did in effect sing this mournful song when he beheld Jerusalem and wept over it (Luke xix. 41), and had reference to it in the parable of the vineyard (Matt. xxi. 33, &c.), only here the fault was in the vines, there in the husbandmen. Here we have,

I. The great things which God had done for the Jewish church and nation. When all the rest of the world lay in common, not cultivated by divine revelation, that was his vineyard, they were his peculiar people. He acknowledged them as his own, set them apart for himself. The soil they were planted in was extraordinary; it was a very fruitful hill, the horn of the son of oil: so it

is in the margin. There was plenty, a cornucopia; and there was dainty: they did there eat the fat and drink the sweet, and so were furnished with abundance of good things to honour God with in sacrifices and free-will offerings. The advantages of our situation will be brought into the account another day. Observe further what God did for this vineyard. 1. He fenced it, took it under his special protection, kept it night and day under his own eye, lest any should hurt it, *ch. xxvii. 2, 3*. If they had not themselves thrown down their fence, no inroad could have been made upon them, *Ps. cxxv. 2; cxxi. 4*. 2. He gathered the stones out of it, that, as nothing from without might damage it, so nothing within might obstruct its fruitfulness. He professed his grace to take away the stony heart. 3. He planted it with the choicest vine, set up a pure religion among them gave them a most excellent law, instituted ordinances very proper for the keeping up of their acquaintance with God, *Jer. ii. 21*. 4. He built a tower in the midst of it, either for defence against violence or for the dressers of the vineyard to lodge in; or rather it was for the owner of the vineyard to sit in, to take a view of the vines (*Cant. vii. 12*)—a summer-house. The temple was this tower, about which the priests lodged, and where God promised to meet his people, and gave them the tokens of his presence among them and pleasure in them. 5. He made a wine-press therein, set up his altar, to which the sacrifices, as the fruits of the vineyard, should be brought.

II. The disappointment of his just expectations from them: *He looked that it should bring forth grapes*, and a great deal of reason he had for that expectation. Note, God expects vineyard-fruit from those that enjoy vineyard-privileges, not leaves only, as *Mark xi. 13*. A bare profession, though ever so green, will not serve: there must be more than buds and blossoms. Good purposes and good beginnings are good things, but not enough; there must be fruit, a good heart and a good life, vineyard fruit, thoughts and affections, words and actions, agreeable to the Spirit, which is the fatness of the vineyard (*Gal. v. 22, 23*), *answerable to the ordinances*, which are the dressings of the vineyard, acceptable to God, the Lord of the vineyard, and fruit according to the season. Such fruit as this God expects from us, grapes, the fruit of the vine, with which they honour God and man (*Judg. ix. 13*); and his expectations are neither high nor hard, but righteous and very reasonable. Yet see how his expectations are frustrated: *It brought forth wild grapes*; not only no fruit at all, but bad fruit, worse than none, grapes of Sodom, *Deut. xxxii. 32*. 1. Wild grapes are the fruits of the corrupt nature, fruit according to the crabstock, not according to the engrafted branch,

from the root of bitterness, *Heb. xii*. Where grace does not work corruption. 2. Wild grapes are hypocritical performances in religion, that look like grapes, are sour or bitter, and are so far from pleasing to God that they are provoking as theirs mentioned in *ch. i. 11*. Coufeit graces are wild grapes.

III. An appeal to themselves upon the whole matter God must be justified and they condemned, *v. 3, 4*. Now the case is plainly stated: *O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah! I pray you, betoixt me and my vineyard.* This implies that God was blamed about it. There was a controversy between them and him; but the equity was so plain on his side that he could venture to put the question of the controversy to their own consciences. "Let any inhabitant of Jerusalem, any man of Judah, that has been under the use of his reason and a common sense of equity and justice, speak his mind impartially in this matter." Here is a challenge any man to show, 1. Any instance where God had been wanting to them: *could have been done more to my vine than that I have not done in it?* He speaks of the external means of fruitfulness, and as might be expected from the dresser of the vineyard, from whom it is not required that he should change the nature of the vine. *Ought to have been done more?* so it might be read. They had every thing requisite for instruction and direction in their duty, quickening them to it and putting the law upon the mind of it. No inducements were wanted to persuade them to it, but all arguments were used that were proper to work upon hope or fear; and they had all opportunities they could desire for the performance of their duty, the new moons, the sabbaths, and solemn feasts; they had the scriptures, the lively oracles, a starry ministry in the priests and Levites, but what was extraordinary in the prophet. No nation had statutes and judgments so righteous. 2. Nor could any tolerable excuse be offered for their walking thus contrary to God. "Wherefore, what reason can be given why it should bring forth wild grapes, when I looked for grapes?" The wickedness of those that profess religion, and enjoy the means of grace, is the most unreasonable unaccountable thing in the world, and the whole blame of it lies upon the sinners themselves. "If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it, and not have a word to say for thyself in judgment of the great day." God will have his own ways equal and the sinner's unequal.

IV. Their doom read, and a righteous sentence passed upon them for their conduct towards God (*v. 5, 6*): "And go to, since nothing can be offered in excuse of the crime or arrest of the judgment,

you what I am now determined to do to my vineyard. I will be vexed and troubled with it more; since it will be good for nothing, *it shall be good for nothing*: in short, it shall cease to be a vineyard, and be turned into wilderness: the church of the Jews such incurthed: their charter shall be taken away, and they shall become *to-amid—unt people*." 1. "They shall no longer be inguished as a peculiar people, but be had common: *I will take away the hedge thereof*, and then it will soon be eaten up and be as bare as other ground." They mingled with the nations and therefore were easily scattered among them. 2. "They shall no longer be protected as God's people, but left exposed. God will not only let the wall to go to decay, but he will take it down, will remove all their defences from them, and then they will become an prey to their enemies, who have long waited for an opportunity to do them a mischief, and will now tread them down and trample upon them." 3. "They shall no longer have the face of a vineyard, the form or shape of a church and commonwealth, but shall be levelled and laid waste." This is fulfilled when *Jerusalem for their sakes is ploughed as a field*, Mic. iii. 12. 4. No more pains shall be taken with them, no magistrates or ministers, the dressers and keepers of their vineyard; it shall not be pruned nor digged, but every thing shall be wild, and nothing shall come up but thorns and thorns, the products of sin and curse," Gen. iii. 18. When errors and corruptions, vice and immorality, go without check or control, no testimony borne against them, no rebuke given them or reproof put upon them, the vineyard is unpruned, is not dressed, or ridged; and then it will soon be like the vineyard of the vineyard of understanding, all grown over with thorns. 5. "That which completes woe is that the dews of heaven shall be withheld; he that has the key of the clouds shall command them that they rain no rain on it, and that alone is sufficient to turn it into a desert." Note, God, in a way of righteous judgment, denies his grace to those that have long received it in vain. The end of all is that those who would not bring forth good fruit should bring forth none. The curse of barrenness is the punishment of the sin of barrenness, as Mark xi. 14. It had its partial accomplishment in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, but full accomplishment in the final rejection of the Jews, and has its frequent accomplishment in the departure of God's Spirit from those persons who have long resisted and striven against him, and the refusal of his gospel from those places that have been long a reproach to it, while it has been an honour to them. It is no loss to him to lay his vineyard waste; for he can, if he please, turn a wilderness into a

fruitful field; and, when he does thus disannex a vineyard, it is but as he did by the garden of Eden, which, when man had by sin forfeited his place in it, was soon brought into a common soil.

V. The explanation of this parable, or a key to it, is in v. 7, where we are told, 1. What is meant by the vineyard (it is the *house of Israel*, the body of the people, incorporated in one church and commonwealth), and what by the vines, the pleasant plants, the plants of God's pleasure, which he had been pleased in and delighted in doing good to: they are the *men of Judah*; these he had dealt graciously with, and from them he expected suitable returns. 2. What is meant by the grapes that were expected and the wild grapes that were produced: *He looked for judgment and righteousness*, that the people should be honest in all their dealings and the magistrates should strictly administer justice. This might reasonably be expected among a people that had such excellent laws and rules of justice given them (Deut. iv. 8); but the fact was quite otherwise. Instead of judgment there was the cruelty of the oppressors, and instead of righteousness the cry of the oppressed. Every thing was carried by clamour and noise, and not by equity and according to the merits of the cause. It is sad with a people when wickedness has usurped the place of judgment, Eccl. iii. 16. It is very sad with a soul when instead of the grapes of humility, meekness, patience, love, and contempt of the world, which God looks for, there are the wild grapes of pride, passion, discontent, malice, and contempt of God—instead of the grapes of praying and praising, the wild grapes of cursing and swearing, which are a great offence to God. Some of the prophets apply this to the Jews in Christ's time, among whom God looked for righteousness (that is, that they should receive and embrace Christ), but behold a cry, that cry, *Crucify him, crucify him*.

8 Woe unto them that join house to house, *that lay field to field*, till *there be no place*, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth! 9 In mine ears *said the Lord of hosts*, Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, *even great and fair*, without inhabitant. 10 Yea, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and the seed of an homer shall yield an ephah. 11 Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, *that they may follow strong drink*: that they continue until night, *till wine inflame them*! 12 And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard

not the work of the LORD, neither consider the operation of his hands. 13 Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because *they have* no knowledge: and their honourable men *are* famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst. 14 Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it. 15 And the mean man shall be brought down, and the mighty man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled: 16 But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness. 17 Then shall the lambs feed after their manner, and the waste places of the fat ones shall strangers eat.

The world and the flesh are the two great enemies that we are in danger of being overpowered by; yet we are in no danger if we do not ourselves yield to them. Eagerness of the world, and indulgence of the flesh, are the two sins against which the prophet, in God's name, here denounces woes. These were sins which then abounded among the men of Judah, some of the wild grapes they brought forth (v. 4), and for which God threatens to bring ruin upon them. They are sins which we have all need to stand upon our guard against and dread the consequences of.

I. Here is a woe to those who set their hearts upon the wealth of the world, and place their happiness in that, and increase it to themselves by indirect and unlawful means (v. 8), who *join house to house and lay field to field, till there be no place, no room for any body to live by them*. If they could succeed, they would be placed alone in the midst of the earth, would monopolize possessions and preferments, and engross all profits and employments to themselves. Not that it is a sin for those who have a house and a field, if they have wherewithal, to purchase another; but

1. Their fault is, (1.) That they are inordinate in their desires to enrich themselves, and make it their whole care and business to raise an estate, as if they had nothing to mind, nothing to seek, nothing to do, in this world, but that. They never know when they have enough, but the more they have the more they would have; and, like the daughters of the horseleech, they cry, *Give, give*. They cannot enjoy what they have, nor dogood with it, but are constantly contriving

and studying to make it more. They must have variety of houses, a winter-house, and a summer-house, and if another man's house or field lie convenient to theirs, as Naboth's vineyard to Ahab's, they must have that too, or they cannot be easy. (2.) That they are herein careless of others, nay, and injurious to them. They would live so as to let nobody live but themselves. So that their insatiable covetings may be gratified they care not what becomes of all about them, what encroachments they make upon their neighbours' rights, what hardships they put upon those that they have power over or advantage against, nor what base and wicked arts they use to heap up treasure to themselves. They would swell so big as to fill all space, and yet are still unsatisfied (Eccl. v. 10), as Alexander, who, when he fancied he had conquered the world, wept because he had not another world to conquer. *Deficiente terrâ, non impletur avaritia*—*If the whole earth were monopolized, avarice would thirst for more*. What! will you be placed alone in the midst of the earth? (so some read it); will you be so foolish as to desire it, when we have so much need or the service of others and so much comfort in their society? Will you be so foolish as to expect that the earth shall be forsaken for us (Job xviii. 4), when it is by multitudes that the earth is to be replenished? *An propter vos solos tanta terra creata est?—Was the wide world created merely for you* Lyra.

2. That which is threatened as the punishment of this sin is that neither the houses nor the fields they were thus greedy of should turn to any account, v. 9, 10. God whispered it to the prophet in his ear, as he speaks in a like case (ch. xxii. 14): *It was revealed in my ears by the Lord of hosts* (as God told Samuel a thing in his ear, 1 Sam. ix. 15); he thought he heard it still sounding in his ears; but he proclaimed it, as he ought, *upon the house-tops*, Matt. x. 27. (1.) That the houses they were so fond of should be untenanted, should stand long empty, and so should yield them no rent, and go out of repair: *Many houses shall be desolate*, the people that should dwell in them, being cut off by sword, famine, or pestilence, or carried into captivity; or trade being dead, and poverty coming upon the country like an armed man, those that had been housekeepers were forced to become lodgers, or shift for themselves elsewhere. Even great and fair houses, that would invite tenants, and (there being a scarcity of tenants) might be taken at low rates, shall stand empty without inhabitants. God created not the earth in vain; *he formed it to be inhabited*, ch. xlv. 18. But men's projects are often frustrated, and what they frame answer not the intention. We have a saying, *Tha fools build houses for wise men to live in* but sometimes, as the event proves, they

are built for no man to live in. God has many ways to empty the most populous cities. (2.) That the fields they were so fond of should be unfruitful (*v. 10*): *Ten acres of vineyard shall yield only such a quantity of grapes as will make but one bath of wine* (which was about eight gallons), *and the seed of a homer, a bushel's sowing of ground, shall yield but an ephah*, which was the tenth part of a homer; so that through the barrenness of the ground, or the unseasonableness of the weather, they should not have more than a tenth part of their seed again. Note, Those that set their hearts upon the world will justly be disappointed in their expectations from it.

II. Here is a woe to those that dote upon the pleasures and delights of sense, *v. 11, 12*. Sensuality ruins men as certainly as worldliness and oppression. As Christ pronounced a woe against those that are rich, so also against those that laugh now and are full (*Luke vi. 24, 25*), and fare sumptuously, *Luke xvi. 19*. Observe,

1. Who the sinners are against whom this woe is denounced. (1.) They are such as are given to drink; they make drinking their business, have their hearts upon it, and overcharge themselves with it. They rise early to follow strong drink, as husbandmen and tradesmen do to follow their employments; as if they were afraid of losing time from that which is the greatest misspending of time. Whereas commonly those that are drunken are drunken in the night, when they have despatched the business of the day, these neglect business, abandon it, and give up themselves to the service of the flesh; for they sit at their cups all day, *and continue till night, till wine inflame them*—inflame their lusts (chambering and wantonness follow upon rioting and drunkenness)—inflame their passions; for who but such have *contentions and wounds without cause*? *Prov. xxiii. 29—35*. They make a perfect trade of drinking; nor do they seek the shelter of the night for this work of darkness, as men ashamed of it, but *count it a pleasure to riot in the day-time*. See *2 Pet. ii. 13*. (2.) They are such as are given to mirth. They have their feasts, and they are so merrily disposed that they cannot dine or sup without music, musical instruments of all sorts, like David (*Amos vi. 5*), like Solomon (*Eccl. ii. 8*); *the harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe*, must accompany the wine, that every sense may be gratified to a nicety; they *take the timbrel and harp*, *Job xxi. 12*. The use of music is lawful in itself; but when it is excessive, when we set our hearts upon it, misspend time in it, so that it crowds our spiritual and divine pleasures and draws away the heart from God, then it turns into sin to us. (3.) They are such as never give their mind to any thing that is serious: *They regard not the work of the Lord*; they observe not his power, wisdom, and good-

ness, in those creatures which they abuse and subject to vanity, nor the bounty of his providence in giving them those good things which they make the food and fuel of their lusts. God's judgments have already seized them, and they are under the tokens of his displeasure, but they regard not; they consider not the hand of God in all these things; his hand is lifted up, but they will not see, because they will not disturb themselves in their pleasures nor think what God is doing with them.

2. What the judgments are which are denounced against them, and in part executed. It is here foretold, (1.) That they should be dislodged; the land should spue out these drunkards (*v. 13*): *My people* (so they called themselves, and were proud of it) have therefore *gone into captivity*, are as sure to go as if they were gone already, *because they have no knowledge*; how should they have knowledge when by their excessive drinking they make sots and fools of themselves? They set up for wits; but because they regard not God's controversy with them, nor take any care to make their peace with him, they may truly be said to have no knowledge; and the reason is because they will have none; they are inconsiderate and wilful, and are therefore destroyed for lack of knowledge. (2.) That they should be impoverished, and come to want that which they had wasted and abused to excess: *Even their glory are men of famine*, subject to it and slain by it; and *their multitude are dried up with thirst*. Both the great men and the common people are ready to perish for want of bread and water. This is the effect of the failure of the corn (*v. 10*), for *the king himself is served of the field*, *Eccl. v. 9*. And when the vintage fails the drunkards are called upon to weep, because *the new wine is cut off from their mouth* (*Joel i. 5*), and not so much because now they want it as because when they had it they abused it. It is just with God to make men want that for necessity which they have abused to excess. (3.) That multitudes should be cut off by famine and sword (*v. 14*). *Therefore hell has enlarged herself*. Tophet, the common burying-place, proves too little; so many are there to be buried that they shall be forced to enlarge it. The grave has opened her mouth without measure, *never saying, It is enough*, *Prov. xxx. 15, 16*. It may be understood of the place of the damned; luxury and sensuality fill those regions of darkness and horror; there those are tormented who made a god of their belly, *Luke xvi. 25*; *Phil. iii. 19*. (4.) That they should be humbled and abased, and all their honours laid in the dust. This will be done effectually by death and the grave: *Their glory shall descend*, not only to the earth, but into it; it shall not *descend after them* (*Ps. xlix. 17*), to stand

them in any stead on the other side death, but it shall die and be buried with them—poor glory, which will thus wither! Did they glory in their numbers? Their multitude shall go down to the pit, Ezek. xxxi. 18; xxxii. 32. Did they glory in the figure they made? Their pomp shall be at an end; their shouts with which they triumphed, and were attended. Did they glory in their mirth? Death will turn it into mourning; he that rejoices and revels, and never knows what it is to be serious, shall go thither where there are weeping and wailing. Thus the mean man and the mighty man meet together in the grave and under mortifying judgments. Let a man be ever so high, death will bring him low—ever so mean, death will bring him lower, in the prospect of which the eyes of the lofty should now be humbled, v. 15. It becomes those to look low that must shortly be laid low.

3. What the fruit of these judgments shall be.

(1.) God shall be glorified, v. 16. He that is the Lord of hosts, and the holy God, shall be exalted and sanctified in the judgment and righteousness of these dispensations. His justice must be owned in bringing those low that exalted themselves; and herein he is glorified, [1.] As a God of irresistible power. He will herein be exalted as the Lord of hosts, that is able to break the strongest, humble the proudest, and tame the most unruly. Power is not exalted but in judgment. It is the honour of God that, though he has a mighty arm, yet *judgment and justice are always the habitation of his throne*, Ps. lxxxix. 13, 14. [2.] As a God of unspotted purity. He that is holy, infinitely holy, shall be sanctified (that is, shall be owned and declared to be holy) in the righteous punishment of proud men. Note, When proud men are humbled the great God is honoured, and ought to be honoured by us.

(2.) Good people shall be relieved and succoured (v. 17): *Then shall the lambs feed after their manner; the meek ones of the earth, who followed the Lamb, who were persecuted and put into fear by those proud oppressors, shall feed quietly, feed in the green pastures, and there shall be none to make them afraid. See Ezek. xxxiv. 14. When the enemies of the church are cut off then have the churches rest. They shall feed at their pleasure; so some read it. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth, and delight themselves in abundant peace. They shall feed according to their order or capacity* (so others read it), as they are able to hear the word, that bread of life.

(3.) The country shall be laid waste, and become a prey to the neighbours: *The waste places of the fat ones, the possessions of those rich men that lived at their ease, shall be eaten by strangers that were nothing akin to them. In the captivity the*

poor of the land were left for *vine-dressers and husbandmen* (2 Kings xxv. 12); these were the lambs that fed in the pastures of the fat ones, which were laid in common for strangers to eat. When the church of the Jews, those fat ones, was laid waste, the privileges were transferred to the Gentile who had been long strangers, and the lambs of Christ's flock were welcome to them.

18 Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope: 19 They say, Let him make speed, and haste his work, that we may see it: and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it! 20 Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! 21 Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes and prudent in their own sight! 22 Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: 23 Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him! 24 Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. 25 Therefore is the anger of the Lord kindled against his people, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten them: and the hill did tremble, and their carcasses were torn in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. 26 And he will lift up an ensign to the nations from far, and will hiss unto them from the end of the earth, and, behold, they shall come with speed swiftly: 27 None shall be weary nor stumble among them; none shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken: 28 Whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent, their horses' hoofs shall be counted like

int, and their wheels like a whirl-
 ind: 29 Their roaring *shall be*
 ke a lion, they shall roar like young
 ons: yea, they shall roar, and lay
 old of the prey, and shall carry it
 way safe, and none shall deliver it.
 30 And in that day they shall roar
 gainst them like the roaring of the
 ea: and if *one* look unto the land,
 behold darkness and sorrow, and the
 ight is darkened in the heavens
 hereof.

Here are, I. Sins described which will
 ring judgments upon a people: and this
 perhaps is not only a charge drawn up
 against the men of Judah who lived at that
 time, and the particular articles of that
 charge, though it may relate primarily to
 them, but is rather intended for warning to
 all people, in all ages, to take heed of these
 sins, as destructive both to particular per-
 sons and to communities, and exposing men
 to God's wrath and his righteous judgments.
 These are here said to be in a woeful con-
 dition,

1. Who are eagerly set upon sin, and
 violent in their sinful pursuits (v. 18), who
draw iniquity with cords of vanity, who take
 as much pains to sin as the cattle do that
 draw in a team, who put themselves to the
 stretch for the gratifying of their inordinate
 appetites, and, to humour a base lust, offer
 violence to nature itself. They think them-
 selves as sure of compassing their wicked
 project as if they were pulling it towards them
 with strong cart-ropes; but they will find
 themselves disappointed, for they will prove
 cords of vanity, which will break when they
 come to any stress. For the righteous Lord
 will cut in sunder the cords of the wicked,
 Ps. cxxix. 4; Job iv. 8; Prov. xxii. 8.
 They are by long custom and confirmed
 habits so hardened in sin that they cannot
 get clear of it. Those that sin through in-
 firmity are drawn away by sin; those that
 sin presumptuously draw iniquity to them,
 in spite of the oppositions of Providence and
 the checks of conscience. Some by sin
 understand the punishment of sin: they
 null God's judgments upon their own heads,
 as it were, with cart-ropes.

2. Who set the justice of God at defiance,
 and challenge the Almighty to do his worst
 (v. 19): *They say, Let him make speed, and*
hasten his work: this is the same language
 with that of the scoffers of the last days,
 who say, *Where is the promise of his coming?*
 and therefore it is that, like them, they *draw*
iniquity with cords of vanity, are violent and
 daring in sin, and walk after their own lusts,
 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4. (1.) They ridicule the pro-
 phets, and banter them. It is in scorn that
 they call God *the Holy One of Israel*, because
 the prophets used with great veneration to

call him so. (2.) They will not believe the
 revelation of God's wrath from heaven
 against their ungodliness and unrighteous-
 ness; unless they see it executed, they will
 not know it, as if the curse were *brutum ful-*
men—a mere flash, and all the threatenings
 of the word bugbears to frighten fools and
 children. (3.) If God should appear against
 them, as he has threatened, yet they think
 themselves able to make their part good
 with him, and provoke him to jealousy, as
 if they were stronger than he, 1 Cor. x. 22.
 "We have heard his word, but it is all talk;
 let him hasten his work, we shall shift for
 ourselves well enough." Note, Those that
 wilfully persist in sin consider not the power
 of God's anger.

3. Who confound and overthrow the dis-
 tinctions between moral good and evil, who
 call evil good and good evil (v. 20), who not
 only live in the omission of that which is
 good, but condemn it, argue against it, and,
 because they will not practise it themselves,
 run it down in others, and fasten invidious
 epithets upon it—not only do that which is
 evil, but justify it, and applaud it, and re-
 commend it to others as safe and good.
 Note, (1.) Virtue and piety are good, for
 they are light and sweet, they are pleasant
 and right; but sin and wickedness are evil:
 they are darkness, all the fruit of ignorance
 and mistake, and will be bitterness in the
 latter end. (2.) Those do a great deal of
 wrong to God, and religion, and conscience,
 to their own souls, and to the souls of others,
 who misrepresent these, and put false co-
 lours upon them—who call drunkenness good
 fellowship, and covetousness good husban-
 dry, and, when they persecute the people of
 God, think they do him good service—and,
 on the other hand, who call seriousness ill-
 nature, and sober singularity ill-breeding,
 who say all manner of evil falsely concern-
 ing the ways of godliness, and do what they
 can to form in men's minds prejudices
 against them, and this in defiance of evi-
 dence as plain and convincing as that of
 sense, by which we distinguish, beyond con-
 tradiction, between light and darkness, and
 between that which to the taste is sweet and
 that which is bitter.

4. Who though they are guilty of such
 gross mistakes as these have a great opinion
 of their own judgments, and value them-
 selves mightily upon their understanding
 (v. 21): *They are wise in their own eyes*:
 they think themselves able to disprove and
 baffle the reproofs and convictions of God's
 word, and to evade and elude both the searches
 and the reaches of his judgments; they
 think they can outwit Infinite Wisdom and
 countermine Providence itself. Or it may be
 taken more generally: God resists the proud,
 those particularly who are conceited of their
 own wisdom and lean to their own under-
 standing; such must become fools, that they
 may be truly wise, or else, at their end.

they shall appear to be fools before all the world.

5. Who glory in it as a great accomplishment that they are able to bear a great deal of strong liquor without being overcome by it (v. 22), *who are mighty to drink wine*, and use their strength and vigour, not in the service of their country, but in the service of their lusts. Let drunkards know from this scripture that, (1.) They ungratefully abuse their bodily strength, which God has given them for good purposes, and by degrees cannot but weaken it. (2.) It will not excuse them from the guilt of drunkenness that they can drink hard and yet keep their feet. (3.) Those who boast of their drinking down others glory in their shame. (4.) How light soever men make of their drunkenness, it is a sin which will certainly lay them open to the wrath and curse of God.

6. Who, as judges, pervert justice, and go counter to all the rules of equity, v. 23. This follows upon the former; they *drink and forget the law* (Prov. xxxi. 5), and *err through wine* (ch. xxviii. 7), and take bribes, that they may have wherewithal to maintain their luxury. They *justify the wicked for reward*, and find some pretence or other to clear him from his guilt and shelter him from punishment; and they condemn the innocent, and *take away their righteousness from them*, that is, overrule their pleas, deprive them of the means of clearing up their innocency, and give judgment against them. In causes between man and man, might and money would at any time prevail against right and justice; and he who was ever so plainly in the wrong would with a small bribe carry the cause and recover costs. In criminal causes, though the prisoner ever so plainly appeared to be guilty, yet for a reward they would acquit him; if he were innocent, yet if he did not fee them well, nay, if they were feed by the malicious prosecutor, or if they themselves had spleen against him, they would condemn him.

II. The judgments described, which these sins would bring upon them. Let not those expect to live easily who live thus wickedly; for the righteous God will take vengeance, v. 24—30. Here we may observe,

1. How complete this ruin will be, and how necessarily and unavoidably it will follow upon their sins. He had compared this people to a vine (v. 7), well fixed, and which, it was hoped, would be flourishing and fruitful; but the grace of God towards it was received in vain, and then the root became rottenness, being dried up from beneath, and the blossom would of course blow off as dust, as a light and worthless thing, Job xviii. 16. Sin weakens the strength, the root, of a people, so that they are easily rooted up; it defaces the beauty, the blossoms, of a people, and takes away the hopes of fruit. The sin of unfruit-

fulness is punished with the plague of unfruitfulness. Sinners make themselves a stubble and chaff, combustible matter, proper fuel to the fire of God's wrath, which then of course devours and consumes them *as the fire devours the stubble*, and nobody can hinder it, or cares to hinder it. Chaff is consumed, unhelped and unpitied.

2. How just the ruin will be: *Because they have cast away the law of the Lord their hosts*, and would not have him to reign over them; and, as the law of Moses was rejected and thrown off, so the word of the Holy One of Israel by his servants the prophets, putting them in mind of his law and calling them to obedience, was despised and disregarded. God does not reject men for every transgression of his law and word; but, when his word is despised and his law cast away, what can they expect but that God should utterly abandon them?

3. Whence this ruin should come (v. 25) it is destruction from the Almighty. (1.) The justice of God appoints it; for that is *the anger of the Lord* which is *kindle against his people*, his necessary vindication of the honour of his holiness and authority. (2.) The power of God effects it: *He has stretched forth his hand against them*. The hand which had many a time been stretched out for them against their enemies is now stretched out against them at full length and in its full vigour; and *who knows the power of his anger?* Whether they are sensible of it or no, it is God that has smitten them, has blasted their vine and made it wither.

4. The consequences and continuance of this ruin. When God comes forth in wrath against a people the hills tremble, fear seizes even their great men, who are strong and high, the earth shakes under men and is ready to sink; and as this feels dreadful (what does more so than an earthquake?) so what sight can be more frightful than the carcasses of men torn with dogs, or *thrown as dung* (so the margin reads it) *in the midst of the streets?* This intimates that great multitudes should be slain, not only soldiers in the field of battle, but the inhabitants of their cities put to the sword in cold blood, and that the survivors should neither have hands nor hearts to bury them. This is very dreadful, and yet such is the merit of sin that, *for all this, God's anger is not turned away*; that fire will burn as long as there remains any of the stubble and chaff to be fuel for it; and *his hand*, which he stretched forth against his people to smite them, because they do not by prayer take hold of it, nor by reformation submit themselves to it, *is stretched out still*.

5. The instruments that should be employed in bringing this ruin upon them it should be done by the incursions of a foreign enemy, that should lay all waste. No particular enemy is named, and there

are we are to take it as a prediction of all the several judgments of this kind which God brought upon the Jews, Sennacherib's invasion soon after, and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans first and at last by the Romans; and I think it is to be looked upon also as a threatening of the like desolation of those countries which harbour and countenance those sins mentioned in the foregoing verses; it is an exposition of those woes. When God designs the ruin of a provoking people,

(1.) He can send a great way off for instruments to be employed in effecting it; he can raise forces from afar, and summon them from the end of the earth to attend his service, *v. 26.* Those who know him not are made use of to fulfil his counsel, when, by reason of their distance, they can scarcely be supposed to have any ends of their own to serve. If God set up his standard, he can incline men's hearts to enlist themselves under it, though perhaps they know not why or wherefore. When the Lord of hosts is pleased to make a general muster of the forces he has at his command, he has a great army in an instant, *Joel ii. 2, 11.* He needs not sound a trumpet, nor beat a drum, to give them notice or to animate them; no, he does but hiss to them, or rather whistle to them, and that is enough; they hear that, and that puts courage into them. Note, God has all the creatures at his beck.

(2.) He can make them come into the service with incredible expedition: *Behold, they shall come with speed swiftly.* Note, [1.] Those who will do God's work must not loiter, must not linger, nor shall they when his time has come. [2.] Those who defy God's judgments will be ashamed of their insolence when it is too late; they are said scornfully (*v. 19.*) *Let him make speed, let him hasten his work, and they shall find, to their terror and confusion, that he will; in one hour has the judgment come.*

(3.) He can carry them on in the service with amazing forwardness and fury. This is described here in very elegant and lofty expressions, *v. 27—30.* [1.] Though their marches be very long, yet *none among them shall be weary*; so desirous shall they be to engage that they shall forget their weariness, and make no complaints of it. [2.] Though the way be rough, and perhaps embarrassed by the usual policies of war, yet none among them shall *stumble*, but all the difficulties in their way shall easily be got over. [3.] Though they be forced to keep constant watch, yet *none shall slumber nor sleep*, so intent shall they be upon their work, in prospect of having the plunder of the city for their pains. [4.] They shall not desire any rest or relaxation; they shall not put off their clothes, nor *loose the girdle of their loins*, but shall always have their belts on and swords by their sides. [5.] They shall not meet with the least hindrance to retard their march or

oblige them to halt; not a *latchet of their shoes shall be broken* which they must stay to mend, as *Josh. ix. 13.* [6.] Their arms and ammunition shall all be fixed, and in good posture; *their arrows sharp, to wound deep, and all their bows bent, none unstrung*, for they expect to be soon in action. [7.] Their horses and chariots of war shall all be fit for service; their horses so strong, so hardy, that *their hoofs shall be like flint*, far from being beaten, or made tender, by their long march; and the wheels of their chariots not broken, or battered, or out of repair, but swift like a whirlwind, turning round so strongly upon their axle-trees. [8.] All the soldiers shall be bold and daring (*v. 29.*): *Their roaring, or shouting, before a battle, shall be like a lion, who with his roaring animates himself, and terrifies all about him.* Those who would not hear the voice of God speaking to them by his prophets, but stopped their ears against their charms, shall be made to hear the voice of their enemies roaring against them and shall not be able to turn a deaf ear to it. *They shall roar like the roaring of the sea in a storm; it roars and threatens to swallow up, as the lion roars and threatens to tear in pieces.* [9.] There shall not be the least prospect of relief or succour. The enemy shall come in like a flood, and there shall be none to lift up a standard against him. He shall seize the prey, and none shall deliver it, none shall be able to deliver it, nay, none shall so much as dare to attempt the deliverance of it, but shall give it up for lost. Let the distressed look which way they will, every thing appears dismal; for, if God frown upon us, how can any creature smile? *First, Look round to the earth, to the land, to that land that used to be a land of light and the joy of the whole earth, and behold darkness and sorrow, all frightful, all mournful, nothing hopeful. Secondly, Look up to heaven, and there the light is darkened, where one would expect to have found it. If the light is darkened in the heavens, how great is that darkness! If God hide his face, no marvel the heavens hide theirs and appear gloomy, Job xxxiv. 29. It is our wisdom, by keeping a good conscience, to keep all clear between us and heaven, that we may have light from above even when clouds and darkness are round about us.*

CHAP. VI.

Hitherto, it should seem, Isaiah had prophesied as a candidate, having only a virtual and tacit commission; but here we have him (if I may so speak) solemnly ordained and set apart to the prophetic office by a more express or explicit commission, as his work grew more upon his hands: or perhaps, having seen little success of his ministry, he began to think of giving it up; and therefore God saw fit to renew his commission here in this chapter, in such a manner as might excite and encourage his zeal and industry in the execution of it, though he seemed to labour in vain. In this chapter we have, I. A very awful vision which Isaiah saw of the glory of God (*ver. 1—4.*), the terror it put him into (*ver. 5.*), and the relief given him against that terror by an assurance of the pardon of his sins, *ver. 6, 7.* II. A very awful commission which Isaiah received to go as a prophet, in God's name (*ver. 8.*), by his preaching to harden the impenitent in sin and ripen them for ruin (*ver. 9—12.*), yet with a reservation of mercy for a remnant

Ver. 13. And it was as to an evangelical prophet that these things were shown him and said to him.

IN the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. **2** Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. **3** And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the Lord of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his glory. **4** And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

The vision which Isaiah saw when he was, as is said of Samuel, *established to be a prophet of the Lord* (1 Sam. iii. 20), was intended, **1.** To confirm his faith, that he might himself be abundantly satisfied of the truth of those things which should afterwards be made known to him. Thus God opened the communications of himself to him; but such visions needed not to be afterwards repeated upon every revelation. Thus God appeared at first as a God of glory to Abraham (Acts vii. 2), and to Moses, Exod. iii. 2. Ezekiel's prophecies, and St. John's, begin with visions of the divine glory. **2.** To work upon his affections, that he might be possessed with such a reverence of God as would both quicken him and fix him to his service. Those who are to teach others the knowledge of God ought to be well acquainted with him themselves.

The vision is dated, for the greater certainty of it. It was *in the year that king Uzziah died*, who had reigned, for the most part, as prosperously and well as any of the kings of Judah, and reigned very long, above fifty years. About the time that he died Isaiah saw this vision of God upon a throne; for when the breath of princes goes forth, and they return to their earth, this is our comfort, that *the Lord shall reign for ever*, Ps. cxlvi. 3, 4, 10. Israel's king dies, but Israel's God still lives. From the mortality of great and good men we should take occasion to look up with an eye of faith to the King eternal, immortal. King Uzziah died under a cloud, for he was shut up as a leper till the day of his death. As the lives of princes have their periods, so their glory is often eclipsed; but, as God is everliving, so his glory is everlasting. King Uzziah dies in an hospital, but the King of kings still sits upon his throne.

What the prophet here saw is revealed to us, that we, mixing faith with that revelation, may in it, as in a glass, behold the glory of the Lord; let us turn aside therefore, and see this great sight with humble reverence.

I. See God upon his throne, and the throne *high and lifted up*, not only above other thrones, as it transcends them, but over other thrones, as it rules and commands them. Isaiah saw not *Jehovah*, the essence of God (no man has seen the or can see it), but *Adonai*—his dominion. He saw the Lord Jesus; so this vision explained John xii. 41, that Isaiah now saw Christ's glory and spoke of him, which is an incontestable proof of the divinity of our Saviour. He it is who when, after his resurrection, he sat down on the right hand of God, did but sit down where he was before. John xvii. 5. See the rest of the Eternal Mind: Isaiah *saw the Lord sitting*, Ps. xxi. 10. See the sovereignty of the Eternal Monarch: *he sits upon a throne*—a throne of glory, before which we must worship, a throne of government, under which we must be subject,—and a throne of grace, to which we may come boldly. This throne is high and lifted up above all competition and contradiction.

II. See his temple, his church on earth filled with the manifestations of his glory. His throne being erected at the door of the temple (as princes sat in judgment at the gates), *his train*, the skirts of his robe, *filled the temple*, the whole world (for it is all God's temple, and, as the heaven is his throne, so the earth is his footstool), rather the church, which is filled, enriched and beautified with the tokens of God's special presence.

III. See the bright and blessed attendants on his throne, in and by whom his glory is celebrated and his government served (v. 2): *Above the throne*, as it were hovering about it, or nigh to the throne bowing before it, with an eye to it, *the seraphim stood*, the holy angels, who are called *seraphim*—burners; for he *makes him ministers a flaming fire*, Ps. civ. 4. They burn in love to God, and zeal for his glory, and against sin, and he makes use of them as instruments of his wrath when he is a consuming fire to his enemies. Whether there were only two or four, or (as I rather think) an innumerable company of angels, that Isaiah saw, is uncertain; see Dan. vii. 10. Not that it is the glory of the angels that they are seraphim, have heat proportionable to the light, have abundance, not only of divine knowledge, but of holy love. Special notice is taken of their wings (and of no other part of their appearance), because of the use they made of them, which is designed for instruction to us. They had *each of them six wings*, not stretched upwards (as those who Ezekiel saw, ch. i. 11), but, **1.** Four were made use of for covering, as the wings of a fowl, sitting, are; with the two upper wings, next the head, they covered the faces, and with the two lowest wings they covered their feet, or lower parts. This bespeaks their great humility and reverence.

in their attendance upon God, for he is greatly feared in the assembly of those saints, Ps. lxxxix. 7. They not only cover their feet, those members of the body which are less honourable (1 Cor. xii. 23), but even their faces. Though angels' faces, doubtless, are much fairer than those of the children of men (Acts vi. 15), yet, in the presence of God, they cover them, because they cannot bear the dazzling lustre of the divine glory, and because, being conscious of an infinite distance from the divine perfection, they are ashamed to show their faces before the holy God, who *charges even his angels with folly* if they should offer to converse with him, Job iv. 18. If angels be thus reverent in their attendance on God, with what godly fear should we approach his throne! Else we do not the will of God as he the angels do it. Yet Moses, when he went into the mount with God, took the veil from off his face. See 2 Cor. iii. 18. 2. Two were made use of for flight; when they are sent on God's errands they fly swiftly (Dan. ix. 21), more swiftly with their own wings than if they flew on the wings of the wind. This teaches us to do the work of God with cheerfulness and expedition. Do angels come upon the wing from heaven to earth, to minister for our good, and shall not we soar upon the wing from earth to heaven, to share with them in their glory? Luke xx. 36.

IV. Hear the anthem, or song of praise, which the angels sing to the honour of him that sits on the throne, v. 3. Observe,

1. How this song was sung. With zeal and fervency—they *cried* aloud; and with unanimity—they *cried one to another*, or one with another; they sang alternately, but in concert, and without the least jarring voice to interrupt the harmony.

2. What the song was; it is the same with that which is sung by the four living creatures, Rev. iv. 8. Note, Praising God always was, and will be to eternity, the work of heaven, and the constant employment of blessed spirits above, Ps. lxxxiv. 4. Note further, The church above is the same as it praises; there is no change of times or notes there. Two things the seraphim here give God the praise of:—

(1.) His infinite perfections in himself. There is one of his most glorious titles raised: he is the *Lord of hosts*, of their hosts, of all hosts; and one of his most glorious attributes, his holiness, without which his being the Lord of hosts (or, as it is in the parallel place, Rev. iv. 8, the *Lord God Almighty*) could not be so much as it is the matter of our joy and praise; for power, without purity to guide it, would be a terror to mankind. None of all the divine attributes is so celebrated in scripture as this. God's power was spoken twice (Ps. lxii. 11), but his holiness thrice, *Holy, holy, holy*. This bespeaks, [1.] The zeal and fervency

of the angels in praising God; they even want words to express themselves, and therefore repeat the same again. [2.] The particular pleasure they take in contemplating the holiness of God; this is a subject they love to dwell upon, to harp upon, and are loth to leave. [3.] The superlative excellency of God's holiness, above that of the purest creatures. He is holy, thrice holy, infinitely holy, originally, perfectly, and eternally so. [4.] It may refer to the three persons in the Godhead, Holy Father, Holy Son, and Holy Spirit (for it follows, v. 8, *Who will go for us?*) or perhaps to *thine* which was, and is, and is to come; for that title of God's honour is added to this song. Rev. iv. 8. Some make the angels here to applaud the equity of that sentence which God was now about to pronounce upon the Jewish nation. Herein he was, and is, and will be, holy; his ways are equal.

(2.) The manifestation of these to the children of men: *The earth is full of his glory*, of the glory of his power and purity; for he is holy in all his works, Ps. cxlv. 17. The Jews thought the glory of God should be confined to their land; but it is here intimated that in gospel times (which are pointed to in this chapter) the glory of God should fill all the earth, the glory of his holiness, which is indeed the glory of all his other attributes; this then *filled the temple* (v. 1), but, in the latter days, the earth shall be full of it.

V. Observe the marks and tokens of terror with which the temple was filled, upon this vision of the divine glory, v. 4. 1. The house was *shaken*; not only the door, but even the posts of the door, which were firmly fixed, *moved at the voice of him that cried*, at the voice of God, who called to judgment (Ps. l. 4), at the voice of the angel, who praised him. There are voices in heaven sufficient to drown all the noises of the many waters in this lower world, Ps. xciii. 3, 4. This violent concussion of the temple was an indication of God's wrath and displeasure against the people for their sins; it was an earnest of the destruction of it and the city by the Babylonians first, and afterwards by the Romans; and it was designed to strike an awe upon us. Shall walls and posts tremble before God, and shall not we tremble? 2. The house was *darkened*; it was *filled with smoke*, which was as a *cloud spread upon the face of his throne* (Job xxvi. 9); we cannot take a full view of it, nor order our speech concerning it, by reason of darkness. In the temple above there will be no smoke, but every thing will be seen clearly. There God dwells in light; here he *makes darkness his pavilion*, 2 Chron. vi. 1.

5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine

eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. 6 Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, *which* he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: 7 And he laid *it* upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. 8 Also I heard the voice of the LORD, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here *am* I; send me.

Our curiosity would lead us to enquire further concerning the seraphim, their songs, and their services; but here we leave them, and must attend to what passed between God and his prophet. *Secret things belong not to us*, the secret things of the world of angels, but things revealed to and by the prophets, which concern the administration of God's kingdom among men. Now here we have,

I. The consternation that the prophet was put into by the vision which he saw of the glory of God (v. 5): *Then said I, Woe is me!* I should have said, "Blessed art thou, who hast been thus highly favoured, highly honoured, and dignified, for a time, with the privilege of those glorious beings that *always behold the face of our Father*. Blessed were those eyes which saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and those ears which heard the angels' praises." And, one would think, he should have said, "Happy am I, for ever happy; nothing now shall trouble me, nothing make me blush or tremble;" but, on the contrary, he cries out, "*Woe is me! for I am undone*. Alas for me! I am a gone man; *I shall surely die* (Judges xiii. 22; vi. 22); I am silenced; I am struck dumb, struck dead." Thus Daniel, when he heard the words of the angel, *became dumb*, and there was *no strength, no breath, left in him*, Dan. x. 15, 17. Observe,

1. What the prophet reflected upon in himself which terrified him: "*I am undone* if God deal with me in strict justice, for I have made myself obnoxious to his displeasure, *because I am a man of unclean lips*." Some think he refers particularly to some rash word he had spoken, or to his sinful silence in not reproving sin with the boldness and freedom that were necessary—a sin which God's ministers have too much cause to charge themselves with, and to blush at the remembrance of. But it may be taken more generally: *I am a sinner*; particularly, *I have offended in word*; and who is there that hath not? Jam. iii. 2. We all have reason to bewail it before the Lord, (1.) That we are of unclean lips ourselves; our lips are not consecrated to God; he has not had the *first-fruits of our lips* (Heb. xiii. 15), and therefore they are

counted common and unclean, *uncircumcised lips*, Exod. vi. 30. Nay, they have been polluted with sin. We have spoken the language of an unclean heart, that evil communication which corrupts good manner, and whereby many have been defiled. We are unworthy and unmeet to take God's name into our lips. With what a pure heart did the angels praise God! "But," says the prophet, "I cannot praise him so, *for I am a man of unclean lips*." The best men in the world have reason to be ashamed of themselves, and the best of their service when they come into comparison with the holy angels. The angels had celebrated the purity and holiness of God; and therefore the prophet, when he reflects upon sin, calls it *uncleanliness*; for the sinfulness of sin is in contrariety to the holy nature of God, and upon that account especially it should appear both hateful and frightful to us. The impurity of our lips ought to be the grief of our souls, for by our words we shall be justified or condemned. (2.) That we dwell among those who are so too. We have reason to lament not only that we ourselves are polluted, but that the nature and race of mankind are so; the disease is hereditary and epidemic, which is so far from lessening our guilt that it should rather increase our grief, especially considering that we have not done what we might have done for the cleansing of the pollution of other people's lips; nay, we have rather learned their way and spoken their language as Joseph in Egypt learned the courtier's oath, Gen. xlii. 16. "*I dwell in the midst of a people* who by their impudent sinning are pulling down desolating judgments upon the land, which I, who am a sinner too, may justly expect to be involved in."

2. What gave occasion for these sad reflections at this time: *My eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts*. He saw God's sovereignty to be incontestable—he is the King; and his power irresistible—he is the Lord of hosts. These are comfortable truths to God's people, and yet they ought to strike an awe upon us. Note, A believing sight of God's glorious majesty should affect all with reverence and godly fear. We have reason to be abased in the sense of the infinite distance that there is between us and God, and our own sinfulness and wickedness before him, and to be afraid of his displeasure. We are undone if there be no Mediator between us and this holy God (1 Sam. vi. 20). Isaiah was thus humbled to prepare him for the honour he was now to be called to as a prophet. Note, Those are fittest to be employed for God who are low in their own eyes and are made deep sensible of their own weakness and unworthiness.

II. The silencing of the prophet's fear by the good words, and comfortable words with which the angel answered him, v. 6,

One of the seraphim immediately flew to him, to purify him, and so to pacify him. Note, God has strong consolations ready for holy mourners. Those that humble themselves in penitential shame and fear shall soon be encouraged and exalted; those that are struck down with the visions of God's glory shall soon be raised up again with the visits of his grace; he that tears will heal. Note further, Angels are ministering spirits for the good of the saints, for their spiritual good. Here was one of the seraphim dismissed, for a time, from attending on the throne of God's glory, to be a messenger of his grace to a good man; and so well pleased was he with the office that he came flying to him. To our Lord Jesus himself, in his agony, there appeared an angel from heaven, strengthening him, Luke xxii. 43. Here is, 1. A comfortable sign given to the prophet of the purging away of his sin. The seraph brought a live coal from the altar, and touched his lips with it, not to hurt them, but to heal them—not to cauterize, but to cleanse them; for there were purifications by fire, as well as by water, and the filth of Jerusalem was purged by the spirit of burning, ch. iv. 4. The blessed Spirit works as fire, Matt. iii. 11. The seraph, being himself kindled with a divine fire, put life into the prophet, to make him also zealously affected; for the way to purge the lips from the uncleanness of sin is to fire the soul with the love of God. This live coal was taken from off the altar, either the altar of incense or that of burnt-offerings, for they had both of them fire burning on them continually. Nothing is powerful to cleanse and comfort the soul but what is taken from Christ's satisfaction and the intercession he ever lives to make in the virtue of that satisfaction. It must be a coal from his altar that must put life into us and be our peace; it will not be done with strange fire. 2. An explication of this sign: "*Lo, this has touched thy lips*, to assure thee of this, that *thy iniquity is taken away and thy sin purged*. The guilt of thy sin is removed by pardoning mercy, the guilt of thy tongue-sins. Thy corrupt disposition to sin is removed by renewing grace; and therefore nothing can hinder thee from being accepted with God as a worshipper, in concert with the holy angels, or from being employed for God as a messenger to the children of men." Those only who are thus purged from an evil conscience are prepared to *serve the living God*, Heb. ix. 14. The taking away of sin is necessary to our speaking with confidence and comfort either to God in prayer or from God in preaching; nor are any so fit to display to others the riches and power of gospel-grace as those who have themselves tasted the sweetness and felt the influence of that grace; and those shall have their sin taken away who complain of it as a burden and see themselves in danger of being undone by it.

III. The renewing of the prophet's mission, v. 8. Here is a communication between God and Isaiah about this matter. Those that would assist others in their correspondence with God must not themselves be strangers to it; for how can we expect that God should speak by us if we never heard him speaking to us, or that we should be accepted as the mouth of others to God if we never spoke to him heartily for ourselves? Observe here,

1 The counsel of God concerning Isaiah's mission. God is here brought in, after the manner of men, deliberating and advising with himself: *Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?* God needs not either to be counselled by others or to consult with himself; he knows what he will do; but thus he would show us that there is a counsel in his whole will, and teach us to consider our ways, and particularly that the sending forth of ministers is a work not to be done but upon mature deliberation. Observe, (1.) Who it is that is consulting. It is the Lord God in his glory, whom he saw upon the throne high and lifted up. It puts an honour upon the ministry that, when God would send a prophet to speak in his name, he appeared in all the glories of the upper world. Ministers are the ambassadors of the King of kings; how mean soever they are, he who sends them is great; it is God in three persons (Who will go for us? as Gen. i. 26, *Let us make man*), Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. They all concur, as in the creating, so in the redeeming and governing of man. Ministers are ordained in the same name into which all Christians are baptized. (2.) What the consultation is: *Whom shall I send? And who will go?* Some think this refers to the particular message of wrath against Israel, v. 9, 10. "Who will be willing to go on such a melancholy errand, on which they will go in the bitterness of their souls?" Ezek. iii. 14. But I rather take it more largely for all those messages which the prophet was entrusted to deliver, in God's name, to that people, in which that hardening work was by no means the primary intention, but a secondary effect of them, 2 Cor. ii. 16. *Whom shall I send?* intimating that the business was such as required a choice and well-accomplished messenger, Jer. xlix. 19. God now appeared, attended with holy angels, and yet asks, *Whom shall I send?* For he would send them a prophet from among their brethren, Heb. ii. 17. Note, [1.] It is the unspeakable favour of God to us that he is pleased to send us his mind by men like ourselves, whose terror shall not make us afraid, and who are themselves concerned in the messages they bring. Those who are workers together with God are sinners and sufferers together with us. [2.] It is a rare thing to find one who is fit to go for God, and to carry his messages to

the children of men: *Whom shall I send? Who is sufficient?* Such a degree of courage for God and concern for the souls of men as is necessary to make a man faithful, and withal such an insight into the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven as is necessary to make a man skilful, are seldom to be met with. Such an interpreter of the mind of God is one of a thousand, Job xxxiii. 23. [3.] None are allowed to go for God but those who are sent by him; he will own none, but those whom he appoints, Rom. x. 15. It is Christ's work to put men into the ministry, 1 Tim. i. 12.

2. The consent of Isaiah to it: *Then said I, Here am I; send me.* He was to go on a melancholy errand; the office seemed to go a begging, and every body declined it, and yet Isaiah offered himself to the service. It is an honour to be singular in appearing for God, Judges v. 7. We must not say, "I would go if I thought I should have success;" but, "I will go, and leave the success to God. Here am I; send me." Isaiah had been himself in a melancholy frame (v. 5), full of doubts and fears; but now that he had the assurance of the pardon of his sin the clouds were blown over, and he was fit for service and forward to it. What he fits denotes, (1.) His readiness: "Here am I, a volunteer, not pressed into the service." *Behold me*; so the word is. God says to us, *Behold me* (ch. lxxv. 1), and, *Here I am* (ch. lviii. 9), even before we call; let us say so to him when he does call. (2.) His resolution: "Here I am, ready to encounter the greatest difficulties. *I have set my face as a flint.*" Compare this with ch. l. 4—7. (3.) His referring himself to God: "Send me whither thou wilt; make what use thou pleasest of me. Send me, that is, Lord, give me commission and full instruction; send me, and then, no doubt, thou wilt stand by me." It is a great comfort to those whom God sends that they go for God, and may therefore speak in his name, as having authority, and be assured that he will bear them out.

9 And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. 10 Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. 11 Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, 12 And the LORD have removed men far away, and *there be* a great forsaking in the midst of

the land. 13 But yet in it *shall be* tenth, and *it shall return*, and shall be eaten: as a teil-tree, and as an oak, whose substance *is* in them, when they cast *their leaves*: so the holy seed *shall be* the substance thereof.

God takes Isaiah at his word, and here sends him on a strange errand—to foretell the ruin of his people and even to ripen them for that ruin—to preach that which, by their abuse of it, would be to them a savour of death unto death. And this was to be a type and figure of the state of the Jewish church in the days of the Messiah, when they should obstinately reject the gospel, and should thereupon be rejected of God. These verses are quoted in part, or referred to, six times in the New Testament, which intimates that in gospel times these spiritual judgments would be most frequently inflicted, and though they make the least noise, and come not with observation, yet they are of as great judgments the most dreadful. Isaiah is here given to understand these four things:—

1. That the generality of the people to whom he was sent would turn a deaf ear to his preaching, and wilfully shut their eyes against all the discoveries of the mind and will of God which he had to make to them (v. 9): "Go, and tell this people, this foolish, wretched people, tell them their own, tell them how stupid and sottish they are. Isaiah must preach to them, and they will hear him indeed, but that is all; they will not heed him; they will not understand him; they will not take any pains, nor use that application of mind which is necessary to the understanding of him; they are prejudiced against that which is the true intent and meaning of what he says, and therefore they will not understand him, or pretend they do not. They see indeed (for the vision is made plain on tables, so that he who runs may read it); but they perceive not their own concern in it; it is to them as a tale that is told. Note, There are many who hear the sound of God's word, but do not feel the power of it.

2. That, so far as they would not be made better by his ministry, they should be made worse by it; those that were wilfully blind should be judicially blinded (v. 10). "They will not understand or perceive thee, and therefore thou shalt be instrumental to make their heart fat, senseless, and sensual, and so to make their ears yet more heavy, and to shut their eyes the closer; so that, at length, their recovery and repentance will become utterly impossible; they shall no more see with their eyes the danger they are in, the ruin they are upon the brink of, nor the way of escape from it; they shall no more hear with their ears the warnings and instructions that are given them, nor understand with their heart these things that belong

their peace, so as to be converted from the error of their ways, and thus be healed." Note, (1.) The conversion of sinners is the healing of them. (2.) A right understanding is necessary to conversion. (3.) God sometimes, in a way of righteous judgment, gives men up to blindness of mind and strong delusions, because they would not receive the truth in the love of it, 2 Thess. ii. 10—12. *He that is filthy let him be filthy still.* (4.) Even the word of God oftentimes proves a means of hardening sinners. The evangelical prophet himself makes the heart of this people it, not only as he foretells it, passing this sentence upon them in God's name, and calls them under it, but as his preaching had a tendency to it, rocking some asleep in security (to whom it was a lovely song), and making others more outrageous, to whom it was such a reproach that they were not able to bear it. Some looked upon the word as a privilege, and their convictions were smothered by it (Jer. vii. 4); others looked upon it as a provocation, and their corruptions were exasperated by it.

3. That the consequence of this would be their utter ruin, v. 11, 12. The prophet said nothing to object against the justice of his sentence, nor does he refuse to go upon such an errand, but asks, "*Lord, how long?*" (an abrupt question): "Shall it always be thus? Must I and other prophets always labour in vain among them, and will things never be better?" Or (as should seem by the answer) "Lord, what will it come to at last? What will be in the end hereof?" In answer to this he is told that it should issue in the final destruction of the Jewish church and nation. "When the word of God, especially the word of the gospel, has been thus abused by them, they shall be unchurched, and consequently undone. Their cities shall be uninhabited, and their country houses too; the land shall be unpeopled, desolate with desolation (as it is in the margin), the people who should replenish the houses and cultivate the ground being all cut off by sword, famine, or pestilence, and those who escape with their lives being removed far away into captivity, so that there shall be a great and general forsaking in the midst of the land; that populous country shall become desert, and that glory of the islands shall be abandoned." Note, Spiritual judgments often bring temporal judgments along with them upon persons and places. This was in part fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, when the land, being left desolate, enjoyed her sabbaths seventy years; but, the foregoing predictions being so expressly applied in the New Testament to the Jews in our Saviour's time, doubtless this points at the final destruction of that people by the Romans, in which it had a complete accomplishment, and the effects of it that people and that land remain under to this day.

4. That yet a remnant should be reserved to be the monuments of mercy, v. 13. There was a remnant reserved in the last destruction of the Jewish nation (Rom. xi. 5, *At this present time there is a remnant*); for so it was written here: *But in it shall be a tenth, a certain number, but a very small number in comparison with the multitude that shall perish in their unbelief.* It is that which, under the law, was God's proportion; they shall be consecrated to God as the tithes were, and shall be for his service and honour. Concerning this tithe, this saved remnant, we are here told, (1.) That they shall return (ch. vi. 13; x. 21), shall return from sin to God and duty, shall return out of captivity to their own land. God will turn them, and they shall be turned. (2.) That they shall be eaten, that is, shall be accepted of God as the tithe was, which was meat in God's house, Mal. iii. 10. The saving of this remnant shall be meat to the faith and hope of those that wish well to God's kingdom. (3.) That they shall be like a timber-tree in winter, which has life, though it has no leaves: *As a teil-tree and as an oak, whose substance is in them even when they cast their leaves,* so this remnant, though they may be stripped of their outward prosperity and share with others in common calamities, shall yet recover themselves, as a tree in the spring, and flourish again; though they fall, they shall not be utterly cast down. *There is hope of a tree, though it be cut down, that it will sprout again,* Job xiv. 7. (4.) That this distinguished remnant shall be the stay and support of the public interests. *The holy seed in the soul is the substance of the man; a principle of grace reigning in the heart will keep life there; he that is born of God has his seed remaining in him,* 1 John iii. 9. So the holy seed in the land is the substance of the land, keeps it from being quite dissolved, and bears up the pillars of it, Ps. lxxv. 3. See ch. i. 9. Some read the foregoing clause with this, thus: *As the support at Shallecheth is in the elms and the oaks, so the holy seed is the substance thereof;* as the trees that grow on either side of the causeway (the raised way, or terrace-walk, that leads from the king's palace to the temple (1 Kings x. 5), at the gate of Shallecheth, 1 Chron. xxvi. 16) support the causeway by keeping up the earth, which would otherwise be crumbling away, so the small residue of religious, serious, praying people, are the support of the state, and help to keep things together and save them from going to decay. Some make the holy seed to be Christ. The Jewish nation was therefore saved from utter ruin because out of it, as concerning the flesh, Christ was to come, Rom. ix. 5. *Destroy it not, for that blessing is in it* (ch. lxxv. 8); and, when that blessing had come, it was soon destroyed. Now the consideration of this is designed for the

support of the prophet in his work. Though far the greater part should perish in their unbelief, yet to some his word should be a savour of life unto life. Ministers do not wholly lose their labour if they be but instrumental to save one poor soul.

CHAP. VII.

This chapter is an occasional sermon, in which the prophet sings both of mercy and judgment to those that did not perceive or understand either; he piped unto them, but they danced not, mourned unto them, but they wept not. Here is, I. The consternation that Ahaz was in upon an attempt of the confederate forces of Syria and Israel against Jerusalem, ver. 1, 2. II. The assurance which God, by the prophet, sent him for his encouragement, that the attempt should be defeated and Jerusalem should be preserved, ver. 3—5. III. The confirmation of this by a sign which God gave to Ahaz, when he refused to ask one, referring to Christ, and our redemption by him, ver. 10—16. IV. A threatening of the great desolation that God would bring upon Ahaz and his kingdom by the Assyrians, notwithstanding their escape from this present storm, because they went on still in their wickedness, ver. 17—25. And this is written both for our comfort and for our admonition.

AND it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah; that Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it. 2 And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind. 3 Then said the LORD unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shear-jashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field; 4 And say unto him, Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be fainthearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah. 5 Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against thee, saying, 6 Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal: 7 Thus saith the Lord God, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. 8 For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within three-score and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people. 9 And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.

The prophet Isaiah had his commission renewed in the year that king Uzziah died *ch. vi. 1.* Jotham his son reigned, and reigned well, sixteen years. All that time no doubt, Isaiah prophesied as he was commanded, and yet we have not in this book any of his prophecies dated in the reign of Jotham; but this, which is put first, was in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham. Many excellent useful sermons he preached which were not published and left upon record, for, if all that was memorable had been written, *the world could not have contained the books, John xxi. 25.* Perhaps in the reign of Ahaz, a wicked king, he had no opportunity to preach so much at court as in Jotham's time, and therefore then he wrote the more, for a testimony against them. Here is,

I. A very formidable design laid against Jerusalem by Rezin king of Syria and Pekah king of Israel, two neighbouring potentates who had of late made descents upon Judah severally. At the end of the reign of Jotham, *the Lord began to send against Judah Rezin and Pekah,* 2 Kings xv. 37. But now in the second or third year of the reign of Ahaz, encouraged by their former successes, they entered into an alliance against Judah. Because Ahaz, though he found the sword over his head, began his reign with idolatry. *God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria and of the king of Israel* (2 Chron. xxviii. 5), and a great slaughter they made in his kingdom, *v. 6, 7.* Flushed with this victory, they went up towards Jerusalem the royal city, to war against it, to besiege it, and make themselves masters of it; but it proved in the issue that they could not gain their point. Note, The sin of a land brings foreign invasions upon it and betrays the most advantageous posts and passes to the enemy; and God sometimes makes one wicked nation a scourge to another; but judgment, ordinarily, begins at the house of God.

II. The great distress that Ahaz and his court were in when they received advice of this design: *It was told the house of David* that Syria and Ephraim had signed a league against Judah, *v. 2.* This degenerate royal family is called *the house of David*, to put us in mind of that article of God's covenant with David (Ps. lxxxix. 30—33), *If his children forsake my law, I will chasten their transgression with the rod; but my loving-kindness will I not utterly take away*, which is remarkably fulfilled in this chapter. News being brought that the two armies of Syria and Israel were joined, and had taken the field, the court, the city, and the country, were thrown into consternation: *The heart of Ahaz was moved with fear*, and then no wonder that *the heart of his people was so*, as *the trees of the wood are moved with the wind.* They were tossed and shaken, and put into a great disorder and confusion, were

wavering and uncertain in their counsels, hurried hither and thither, and could not fix in any steady resolution. They yielded to the storm, and gave up all for gone, concluding it in vain to make any resistance. Now that which caused this fright was the sense of guilt and the weakness of their faith. They had made God their enemy, and knew not how to make him their friend, and therefore their fears tyrannised over them; while those whose consciences are kept void of offence, and whose hearts are fixed, trusting in God, need not be afraid of evil tidings; though the earth be removed, yet will not they fear; but the wicked flee at the shaking of a leaf, Lev. xxvi. 36.

III. The orders and directions given to Isaiah to go and encourage Ahaz in his distress; not for his own sake (he deserved to hear nothing from God but words of terror, which might add affliction to his grief); but because he was a son of David and king of Judah. God had kindness for him for his father's sake, who must not be forgotten, and for his people's sake, who must not be abandoned, but would be encouraged if Ahaz were. Observe,

1. God appointed the prophet to meet Ahaz, though he did not send to the prophet to speak with him, nor desire him to enquire of the Lord for him (v. 3): *Go to meet Ahaz*. Note, God is often found of those who seek him not, much more will he be found of those who seek him diligently. He speaks comfort to many who not only are not worthy of it, but do not so much as enquire after it.

2. He ordered him to take his little son with him, because he carried a sermon in his name, *Shear-jashub—A remnant shall return*. The prophets sometimes recorded what they preached in the significant names of their children (as Hos. i. 4, 6, 9); therefore Isaiah's children are said to be *for signs*, ch. viii. 18. This son was so called for the encouragement of those of God's people who were carried captive, assuring them that they should return, at least a remnant of them, which was more than they could pretend to merit: yet at this time God was better than his word; for he took care not only that a remnant should return, but the whole number of those whom the confederate forces of Syria and Israel had taken prisoners, 2 Chron. xxviii. 15.

3. He directed him where he should find Ahaz. He was to meet with him not in the temple, or the synagogue, or royal chapel, but *at the end of the conduit of the upper pool*, where he was, probably with many of his servants about him, contriving how to order the water-works, so as to secure them to the city, or deprive the enemy of the benefit of them (ch. xxii. 9—11; 2 Chron. xxxii. 3, 4), or giving some necessary directions for the fortifying of the city as well as they could; and perhaps finding every thing

in a very bad posture of defence, the conduit out of repair, as well as other things gone to decay, his fears increased, and he was now in greater perplexity than ever; therefore, *Go, meet him there*. Note, God sometimes sends comforts to his people very seasonably, and, what time they are most afraid, encourages them to trust in him.

4. He put words in his mouth, else the prophet would not have known how to bring a message of good to such a bad man, a sinner in Zion, that ought to be afraid; but God intended it for the support of faithful Israelites.

(1.) The prophet must rebuke their fears, and advise them by no means to yield to them, but keep their temper, and preserve the possession of their own souls (v. 4): *Take heed, and be quiet*. Note, In order to comfort there is need of caution; that we may be quiet, it is necessary that we take heed and watch against those things that threaten to disquiet us. "Fear not with this amazement, this fear, that weakens, and has torment; neither let thy heart be tender, so as to melt and fail within thee; but pluck up thy spirits, have a good heart on it, and be courageous; let not fear betray the succours which reason and religion offer for thy support." Note, Those who expect God should help them must help themselves, Ps. xxvii. 14.

(2.) He must teach them to despise their enemies, not in pride, or security, or incogitancy (nothing more dangerous than so to despise an enemy), but in faith and dependence upon God. Ahaz's fear called them two powerful politic princes, for either of whom he was an unequal match, but, if united, he durst not look them in the face, nor make head against them. "No," says the prophet, "they are two tails of smoking firebrands; they are angry, they are fierce, they are furious, as firebrands, as fireballs; and they make one another worse by being in a confederacy, as sticks of fire put together burn the more violently. But they are only smoking firebrands: and where there is smoke there is some fire, but it may be not so much as was feared. Their threatenings will vanish into smoke. Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise (Jer. xli. 17), and Rezin king of Syria but a smoke; and such are all the enemies of God's church, smoking flax, that will soon be quenched. Nay, they are but tails of smoking firebrands, in a manner burnt out already; their force is spent; they have consumed themselves with the heat of their own anger; you may put your foot on them, and tread them out." The two kingdoms of Syria and Israel were now near expiring. Note, The more we have an eye to God as a consuming fire the less reason we shall have to fear men, though they are ever so furious, nay, we shall be able to despise them as smoking firebrands.

(3.) He must assure them that the present

design of these high allies (so they thought themselves) against Jerusalem should certainly be defeated and come to nothing, v. 5—7. [1.] That very thing which Ahaz thought most formidable is made the ground of their defeat—and that was the depth of their designs and the height of their hopes: “*Therefore they shall be baffled and sent back with shame, because they have taken evil counsel against thee, which is an offence to God. These firebrands are a smoke in his nose (ch. lxxv. 5), and therefore must be extinguished.*” *First*, They are very spiteful and malicious, and therefore they shall not prosper. Judah had done them no wrong; they had no pretence to quarrel with Ahaz; but, without any reason, they said, *Let us go up against Judah, and vex it.* Note, Those that are vexatious cannot expect to be prosperous; those that love to do mischief cannot expect to do well. *Secondly*, They are very secure, and confident of success. They will vex Judah by going up against it; yet that is not all: they do not doubt but to make a breach in the wall of Jerusalem wide enough for them to march their army in at; or they count upon dissecting or dividing the kingdom into two parts, one for the king of Israel, the other for the king of Syria, who had agreed in one viceroy—a king to be set in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal, some obscure person, it is uncertain whether a Syrian or an Israelite. So sure were they of gaining their point that they divided the prey before they had caught it. Note, Those that are most scornful are commonly least successful, for surely God scorns the scornors. [2.] God himself gives them his word that the attempt should not take effect (v. 7): “*Thus saith the Lord God, the sovereign Lord of all, who brings the counsel of the heathen to nought (Ps. xxxiii. 10), It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass; their measures shall all be broken, and they shall not be able to bring to pass their enterprise.*” Note, Whatever stands against God, or thinks to stand without him, cannot stand long. Man purposes, but God disposes; and who is he that saith and it cometh to pass if the Lord commands it not or countermands it? Lam. iii. 37. See Prov. xix. 21.

(4.) He must give them a prospect of the destruction of these enemies, at last, that were now such a terror to them. [1.] They should neither of them enlarge their dominions, nor push their conquests any further: *The head city of Syria is Damascus, and the head man of Damascus is Rezin; this he glories in, and this let him be content with, v. 8. The head city of Ephraim has long been Samaria, and the head man in Samaria is now Pekah the son of Remaliah.* These shall be made to know their own; their bounds are fixed, and they shall not pass them, to make themselves masters of the cities of Judah, much less to make

Jerusalem their prey. Note, As God has appointed men the bounds of their habitation (Acts xvii. 26), so he has appointed princes the bounds of their dominion, within which they ought to confine themselves, and not encroach upon their neighbours' rights. [2.] Ephraim, which perhaps was the more malicious and forward enemy of the two, should shortly be quite rooted out, and should be so far from seizing other people's lands that they should not be able to hold their own. Interpreters are much at a loss how to compute the sixty-five years within which Ephraim shall cease to be a people; for the captivity of the ten tribes was but eleven years after this: and some make it a mistake of the transcriber, and think it should be read *within six and five years*, just eleven. But it is hard to allow that. Others make it to be sixty-five years from the time that the prophet Amos first foretold the ruin of the kingdom of the ten tribes; and some late interpreters make it to look as far forward as the last desolation of that country by Sennacherib, which was about sixty-five years after this; then Ephraim was so broken that it was no more a people. Now it was the greatest folly in the world for those to be ruining their neighbours who were themselves marked for ruin, and so near to it. See what a prophet told them at this time, when they were triumphing over Judah, 2 Chron. xxviii. 10: *Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?*

(5.) He must urge them to mix faith with those assurances which he had given them (v. 9): “*If you will not believe what is said to you, surely you shall not be established; your shaken and disordered state shall not be established, your unquiet unsettled spirit shall not; though the things told you are very encouraging, yet they will not be so to you, unless you believe them, and be willing to take God's word.*” Note, The grace of faith is absolutely necessary to the quieting and composing of the mind in the midst of all the tomes of this present time, 2 Chron. xx. 20.

10 Moreover the LORD spake again unto Ahaz, saying, 11 Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. 12 But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD. 13 And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; *Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?* 14 Therefore the LORD himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. 15 Butter and

honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good. 16 For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings.

Here, I, God, by the prophet, makes a gracious offer to Ahaz, to confirm the foregoing predictions, and his faith in them, by such sign or miracle as he should choose (v. 10, 11): *Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God.* See here the divine faithfulness and veracity. God tells us nothing but what he is able and ready to prove. See his wonderful condescension to the children of men, in that he is so willing to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, Heb. vi. 17. He considers our frame, and that, living in a world of sense, we are apt to require sensible proofs, which therefore he has favoured us with in sacramental signs and seals. Ahaz was a bad man, yet God is called the Lord his God, because he was a child of Abraham and David, and of the covenants made with them. See how gracious God is even to the evil and unthankful; Ahaz is bidden to choose his sign, as Gideon about the fleece (Judg. vi. 37); let him ask for a sign in the air, or earth, or water, for God's power is the same in all.

II. Ahaz rudely refuses this gracious offer, and (which is not mannerly towards any superior) kicks at the courtesy, and puts a slight upon it (v. 12): *I will not ask.* The true reason why he would not ask for a sign was because, having a dependence upon the Assyrians, their forces, and their gods, for help, he would not thus far be beholden to the God of Israel, or lay himself under obligations to him. He would not ask a sign for the confirming of his faith because he resolved to persist in his unbelief, and would indulge his doubts and distrusts; yet he pretends a pious reason: *I will not tempt the Lord*; as if it would be a tempting of God to do that which God himself invited and directed him to do. Note, A secret disaffection to God is often disguised with the specious colours of respect to him; and those who are resolved that they will not trust God yet pretend that they will not tempt him.

III. The prophet reproves him and his court, him and the house of David, the whole royal family, for their contempt of prophecy, and the little value they had for divine revelation (v. 13): *Is it a small thing for you to weary men by your oppression and tyranny, with which you make yourselves burdensome and odious to all mankind? But will you weary my God also with the affronts you put upon him?* As the unjust judge that neither feared God nor regarded man, Luke xviii. 2. *You have wearied the Lord with your words*, Mal. ii. 17. Nothing is

more grievous to the God of heaven than to be distrusted. *"Will you weary my God?"* Will you suppose him to be tired and unable to help you, or to be weary of doing you good? Whereas the youths may faint and be weary, you may have tired all your friends, the Creator of the ends of the earth faints not, neither is weary." ch. xl. 28—31. Or thus: "In affronting the prophets, you think you put a slight only upon men like yourselves, and consider not that you affront God himself, whose messengers they are, and put a slight upon him, who will resent it accordingly." The prophet here calls God his God with a great deal of pleasure: Ahaz would not say, He is my God, though the prophet had invited him to say so (v. 11): *The Lord thy God*; but Isaiah will say, "He is mine." Note, Whatever others do, we must avouch the Lord for ours and abide by him.

IV. The prophet, in God's name, gives them a sign: "You will not ask a sign, but the unbelief of man shall not make the promise of God of no effect: *The Lord himself shall give you a sign* (v. 14), a double sign." —

1. "A sign in general of his good-will to Israel and to the house of David. You may conclude that he has mercy in store for you, and that you are not forsaken of your God, how great soever your present distress and danger are; for of your nation, of your family, the Messiah is to be born, and you cannot be destroyed while that blessing is in you, which shall be introduced," (1.) "In a glorious manner; for, whereas you have been often told that he should be born among you, I am now further to tell you that he shall be born of a virgin, which will signify both the divine power and the divine purity with which he shall be brought into the world,—that he shall be an extraordinary person, for he shall not be born by ordinary generation,—and that he shall be a holy thing, not stained with the common pollutions of the human nature, therefore incontestably fit to have the throne of his father David given him." Now this, though it was to be accomplished above 500 years after, was a most encouraging sign to the house of David (and to them, under that title, this prophecy is directed, v. 13) and an assurance that God would not cast them off. Ephraim did indeed envy Judah (ch. xi. 13) and sought the ruin of that kingdom, but could not prevail; for the sceptre should never depart from Judah till the coming of Shiloh, Gen. xlix. 10. Those whom God designs for the great salvation may take that for a sign to them that they shall not be swallowed up by any trouble they may meet with in the way. (2.) The Messiah shall be introduced on a glorious errand, wrapped up in his glorious name: *They shall call his name Immanuel—God with us*, God in our nature, God at

peace with us, in covenant with us. This was fulfilled in their calling him *Jesus—a Saviour* (Matt. i. 21—25), for, if he had not been *Immanuel—God with us*, he could not have been *Jesus—a Saviour*. Now this was a further sign of God's favour to the house of David and the tribe of Judah; for he that intended to work this great salvation among them no doubt would work out for them all those other salvations which were to be the types and figures of this, and as it were preludes to this. "Here is a sign for you, not in the depth nor in the height, but in the prophecy, in the promise, in the covenant made with David, which you are no strangers to. The promised seed shall be Immanuel, *God with us*, let that word comfort you (ch. viii. 10), that *God is with us*, and (v. 8) that your land is Immanuel's land. Let not the heart of the house of David be moved thus (v. 2), nor let Judah fear the setting up of the son of Tabeal (v. 6), for nothing can cut off the entail on the Son of David that shall be Immanuel." Note, The strongest consolations, in time of trouble, are those which are borrowed from Christ, our relation to him, our interest in him, and our expectations of him and from him. Of this child it is further foretold (v. 15) that though he shall not be born like other children, but of a virgin, yet he shall be really and truly man, and shall be nursed and brought up, like other children: *Butter and honey shall he eat*, as other children do, particularly the children of that land which *flowed with milk and honey*. Though he be conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, yet he shall not therefore be fed with angels' food, but, as it becomes him, shall be in all things made like unto his brethren, Heb. ii. 17. Nor shall he, though born thus by extraordinary generation, be a man immediately, but, as other children, shall advance gradually through the several states of infancy, childhood, and youth, to that of manhood, and, growing in wisdom and stature, shall at length wax strong in spirit, and come to maturity, so as to know how to *refuse the evil and choose the good*. See Luke ii. 40, 52. Note, Children are fed when they are little that they may be taught and instructed when they have grown up; they have their maintenance in order to their education.

2. Here is another sign in particular of the speedy destruction of these potent princes that were now a terror to Judah, v. 16. "Before this child (so it should be read), this child which I have now in my arms" (he means not Immanuel, but Shear-jashub his own son, whom he was ordered to take with him for a sign, v. 3), "before this child shall know how to refuse the evil and choose the good" (and those who saw what his present stature and forwardness were would easily conjecture how long that would be), "before this child be three or

four years older, the land that thou abhorrest these confederate forces of Israelites and Syrians, which thou hast such an enmity to and standest in such dread of, shall be forsaken of both their kings, both Pekah and Rezin," who were in so close an alliance that they seemed as if they were the kings but of one kingdom. This was fully accomplished; for, within two or three years after this, Hoshea conspired against Pekah and slew him (2 Kings xv. 30), and, before that, the king of Assyria took Damascus, and slew Rezin, 2 Kings xvi. 9. Nay, there was a present event, which happened immediately, and which this child carried the prediction of in his name, which was a pledge and earnest of this further event. *Shear-jashub* signifies *The remnant shall return*, which doubtless points at the wonderful return of those 200,000 captives whom Pekah and Rezin had carried away, who were brought back, not by might or power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts. Read the story, 2 Chron xxviii. 8—15. The prophetic naming of this child having thus had its accomplishment, no doubt this, which was further added concerning him, should have its accomplishment likewise, that Syria and Israel should be deprived of both their kings. One mercy from God encourages us to hope for another, if it engages us to prepare for another.

17 The LORD shall bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah; *even the king of Assyria*. 18 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the LORD shall hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. 19 And they shall come, and shall rest all of them in the desolate valleys, and in the holes of the rocks, and upon all thorns, and upon all bushes. 20 In the same day shall the LORD shave with a razor that is hired, *namely*, by them beyond the river, by the king of Assyria, the head, and the hair of the feet: and it shall also consume the beard. 21 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* a man shall nourish a young cow, and two sheep: 22 And it shall come to pass, for the abundance of milk that they shall give, he shall eat butter: for butter and honey shall every one eat that is left in the land. 23 And it shall come to pass in the

day, *that* every place shall be, where there were a thousand vines at a thousand silverlings, it shall *even* be for briers and thorns. 24 With arrows and with bows shall *men* come thither; because all the land shall become briers and thorns. 25 And on all hills that shall be digged with the mattock, there shall not come thither the fear of briers and thorns: but it shall be for the sending forth of oxen, and for the treading of lesser cattle.

After the comfortable promises made to Ahaz as a branch of the house of David, here follow terrible threatenings against him, as a degenerate branch of that house; for though the loving-kindness of God shall not be utterly taken away, for the sake of David and the covenant made with him, yet his iniquity shall be *chastened with the rod*, and his sin with stripes. Let those that will not mix faith with the promises of God expect to hear the alarms of his threatenings.

I. The judgment threatened is very great, v. 17. It is very great, for it is general; it shall be brought upon the prince himself (high as he is, he shall not be out of the reach of it), and upon the people, the whole body of the nation, and upon the royal family, *upon all thy father's house*; it shall be a judgment entailed on posterity, and shall go along with the royal blood. It is very great, for it shall be unprecedented—*days that have not come*; so dark, so gloomy, so melancholy, as never were the like since the revolt of the ten tribes, when Ephraim departed from Judah, which was indeed a sad time to the house of David. Note, The longer men continue in sin the sorer punishments they have reason to expect. It is the Lord that will bring these days upon them, for our times are in his hand, and who can resist or escape the judgments he brings?

II. The enemy that should be employed as the instrument of this judgment is the king of Assyria. Ahaz reposed great confidence in that prince for help against the confederate powers of Israel and Syria, and minded the less what God said to him by his prophet for his encouragement because he built much upon his interest in the king of Assyria, and had meanly promised to be his servant if he would send him some succours; he had also made him a present of gold and silver, for which he drained the treasures both of church and state, 2 Kings xvi. 7, 8. Now God threatens that that king of Assyria whom he made his stay instead of God should become a scourge to him. He was so speedily; for, when he came to him, he distressed him, but strengthened him not (2 Chron. xxviii. 20), the reed not only

broke under him, but ran into his hand, and pierced it, and thenceforward the kings of Assyria were, for a long time, grieving thorns to Judah, and gave them a great deal of trouble. Note, The creature that we make our hope commonly proves our hurt. The king of Assyria, not long after this, made himself master of the ten tribes, carried them captive, and laid their country waste, so as fully to answer the prediction here; and perhaps it may refer to that, as an explication of v. 8, where it is foretold that Ephraim shall be broken, that it shall not be a people; and it is easy to suppose that the prophet (at v. 17) turns his speech to the king of Israel, denouncing God's judgments against him for invading Judah. But the expositors universally understand it of Ahaz and his kingdom. Now observe, 1. Summons given to the invaders (v. 18). *The Lord shall whistle for the fly and the bee*. See ch. v. 26. Enemies that seem as contemptible as a fly or a bee, and are as easily crushed, shall yet, when God pleases, do his work as effectually as lions and young lions. Though they are as far distant from one another as the rivers of Egypt and the land of Assyria, yet they shall punctually meet to join in this work when God commands their attendance; for, when God has work to do, he will not be at a loss for instruments to do it with. 2. Possession taken by them, v. 19. It should seem as if the country were in no condition to make resistance. They find no difficulties in forcing their way, *out come and rest all of them in the desolate valleys*, which the inhabitants had deserted upon the first alarm and left them a cheap and easy prey to the invaders. They shall come and rest in the low grounds like swarms of flies and bees, and shall render themselves impregnable by taking shelter in the holes of the rocks, as bees often do, and show themselves formidable by appearing openly upon all thorns and all bushes; so generally shall the land be overspread with them. These bees shall knit upon the thorns and bushes, and there rest undisturbed. 3. Great desolations made, and the country generally depopulated (v. 20): *The Lord shall shave the hair of the head, and beard, and feet*; he shall sweep all away, as the leper, when he was cleansed, *shaved off all his hair*, Lev. xiv. 8, 9. This is done with a razor which is hired, either which God has hired (as if he had none of his own; but what he hires, and whom he employs in any service for him, he will pay for. See Ezek. xxix. 18, 19), or which Ahaz has hired for his assistance. God will make that to be an instrument of his destruction which he hired into his service. Note, Many are beaten with that arm of flesh which they trusted to rather than to the arm of the Lord, and which they were at a great expense upon, when by faith and prayer they might have found cheap and

easy succour in God. 4. The consequences of this general depopulation. (1.) The flocks of cattle shall be all destroyed, so that a man who had herds and flocks in abundance shall be stripped of them all by the enemy, and shall with much ado save for his own use a young cow and two sheep—a poor stock (v. 21), yet he shall think himself happy in having any left. (2.) The few cattle that are left shall have such a large compass of ground to feed in that *they shall give abundance of milk*, and very good milk, such as shall produce butter enough, v. 22. There shall also be such want of men that the milk of one cow and two sheep shall serve a whole family, which used to keep abundance of servants and consume a great deal, but is now reduced. (3.) The breed of cattle shall be destroyed; so that those who used to eat flesh (as the Jews commonly did) shall be necessitated to confine themselves to butter and honey, for there shall be no flesh for them; and the country shall be so depopulated that there shall be butter and honey enough for the few that are left in it. (4.) Good land, that used to be let well, shall be all overrun with briers and thorns (v. 23); where there used to be a thousand vines planted, for which the tenants used to pay a thousand shekels, or pieces of silver, yearly rent, there shall be nothing now but briers and thorns, no profit either for landlord or tenant, all being laid waste by the army of the invaders. Note, God can soon turn a fruitful land into barrenness; and it is just with him to turn vines into briers if we, instead of bringing forth grapes to him, bring forth wild grapes, *ch. v. 4.* (5.) The implements of husbandry shall be turned into instruments of war, v. 24. The whole land having become briers and thorns, the grounds that men used to come to with sickles and pruning-hooks to gather in the fruits they shall now come to with arrows and bows, to hunt for wild beasts in the thickets, or to defend themselves from the robbers that lurk in the bushes, seeking for prey, or to kill the serpents and venomous beasts that are hid there. This denotes a very sad change of the face of that pleasant land. But what melancholy change is there which sin will not make with a people? (6.) Where briers and thorns were wont to be of use and to do good service, even in the hedges, for the defence of the enclosed grounds, they shall be plucked up, and all laid in common. There shall be briers and thorns in abundance where they should not be, but none where they should be, v. 25. *The hills that shall be digged with the mattock*, for special use, from which the cattle used to be kept off with the fear of briers and thorns, shall now be thrown open, the *hedges broken down for the boar out of the wood* to waste it, Ps. lxxx. 12, 13. It shall be left at large for oxen to run in and less cattle. See the

effect of sin and the curse; it has made the earth a forest of thorns and thistles, except as it is forced into some order by the constant care and labour of man. And see what folly it is to set our hearts upon possessions of lands, be they ever so fruitful, ever so pleasant; if they lie ever so little neglected and uncultivated, or if they be abused by a wasteful careless heir or tenant, or the country be laid waste by war, they will soon become frightful deserts. Heaven is a paradise not subject to such changes.

CHAPTER VIII.

This chapter, and the four next that follow it (to chap. xiii.) are all one continued discourse or sermon, the scope of which is to show the great destruction that should now shortly be brought upon the kingdom of Israel, and the great disturbance that should be given to the kingdom of Judah by the king of Assyria, and that both were for their sins; but rich provision is made of comfort for those that feared God in those dark times, referring especially to the days of the Messiah. In this chapter we have, I. A prophecy of the destruction of the confederate kingdoms of Syria and Israel by the king of Assyria, v. 1—4. II. Of the desolations that should be made by that proud victorious prince in the land of Israel and Judah, v. 5—8. III. Great encouragement given to the people of God in the midst of those distractions; they are assured, 1. That the enemies shall not gain their point against them, v. 9, 10. 2. That if they kept up the fear of God, and kept down the fear of man, they should find God their refuge (v. 11—14), and while others stumbled, and fell into despair, they should be enabled to wait on God, and should see themselves reserved for better times, v. 15—18. Lastly, He gives a necessary caution to all, at their peril, not to consult with familiar spirits, for they would thereby throw themselves into despair, but to keep close to the word of God, v. 19—22. And these counsels and these comforts will still be of use to us in time of trouble.

MOREOVER the LORD said unto me, Take thee a great roll, and write in it with a man's pen concerning Maher-shalal-hash-baz. 2 And I took unto me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah. 3 And I went unto the prophetess: and she conceived, and bare a son. Then said the LORD to me, Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz. 4 For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria. 5 The LORD spake also unto me again, saying, 6 Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son; 7 Now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks: 8 And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the

stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel.

In these verses we have a prophecy of the successes of the king of Assyria against Damascus, Samaria, and Judah, that the two former should be laid waste by him, and the last greatly frightened. Here we have,

1. Orders given to the prophet to write this prophecy, and publish it to be seen and read of all men, and to leave it upon record, that when the thing came to pass they might know that God had sent him; for that was one end of prophecy, John xiv. 29. He must take a great roll, which would contain those five chapters fairly written in words at length; and he must write in it all that he had foretold concerning the king of Assyria's invading the country; he must write it with a man's pen, in the usual way and style of writing, so as that it might be legible and intelligible by all. See Hab. ii.

2. Write the vision, and make it plain. Those that speak and write of the things of God should avoid obscurity, and study to speak and write so as to be understood, 1 Cor. xiv. 19. Those that write for men should write with a man's pen, and not covet the pen or tongue of angels. And forasmuch as it is usual to put some short, but significant comprehensive title before books that are published, the prophet is directed to call his book *Maher-shalal-hash-baz—Make speed to the spoil, hasten to the prey*, intimating that the Assyrian army should come upon them with great speed and make great spoil. By this title the substance and meaning of the book would be enquired after by those that heard of it, and remembered by those that had read it or heard it read. It is sometimes a good help to memory to put much matter in few words, which serve as handles by which we take hold of more.

II. The care of the prophet to get this record well attested (v. 2): *I took unto me faithful witnesses to record*; he wrote the prophecy in their sight and presence, and made them subscribe their names to it, that they might be ready, if afterwards there should be occasion, to make oath of it, that the prophet had so long before foretold the descent which the Assyrians made upon that country. He names his witnesses for the greater certainty, that they might be appealed to by any. They were two in number (for out of the mouth of two witnesses shall every word be established); one was Uriah the priest; he is mentioned in the story of Ahaz, but for none of his good deeds, for he humoured Ahaz with an idolatrous altar (2 Kings xvi. 10, 11); however, at this time, no exception lay against him, being a faithful witness. See what full satisfaction the prophets took care to give to all persons concerned of the sincerity of their intentions, that we might know with a full assurance the certainty of

the things wherein we have been instructed, and that we have not followed cunningly-devised fables.

III. The making of the title of his book the name of his child, that it might be the more taken notice of and the more effectually perpetuated, v. 3. His wife (because the wife of a prophet) is called *the prophetess*, she conceived and bore a son, another son, who must carry a sermon in his name, as the former had done (ch. vii. 3), but with this difference, that spoke mercy, *Shear-jashub—The remnant shall return*; but, that being slighted, this speaks judgment, *Maher-shalal-hash-baz—In making speed to the spoil he shall hasten, or he has hastened, to the prey*. The prophecy is doubled, even in this one name, for the thing was certain. *I will hasten my word*, Jer. i. 12. Every time the child was called by his name, or any part of it, it would serve as a memorandum of the judgments approaching. Note, It is good for us often to put ourselves in mind of the changes and troubles we are liable to in this world, and which perhaps are at the door. When we look with pleasure on our children it should be with the alloy of this thought, *We know not what they are yet reserved for*.

IV. The prophecy itself, which explains this mystical name.

1. That Syria and Israel, who were now in confederacy against Judah, should in a very little time become an easy prey to the king of Assyria and his victorious army (v. 4): *"Before the child, now newly born and named, shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and, My mother"* (which are usually some of the first things that children know and some of the first words that children speak), that is, "in about a year or two, the riches of Damascus, and the spoil of Samaria, those cities that are now so secure themselves and so formidable to their neighbours, shall be taken away before the king of Assyria, who shall plunder both city and country, and send the best effects of both into his own land, to enrich that, and as trophies of his victory." Note, Those that spoil others must expect to be themselves spoiled (ch. xxxiii. 1); for the Lord is righteous, and those that are troublesome shall be troubled.

2. That forasmuch as there were many in Judah that were secretly in the interests of Syria and Israel, and were disaffected to the house of David, God would chastise them also by the king of Assyria, who should create a great deal of vexation to Judah, as was foretold, ch. vii. 17. Observe, (1.) What was the sin of the discontented party in Judah (v. 6): *This people, whom the prophet here speaks to, refuse the waters of Shiloah that go softly*, despise their own country and the government of it, and love to run it down, because it does not make so great a figure, and so great a noise, in the world, as some other kings and kingdoms

do. They refuse the comforts which God's prophets offer them from the word of God, speaking to them in a still small voice, and make nothing of them; but *they rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son*, who were the enemies of their country, and were now actually invading it; they cried them up as brave men, magnified their policies and strength, applauded their conduct, were well pleased with their successes, and were hearty well-wishers to their designs, and resolved to desert and go over to them. Such vipers does many a state foster in its bosom, that eat its bread, and yet adhere to its enemies, and are ready to quit its interests if they but seem to totter. (2.) The judgment which God would bring upon them for this sin. The same king of Assyria that should lay Ephraim and Syria waste should be a scourge and terror to those of their party in Judah, *v. 7, 8*. Because they *refuse the waters of Shiloh*, and will not accommodate themselves to the government God has set over them, but are uneasy under it, *therefore the Lord brings upon them the waters of the river, strong and many*, the river Euphrates. They slighted the land of Judah, because it had no river to boast of comparable to that; the river at Jerusalem was a very inconsiderable one. "Well," says God, "if you be such admirers of Euphrates, you shall have enough of it; the king of Assyria, whose country lies upon that river, shall come with his glory, with his great army, which you cry up as his glory, despising your own king because he cannot bring such an army as that into the field; God shall bring that army upon you." If we value men, if we over-value them, for their worldly wealth and power, it is just with God to make them thereby a scourge to us. It is used as an argument against magnifying rich men that *rich men oppress us*, *Jam. ii. 3, 6*. Let us be best pleased with the waters of Shiloh, that go softly, for rapid streams are dangerous. It is threatened that the Assyrian army should break in upon them like a deluge, or inundation of waters, bearing down all before it, should come up over all his channels, and overflow all his banks. It would be to no purpose to oppose or withstand them. Sennacherib and his army should pass through Judah, and meet with so little resistance that it should look more like a march through the country than a descent upon it. *He shall reach even to the neck*, that is, he shall advance so far as to lay siege to Jerusalem, the head of the kingdom, and nothing but that shall be kept out of his hands; for that was the holy city. Note, In the greatest deluge of trouble God can and will keep the head of his people above water, and so preserve their comforts and spiritual lives; the waters that come into their souls may reach to the neck (*Ps. lxxix. 1*), but there shall their proud waves be stayed. And here is another comforta-

ble intimation that though the stretching out of the wings of the Assyrian, that bird of prey, though the right and left wing of his army, should fill the breadth of the land of Judah, yet still it was Immanuel's land. It is *thy land, O Immanuel!* It was to be Christ's land; for there he was to be born, and live, and preach, and work miracles. He was Zion's King, and therefore had a peculiar interest in and concern for that land. Note, The lands that Immanuel owns for his, as he does all those lands that own him, though they may be deluged, shall not be destroyed; *for, when the enemy shall come in like a flood, Immanuel shall secure his own, and shall lift up a standard against him, ch. lix. 19*.

9 Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. 10 Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us. 11 For the LORD spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying, 12 Say ye not, A confederacy, to all *them* to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. 13 Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. 14 And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 15 And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.

The prophet here returns to speak of the present distress that Ahaz and his court and kingdom were in upon account of the threatening confederacy of the ten tribes and the Syrians against them. And in these verses,

I. He triumphs over the invading enemies, and, in effect, sets them at defiance, and bids them do their worst (*v. 9, 10*): "O ye people, you of far countries, give ear to what the prophet says to you in God's name." 1. "We doubt not but you will now make your utmost efforts against Judah and Jerusalem. You associate yourselves in a strict alliance. You gird yourselves, and again you gird yourselves; you prepare for action; you address yourselves to it with resolution; you gird on your swords; you

gird up your loins. You animate and encourage yourselves and one another with all the considerations you can think of: you *take counsel together*, call councils of war, and all heads are at work about the proper methods for making yourselves masters of the land of Judah. *You speak the word*; you come to resolutions concerning it, and are not always deliberating; you determine what to do, and are very confident of the success of it, that the matter will be accomplished with a word's speaking." Note, It is with a great deal of policy, resolution, and assurance, that the church's enemies carry on their designs against it; and abundance of pains they take to roll a stone that will certainly return upon them. 2. "This is to let you know that all your efforts will be ineffectual. You cannot, you shall not, gain your point, nor carry the day: *You shall be broken in pieces*. Though you associate yourselves, though you gird yourselves, though you proceed with all the policy and precaution imaginable, yet, I tell you again and again, all your projects shall be baffled, *you shall be broken in pieces*. Nay, not only shall your attempts be ruined, but your attempts shall be your ruin; you shall be broken by those designs you have formed against Jerusalem: *Your counsels shall come to nought*; for there is no wisdom nor counsel against the Lord. Your resolves will not be put in execution; they shall not stand. You speak the word, but *who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, if the Lord commandeth it not?* What sets up itself against God, and his cause and counsel, cannot stand, but must inevitably fall. *For God is with us*" (this refers to the name of Immanuel—God with us); "the Messiah is to be born among us, and a people designed for such an honour cannot be given up to utter ruin. We have now the special presence of God with us in his temple, his oracles, his promises, and these are our defence. God is with us; he is on our side, to take our part and fight for us; and, *if God be for us, who can be against us?*" Thus does the daughter of Zion despise them.

II. He comforts and encourages the people of God with the same comforts and encouragements which he himself had received. The attempt made upon them was very formidable; the house of David, the court and royal family, were at their wits' end (*ch. vii. 2*), and then no marvel if the people were in a consternation. Now,

1. The prophet tells us how he was himself taught of God not to give way to such amazing fears as the people were disturbed with, nor to run into the same measures with them (*v. 11*): "*The Lord spoke to me with a strong hand not to walk in the way of this people, not to say as they say nor do as they do, not to entertain the same frightful apprehensions of things nor to approve of*

their projects of making peace upon any terms, or calling in the help of the Assyrians." God instructed the prophet not to go down the stream. Note, (1.) There is a proneness in the best of men to be frightened at threatening clouds, especially when fears are epidemic. We are all too apt to walk in the way of the people we live among, though it be not a good way. (2.) Those whom God loves and owns he will instruct and enable to swim against the stream of common corruptions, particularly of common fears. He will find ways to teach his own people not to walk in the way of other people, but in a sober singularity. (3.) Corruption is sometimes so active in the hearts even of good men that they have need to be taught their duty with a strong hand, and it is God's prerogative to teach so, for he only can give an understanding and overpower the contradiction of unbelief and prejudice. He can teach the heart, and herein none teaches like him. (4.) Those that are to teach others have need to be themselves well instructed in their duty, and then they teach most powerfully when they teach experimentally. The word that comes from the heart is most likely to reach to the heart; and what we are ourselves by the grace of God instructed in we should, as we are able, teach others also.

2. Now what is it that he says to God's people?

(1.) He cautions them against a sinful fear, *v. 12*. It seems it was the way of this people at this time, and fear is catching. He whose heart fails him makes his brethren's heart to fail, like his heart (*Deut. xx. 8*); therefore *Say you not, A confederacy, to all those to whom this people shall say, A confederacy*; that is, [1.] "Be not associated with them in the confederacies they are projecting and forecasting for. Do not join with those that, for the securing of themselves, are for making a league with the Assyrians, through unbelief, and distrust of God and their cause. Do not come into any such confederacy." Note, It concerns us, in time of trouble, to watch against all such fears as put us upon taking any indirect courses for our own security. [2.] "Be not afraid of the confederacies they frighten themselves and one another with. Do not distress yourselves with the apprehension of a confederacy upon every thing that stirs, nor, when any little thing is amiss, cry out presently, There is a plot, a plot. When they talk what dismal news there is, *Syria is joined with Ephraim*, what will become of us? must we fight, or must we flee, or must we yield? do not you fear their fear: *Be not afraid of the signs of heaven*, as the heathen are, *Jer. x. 2*. Be not afraid of evil tidings on earth, but let your hearts be fixed. Fear not that which they fear, nor be afraid as they are. Be not put into such a fright as causes trem-

bling and shaking;" so the word signifies. Note, When the church's enemies have sinful confederacies on foot the church's friends should watch against the sinful fears of those confederacies.

(2.) He advises them to a gracious religious fear: *But sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, v. 13.* Note, The believing fear of God is a special preservative against the disquieting fear of man; see 1 Pet. iii. 14, 15, where this is quoted, and applied to suffering Christians. [1.] We must look upon God as the Lord of hosts, that has all power in his hand and all creatures at his beck. [2.] We must sanctify him accordingly, give him the glory due to that name, and behave towards him as those that believe him to be a holy God. [3.] We must make him our fear, the object of our fear, and make him our dread, keep up a reverence of his providence and stand in awe of his sovereignty, be afraid of his displeasure and silently acquiesce in all his disposals. Were we but duly affected with the greatness and glory of God, we should see the pomp of our enemies eclipsed and clouded, and all their power restrained and under check; see Neh. iv. 14. Those that are afraid of the reproach of men forget the Lord their Maker, ch. li. 12, 13. Compare Luke xii. 4, 5.

(3.) He assures them of a holy security and serenity of mind in so doing (v. 14): "He shall be for a sanctuary; make him your fear, and you shall find him your hope, your help, your defence, and your mighty deliverer. He will sanctify and preserve you. He will be for a sanctuary," [1.] To make you holy. He will be your sanctification;" so some read it. If we sanctify God by our praises, he will sanctify us by his grace. [2.] "To make you easy. He will be your sanctuary, to which you may flee for safety, and where you are privileged from all the arrests of fear; you shall find an inviolable refuge and security in him, and see yourselves out of the reach of danger. Those that truly fear God shall not need to fear any evil.

III. He threatens the ruin of the ungodly and unbelieving, both in Judah and Israel. They have no part nor lot in the foregoing comforts; that God who will be a sanctuary to those who trust in him will be a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, to those who leave these waters of Shiloah, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son, (v. 6), who make the creature their fear and their hope, v. 14, 15. The prophet foresees that the greatest part of both the houses of Israel would not sanctify the Lord of hosts, and to them he would be for a gin and a snare; he would be a terror to them, as he would be a support and stay to those that trusted in him. Instead of profiting by the word of God, they should be offended at it; and the providences of God, instead of leading them

to him, would drive them from him. What was a savour of life unto life to others would be a savour of death unto death to them. "So that many among them shall stumble and fall; they shall fall both into sin and into ruin; they shall fall by the sword, shall be taken prisoners, and go into captivity." Note, If the things of God be an offence to us, they will be an undoing to us. Some apply this to the unbelieving Jews, who rejected Christ, and to whom he became a stone of stumbling; for the apostle quotes this scripture with application to all those who persisted in their unbelief of the gospel of Christ (1 Pet. ii. 8); to them he is a rock of offence, because, being disobedient to the word, they stumble at it.

16 Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. 17 And I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him. 18 Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion. 19 And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? For the living to the dead? 20 To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. 21 And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry: and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward. 22 And they shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness.

In these verses we have,

I. The unspeakable privilege which the people of God enjoy in having the oracles of God consigned over to them, and being entrusted with the sacred writings. That they may sanctify the Lord of hosts, may make him their fear and find him their sanctuary, bind up the testimony, v. 16. Note, It is a great instance of God's care of his church and love to it that he has lodged in it the invaluable treasure of divine revelation. 1. It is a testimony and a law; not only this prophecy is so, which must therefore be preserved safely for the comfort of God's people in the approaching times of trouble

and distress, but the whole word of God is so; God has attested it, and he has enjoined it. As a testimony it directs our faith; as a law it directs our practice; and we ought both to subscribe to the truths of it and to submit to the precepts of it. 2. This testimony and this law are bound up and sealed, for we are not to add to them nor diminish from them; they are a letter from God to man, folded up and sealed, a proclamation under the broad seal. The binding up and sealing of the Old Testament signified that the full explication of many of the prophecies of it was reserved for the New-Testament times. Dan. xii. 4, *Seal the book till the time of the end*; but what was then bound up and sealed is now open and unsealed, and *revealed unto babes*, Matt. xi. 25. Yet with reference to the other world, and the future state, still the testimony is bound up and sealed, for we know but in part, and prophesy but in part. 3. They are lodged as a sacred deposit in the hands of the disciples of the children of the prophets and the covenant, Acts iii. 25. This is the good thing which is committed to them, and which they are charged with the custody of, 2 Tim. i. 13, 14. Those that had prophets for their tutors must still keep close to the written word.

II. The good use which we ought to make of this privilege. This we are taught,

1. By the prophet's own practice and resolutions, c. 17, 18. He embraced the law and the testimony, and he had the comfort of them, in the midst of the many discouragements he met with. Note, Those ministers can best recommend the word of God to others that have themselves found the satisfaction of relying upon it. Observe,

(1.) The discouragements which the prophet laboured under. He specifies two:— [1.] The frowns of God, not so much upon himself, but upon his people, whose interests lay very near his heart: "*He hides his face from the house of Jacob*, and seems at present to neglect them, and lay them under the tokens of his displeasure." The prophet was himself employed in revealing God's wrath against them, and yet grieved thus for it, as one that did not desire the woeful day. If the house of Jacob forsake the God of Jacob, let it not be thought strange that he hides his face from them. [2.] The contempt and reproaches of men, not only upon himself, but upon his disciples, among whom the law and the testimony were sealed: *I and the children whom the Lord has given me are for signs and wonders*; we are gazed at as monsters or outlandish people, pointed at as we go along the streets. Probably the prophetic names that were given to his children were ridiculed and bantered by the profane scoffers of the town. *I am as a wonder unto many*, Ps. lxxi. 7. God's people are the world's wonder (Zech. iii. 6) for their singularity, and because they run not

with them to the same excess of riot, 1 Pet. iv. 4. The prophet was herein a type of Christ; for this is quoted (Heb. ii. 13) to prove that believers are Christ's children: *Behold, I and the children whom God has given me*. Parents must look upon their children as God's gifts, his gracious gifts: Jacob did so, Gen. xxxiii. 5. Ministers must look upon their converts as their children, and be tender of them accordingly (1 Thess. ii. 7), and as the children whom God has given them; for, whatever good we are instrumental of to others, it is owing to the grace of God. Christ looks upon believers as his children, whom the Father gave him (John xvii. 6), and both he and they are for signs and wonders, spoken against (Luke ii. 34), every where spoken against, Acts xxviii. 22.

(2.) The encouragement he took in reference to these discouragements. [1.] He saw the hand of God in all that which was discouraging to him, and kept his eye upon that. Whatever trouble the house of Jacob is in, it comes from God's hiding his face; nay, whatever contempt was put upon him or his friends, it is from the Lord of hosts; he has bidden Shimei curse David, Job xix. 13; xxx. 11. [2.] He saw God dwelling in Mount Zion, manifesting himself to his people, and ready to hear their prayers and receive their homage. Though, for the present, he hide his face from the house of Jacob, yet they know where to find him and recover the sight of him; he dwells in Mount Zion. [3.] He therefore resolved to wait upon the Lord and to look for him; to attend his motions even while he hid his face, and to expect with a humble assurance his returns in a way of mercy. Those that wait upon God by faith and prayer may look for him with hope and joy. When we have not sensible comforts we must still keep up our observance of God and obedience to him, and then wait awhile; *at evening time it shall be light*.

2. By the counsel and advice which he gives to his disciples, among whom the law and the testimony were sealed, to whom were committed the lively oracles.

(1.) He supposes they would be tempted, in the day of their distress, to consult *those that had familiar spirits*, that dealt with the devil, asked his advice, and desired to be informed by him concerning things to come, that they might take their measures accordingly. Thus Saul, when he was in straits, made his application to the witch of Endor (1 Sam. xxviii. 7, 15), and Abaziah to the god of Ekron, 2 Kings i. 2. These conjurors had strange fantastic gestures and tones: They *peeped and muttered*; they muffled their heads, that they could neither see nor be seen plainly, but peeped and were peeped at. Or both the words here used may refer to their voice and manner of speaking; they delivered what they had

to say with a low, hollow, broken sound, scarcely articulate, and sometimes in a pining or mournful tone, like a crane, or a swallow, or a dove, *ch. xxxviii. 14.* They spoke not with that boldness and plainness which the prophets of the Lord spoke with, but as those who desire to amuse people rather than to instruct them; yet there were those who were so wretchedly sottish as to seek to them and to court others to do so, even the prophet's hearers, who knew better things, whom therefore the prophet warns not to say, *A confederacy with such.* There were express laws against this wickedness (*Lev. xix. 31; xx. 27*), and yet it was found in Israel, is found even in Christian nations; but let all that have any sense of religion show it, by startling at the thought of it. *Get thee behind me, Satan.* Dread the use of spells and charms, and consulting those that by hidden arts pretend to tell fortunes, cure diseases, or discover things lost; for this is a heinous crime, and, in effect, denies the God that is above.

(2.) He furnishes them with an answer to this temptation, puts words into their mouths. "If any go about thus to ensnare you, give them this reply: *Should not a people seek to their God?* What! *for the living to the dead!*" [1.] "Tell them it is a principle of religion that a people ought to seek unto their God; now Jehovah is our God, and therefore to him we ought to seek, and to consult with him, and not with those that have familiar spirits. *All people will thus walk in the name of their God,* Mic. iv. 5. Those that made the hosts of heaven their gods sought unto them, *Jer. viii. 2.* Should not a people under guilt, and in trouble, seek to their God for pardon and peace? Should not a people in doubt, in want, and in danger, seek to their God for direction, supply, and protection? Since the Lord is our God, and we are his people, it is certainly our duty to seek him." [2.] "Tell them it is an instance of the greatest folly in the world to seek for living men to dead idols." What can be more absurd than to seek to lifeless images for life and living comforts, or to expect that our friends that are dead should do that for us, when we deify them and pray to them, which our living friends cannot do? *The dead know not any thing,* nor is there with them any device or working, *Eccl. ix. 5, 10.* It is folly therefore for the living to make their court to them, with any expectation of relief from them. Necromancers consulted the dead, as the witch of Endor, and so proclaimed their own folly. We must live by the living, and not by the dead. What life or light can we look for from those that have no light or life themselves?

(3.) He directs them to consult the oracles of God. If the prophets that were among them did not speak directly to every case, yet they had the written word, and to that

they must have recourse. Note, Those will never be drawn to consult wizards that know how to make a good use of their Bibles. Would we know how we may seek to our God, and come to the knowledge of his mind? *To the law and to the testimony.* There you will see what is good, and what the Lord requires of you. Make God's statutes your counsellors, and you will be counselled aright. Observe, [1.] What use we must make of the law and the testimony: we must speak according to that word, that is, we must make this our standard, conform to it, take advice from it, make our appeals to it, and in every thing be over-ruled and determined by it, consent to those wholesome healing words (*1 Tim. vi. 3*), and speak of the things of God in the words which the Holy Ghost teaches. It is not enough to say nothing against it, but we must speak according to it. [2.] Why we must make this use of the law and the testimony: because we shall be convicted of the greatest folly imaginable if we do not. Those that concur not with the word of God do thereby evince that *there is no light, no morning light* (so the word is) *in them*; they have no right sense of things; they do not understand themselves, nor the difference between good and evil, truth and falsehood. Note, Those that reject divine revelation have not so much as human understanding; nor do those rightly admit the oracles of reason who will not admit the oracles of God. Some read it as a threatening: "If they speak not according to this word, there shall be no light to them, no good, no comfort or relief; but they shall be driven to darkness and despair;" as it follows here, *v. 21, 22.* What light had Saul when he consulted the witch? *1 Sam. xxviii. 18, 20.* Or what light can those expect that turn away from the Father of lights?

(4.) He reads the doom of those that seek to familiar spirits and regard not God's law and testimony; there shall not only be no light to them, no comfort or prosperity, but they may expect all horror and misery, *v. 21, 22.* [1.] The trouble they feared shall come upon them: They shall pass through the land, or pass to and fro in the land, unfixed, unsettled, and driven from place to place by the threatening power of an invading enemy; they shall be *hardly bestead* whither to go for the necessary supports of life, either because the country would be so impoverished that there would be nothing to be had, or at least themselves and their friends so impoverished that there would be nothing to be had for them; so that those who used to be fed to the full shall be hungry. Note, Those that go away from God go out of the way of all good. [2.] They shall be very uneasy to themselves, by their discontent and impatience under their trouble. A good man may be in want, but then he quiets himself, and strives to make

himself easy; but these people *when they shall be hungry shall fret themselves, and when they have nothing to feed on their vexation shall prey upon their own spirits; for fretfulness is a sin that has its own punishment.* [3.] They shall be very provoking to all about them, nay, to all above them; when they find all their measures broken, and themselves at their wits' end, they will forget all the rules of duty and decency, and will treasonably *curse their king* and blasphemously *curse their God*, and this more than *in their thought and in their bed-chamber*, Eccl. x. 20. They begin with cursing their king for managing the public affairs no better, as if the fault were his, when the best and wisest kings cannot secure success; but, when they have broken the bonds of their allegiance, no marvel if those of their religion do not hold them long: they next curse their God, curse him, and die; they quarrel with his providence, and reproach that, as if he had done them wrong. *The foolishness of man perverts his way, and then his heart frets against the Lord*, Prov. xix. 3. See what need we have to *keep our mouth as with a bridle* when our heart is hot within us; for the language of fretfulness is commonly very offensive. [4.] They shall abandon themselves to despair, and, which way soever they look, shall see no probability of relief. They shall look upward, but heaven shall frown upon them and look gloomy; and how can it be otherwise when they curse their God? They shall look to the earth, but what comfort can that yield to those with whom God is at war? There is nothing there but trouble, and darkness, and dimness of anguish, every thing threatening, and not one pleasant gleam, not one hopeful prospect; but they shall be driven to darkness by the violence of their own fears, which represent every thing about them black and frightful. This explains what he had said v. 20, that there shall be no light to them. Those that shut their eyes against the light of God's word will justly be abandoned to darkness, and left to wander endlessly, and the sparks of their own kindling will do them no kindness.

CHAP. IX.

The prophet in this chapter (according to the directions given him, ch. iii. 10, 11) saith to the righteous, It shall be well with thee, but Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him. Here are, I. Gracious promises to those that adhere to the law and to the testimony; while those that seek to familiar spirits shall be driven into darkness and dimness, they shall see a great light, relief in the midst of their distresses, typical of gospel grace. 1. In the doctrine of the Messiah, ver. 1—3. 2. His victories, ver. 4, 5. 3. His government and dominion as Immanuel, ver. 6, 7. II. Dreadful threatenings against the people of Israel, who had revolted from and were enemies to the house of David, that they should be brought to utter ruin, that their pride should bring them down (ver. 8—10), that their neighbours should make a prey of them (ver. 11, 12), that, for their impentence and hypocrisy, all their ornaments and supports should be cut off (ver. 13—17), and that by the wrath of God against them, and their wrath one against another, they should be brought to utter ruin, ver. 18—21. And this is typical of the final destruction of all the enemies of the Son of David and his Kingdom.

NEVERTHELESS the dimness shall not be such as was in her

vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict *her* by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. 2 The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. 3 Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. 4 For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. 5 For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but *this* shall be with burning and fuel of fire. 6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

The first words of this chapter plainly refer to the close of the foregoing chapter, where every thing looked black and melancholy: *Behold, trouble, and darkness, and dimness*—very bad, yet not so bad but that *to the upright there shall arise light in the darkness* (Ps. cxli. 4) and *at evening time it shall be light*, Zech. xiv. 7. *Nevertheless it shall not be such dimness* (either not such for kind or not such for degree) as sometimes there has been. Note, In the worst of times God's people have a *nevertheless* to comfort themselves with, something to allay and balance their troubles; they are persecuted, but not forsaken (2 Cor. iv. 9), sorrowful yet always rejoicing, 2 Cor. vi. 10. And it is matter of comfort to us, when things are at the darkest, that he who *forms the light and creates the darkness* (ch. xlv. 7) has appointed to both their bounds and set the one over against the other, Gen. i. 4. He can say, "Hitherto the dimness shall go,

so long it shall last, and no further, no longer."

1. Three things are here promised, and they all point ultimately at the grace of the gospel, which the saints then were to comfort themselves with the hopes of in every cloudy and dark day, as we now are to comfort ourselves in time of trouble with the hopes of Christ's second coming, though that be now, as his first coming then was, a thing at a great distance. The mercy likewise which God has in store for his church in the latter days may be a support to those that are mourning with her for her present calamities. We have here the promise,

1. Of a glorious light, which shall so qualify, and by degrees dispel, the dimness, that it shall not be as it sometimes has been: *Not such as was in her vexation*; there shall not be such dark times as were formerly, *when at first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and Naphtali* (which lay remote and most exposed to the inroads of the neighbouring enemies), *and afterwards he more grievously afflicted the land by the way of the sea and beyond Jordan* (v. 1), referring probably to those days when God began to cut Israel short and to smite them in all their coasts, 2 Kings x. 32. Note, God tries what less judgments will do with a people before he brings greater; but if a light affliction do not do its work with us, to humble and reform us, we must expect to be afflicted more grievously; for when God judges he will overcome. Well, those were dark times with the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, and there was *dimness of anguish in Galilee of the Gentiles*, both in respect of ignorance (they did not speak according to the law and the testimony, and then there was no light in them, ch. viii. 20) and in respect of trouble, and the desperate posture of their outward affairs; we have both together, 2 Chron. xv. 3, 5. *Israel has been without the true God and a teaching priest, and in those times there was no peace.* But the dimness threatened (ch. viii. 22) shall not prevail to such a degree; for (v. 2) *the people that walked in darkness have seen a great light.* (1.) At this time when the prophet lived, there were many prophets in Judah and Israel, whose prophecies were a great light both for direction and comfort to the people of God, who adhered to the law and the testimony. Besides the written word, they had prophecy; there were those that had shown them how long (Ps. lxxiv. 9), which was a great satisfaction to them, when in respect of their outward troubles they sat in darkness, and dwelt in the land of the shadow of death. (2.) This was to have its full accomplishment when our Lord Jesus began to appear as a prophet, and to preach the gospel in the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, and in Galilee of the Gentiles. And the Old-Testament prophets, as they

were witnesses to him, so they were types of him. When he came and dwelt in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali, then this prophecy is said to have been fulfilled. Matt. iv. 13—16. Note, [1.] Those that want the gospel walk in darkness, and know not what they do nor whither they go; and they dwell in the land of the shadow of death, in thick darkness, and in the utmost danger. [2.] When the gospel comes to any place, to an soul, light comes, a great light, a shining light, which will shine more and more. It should be welcome to us, as light is to those that sit in darkness, and we should readily entertain it, both because it is of such sovereign use to us and because it brings its own evidence with it. Truly this light is sweet.

2. Of a glorious increase, and a universal joy arising from it, (v. 3) "*Thou, O God! hast multiplied the nation*, the Jewish nation which thou hast mercy in store for; though it has been diminished by one sore judgment after another, yet now thou hast begun to multiply it again." The numbers of a nation are its strength and wealth if the numerous be industrious; and it is God that increases nations, Job xii. 23. Yet it follows, "*Thou hast not increased the joy*—the carnal joy and mirth, and those things that are commonly the matter and occasion thereof. But, notwithstanding that, *they joy before thee*; there is a great deal of serious spiritual joy among them, joy in the presence of God, with an eye to him." This is very applicable to the times of gospel light, spoken of v. 2. Then God multiplied the nation, the gospel Israel. "And to him" (so the Masorites read it) "*thou hast magnified the joy*, to every one that receives the light." The following words favour this reading: "*They joy before thee*; they come before thee in holy ordinances with great joy; their mirth is not like that of Israel under their vines and fig-trees (thou hast not increased that joy), but it is in the favour of God and in the tokens of his grace." Note The gospel, when it comes in its light and power, brings joy along with it, and those who receive it aright do therein rejoice, yea, and will rejoice; therefore the conversion of the nations is prophesied of by this (Ps. lxxvii. 4), *Let the nations be glad, and sing for joy.* See Ps. xcvi. 11. (1.) It is holy joy: *They joy before thee*; they rejoice in spirit (as Christ did, Luke x. 21), and that is before God. In the eye of the world they are always as sorrowful, and yet, in God's sight, *always rejoicing*, 2 Cor. vi. 10. (2.) It is great joy; it is according to the joy in harvest, when those who sowed in tears, and have with long patience waited for the precious fruits of the earth, reap in joy; and as in war men rejoice when, after a hazardous battle, *they divide the spoil.* The gospel brings with it plenty and victory; but those that would have the joy of it

must expect to go through a hard work, as the husbandman before he has the joy of harvest, and a hard conflict, as the soldier before he has the joy of dividing the spoil; but the joy, when it comes, will be an abundant recompence for the toil. See Acts viii. 8, 39.

3. Of a glorious liberty and enlargement (v. 4, 5): "They shall rejoice before thee, and with good reason, *for thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and made him easy, for he shall no longer be in servitude; and thou hast broken the staff of his shoulder and the rod of his oppressor*, that rod of the wicked which rested long on the lot of the righteous," as the Midianites' yoke was broken from off the neck of Israel by the agency of Gideon. If God makes former deliverances his patterns in working for us, we ought to make them our encouragements to hope in him and to seek to him, Ps. lxxxiii.

9. *Do unto them as to the Midianites*. What temporal deliverance this refers to is not clear, probably the preventing of Sennacherib from making himself master of Jerusalem, which was done, *as in the day of Midian*, by the immediate hand of God; and, whereas other battles were usually won with a great deal of noise and by the expense of much blood, this shall be done silently and without noise. *Under his glory God shall kindle a burning* (ch. x. 16); *a fire not blown shall consume him*, Job xx. 26. But doubtless it looks further, to the blessed fruits and effects of that great light which should visit those that sat in darkness; it would bring liberty along with it, *deliverance to the captives*, Luke iv. 18. (1.) The design of the gospel, and the grace of it, is to break the yoke of sin and Satan, to remove the burden of guilt and corruption, and to free us from the rod of those oppressors, that we might be brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Christ broke the yoke of the ceremonial law (Acts. xv. 10; Gal. v. 1), and delivered us out of the hand of our enemies, that we might serve him without fear, Luke i. 74, 75. (2.) This is done by the Spirit working like fire (Matt. iii. 11), not as the battle of the warrior is fought, with confused noise; no, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal; but it is done with the Spirit of judgment and the Spirit of burning, ch. iv. 4. It is done *as in the day of Midian*, by a work of God upon the hearts of men. Christ is our Gideon; it is his sword that doeth wonders.

II. But who, where, is he that shall undertake and accomplish these great things for the church? The prophet tells us (v. 6, 7) they shall be done by the Messiah, *Immanuel*, that son of a virgin whose birth he had foretold (ch. vii. 14), and now speaks of, in the prophetic style, as a thing already done: *the child is born*, not only because it was as certain, and he was as certain of it as if it had been done already, but because the church before his incarnation reaped great

benefit and advantage by his undertaking in virtue of that first promise concerning *the seed of the woman*, Gen. iii. 15. As he was the Lamb slain, so he was the child born, *from the foundation of the world*, Rev. xiii. 8. All the great things that God did for the Old-Testament church were done by him as the eternal Word, and for his sake as the Mediator. He was the Anointed, to whom God had respect (Ps. lxxxiv. 9), and it was for the Lord's sake, for the Lord Christ's sake, that God caused his face to shine upon his sanctuary, Dan. ix. 17. The Jewish nation, and particularly the house of David, were preserved many a time from imminent ruin only because that blessing was in them. What greater security therefore could be given to the church of God then that it should be preserved, and be the special care of the divine Providence, than this, that God had so great a mercy in reserve for it? The Chaldee paraphrast understands it of the man that shall endure for ever, even Christ. And it is an illustrious prophecy of him and of his kingdom, which doubtless those that waited for the consolation of Israel built much upon, often turned to, and read with pleasure.

1. See him in his humiliation. The same that is *the mighty God is a child born*; the ancient of days becomes an infant of a span long; the *everlasting Father is a Son given*. Such was his condescension in taking our nature upon him; thus did he humble and empty himself, to exalt and fill us. He is born into our world. *The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us*. He is given, freely given, to be all that to us which our case, in our fallen state, calls for. God so loved the world that he gave him. He is born to us, he is given to us, us men, and not to the angels that sinned. It is spoken with an air of triumph, and the angel seems to refer to these words in the notice he gives to the shepherds of the Messiah's having come (Luke ii. 11), *Unto you is born, this day, a Saviour*. Note, Christ's being born and given to us is the great foundation of our hopes, and fountain of our joys, in times of greatest grief and fear.

2. See him in his exaltation. This child, this son, this Son of God, this Son of man, that is given to us, is in a capacity to do us a great deal of kindness; for he is invested with the highest honour and power, so that we cannot but be happy if he be our friend.

(1.) See the dignity he is advanced to, and the name he has above every name. He shall be called (and therefore we are sure he is and shall be) *Wonderful, Counsellor, &c*. His people shall know him and worship him by these names; and, as one that fully answers them, they shall submit to him and depend upon him. [1.] He is *wonderful, counsellor*. Justly is he called *wonderful*, for he is both God and man. His love is the wonder of angels and glorified saints; in his

birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, he was wonderful. A constant series of wonders attended him, and, without controversy, great was the mystery of godliness concerning him. He is the *counsellor*, for he was intimately acquainted with the counsels of God from eternity, and he gives counsel to the children of men, in which he consults our welfare. It is by him that God has *given us counsel*, Ps. xvi. 7; Rev. iii. 18. He is the wisdom of the Father, and is made of God to us wisdom. Some join these together: He is the wonderful counsellor, a wonder or miracle of a counsellor; in this, as in other things, he has the pre-eminence; none teaches like him. [2.] He is *the mighty God—God, the mighty One*. As he has wisdom, so he has strength, to go through with his undertaking: he is able to save to the utmost; and such is the work of the Mediator that no less a power than that of the mighty God could accomplish it. [3.] He is *the everlasting Father*, or *the Father of eternity*; he is God, one with the Father, who is from everlasting to everlasting. His fatherly care of his people and tenderness towards them are everlasting. He is the author of everlasting life and happiness to them, and so is the Father of a blessed eternity to them. He is *the Father of the world to come* (so the LXX. read it), the father of the gospel-state, which is put in subjection to him, not to the angels, Heb. ii. 5. He was, from eternity, Father of the great work of redemption: his heart was upon it; it was the product of his wisdom as the counsellor, of his love as the *everlasting Father*. [4.] He is *the prince of peace*. As a King, he preserves the peace, commands peace, nay, he creates peace, in his kingdom. He is our peace, and it is his peace that both keeps the hearts of his people and rules in them. He is not only a peaceable prince, and his reign peaceable, but he is the author and giver of all good, all that peace which is the present and future bliss of his subjects.

(2.) See the dominion he is advanced to, and the throne he has above every throne (*v. 6*): *The government shall be upon his shoulder*—his only. He shall not only wear the badge of it upon his shoulder (*the key of the house of David*, ch. xxii. 22), but he shall bear the burden of it. The Father shall devolve it upon him, so that he shall have an incontestable right to govern; and he shall undertake it, so that no doubt can be made of his governing well, for he shall set his shoulder to it, and will never complain, as Moses did, of his being overcharged. *I am not able to bear all this people*, Num. xi. 11, 14. Glorious things are here spoken of Christ's government, *v. 7*. [1.] That it shall be an increasing government. It shall be multiplied; the bounds of his kingdom shall be more and more enlarged, and many shall be added to it daily. The lustre of it shall in-

crease, and it shall shine more and more brightly in the world. The monarchies of the earth were each less illustrious than the other, so that what began in gold ended in iron and clay, and every monarchy dwindled by degrees; but the kingdom of Christ is a growing kingdom, and will come to perfection at last. [2.] That it shall be a peaceable government, agreeable to his character as the prince of peace. He shall rule by love, shall rule in men's hearts; so that wherever his government is there shall be peace, and as his government increases the peace shall increase. The more we are subject to Christ the more easy and safe we are. [3.] That it shall be a rightful government. He that is the Son of David shall reign upon the throne of David and over his kingdom, which he is entitled to. *God shall give him the throne of his father David*, Luke i. 32, 33. The gospel church, in which Jew and Gentile are incorporated, is the holy hill of Zion, on which Christ reigns, Ps. ii. 6. [4.] That it shall be administered with prudence and equity, and so as to answer the great end of government, which is the establishment of the kingdom: *He shall order it, and settle it, with justice and judgment*. Every thing is, and shall be, well managed, in the kingdom of Christ, and none of his subjects shall ever have cause to complain. [5.] That it shall be an everlasting kingdom: *There shall be no end of the increase of his government* (it shall be still growing), no end of the increase of the peace of it, for the happiness of the subjects of this kingdom shall last to eternity and perhaps shall be progressive in infinitum—for ever. He shall reign *henceforth even for ever*; not only throughout all generations of time, but, even when the kingdom shall be delivered up to God even the Father, the glory both of the Redeemer and the redeemed shall continue eternally. [6.] That God himself has undertaken to bring all this about: "*The Lord of hosts*, who has all power in his hand and all creatures at his beck, *shall perform this*, shall preserve the throne of David till this prince of peace is settled in it; his zeal shall do it, his jealousy for his own honour, and the truth of his promise, and the good of his church." Note, The heart of God is much upon the advancement of the kingdom of Christ among men, which is very comfortable to all those that wish well to it; *the zeal of the Lord of hosts* will overcome all opposition.

8 The LORD sent a word into Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Israel. 9 And all the people shall know, *even* Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria, that say in the pride and stoutness of heart, 10 The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones: the sycamores are cut down, but we will change *them into* cedars.

1 Therefore the LORD shall set up his adversaries of Rezin against him, and join his enemies together; 12 The Syrians before, and the Philistines behind; and they shall devour Israel with open mouth. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand *is* stretched out still. 13 For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the LORD of hosts. 14 Therefore the LORD will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day. 15 The ancient and honourable, he *is* the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he *is* the tail. 16 For the leaders of this people cause *them* to err; and *they that are* led of them are destroyed. 17 Therefore the LORD shall have no joy in their young men, neither shall have mercy on their fatherless and widows: for every one *is* an hypocrite and an evil doer, and every mouth speaketh folly. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand *is* stretched out still. 18 For wickedness burneth as the fire: it shall devour the briars and thorns, and shall kindle in the thickets of the forest, and they shall mount up *like* the lifting up of smoke. 19 Through the wrath of the LORD of hosts is the land darkened, and the people shall be as the fuel of the fire: no man shall spare his brother. 20 And he shall snatch on the right hand, and be hungry; and he shall eat on the left hand, and they shall not be satisfied: they shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm: 21 Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim, Manasseh: *and they together shall be* against Judah. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand *is* stretched out still.

Here are terrible threatenings, which are directed primarily against Israel, the kingdom of the ten tribes, Ephraim and Samaria, the ruin of which is here foretold, with all the woeful confusions that were the prefaces to that ruin, all which came to pass within a few years after; but they look further, to all the enemies of the throne and kingdom of Christ the Son of David, and read the doom of all the nations that forget God, and will not have Christ to reign over them. Observe,

I. The preface to this prediction (v. 8):

The Lord sent a word into Jacob, sent it by his servants the prophets. He warns before he wounds. He sent notice what he would do, that they might meet him in the way of his judgments; but they would not take the hint, took no care to turn away his wrath, and so it lighted upon Israel; for no word of God shall fall to the ground. It fell upon them as a storm of rain and hail from on high, which they could not avoid: *It has lighted upon them*, that is, it is as sure to come as if come already, and all the people shall know by feeling it what they would not know by hearing of it. Those that are willingly ignorant of the wrath of God revealed from heaven against sin and sinners shall be made to know it.

II. The sins charged upon the people of Israel, which provoked God to bring these judgments upon them. 1. Their insolent defiance of the justice of God, thinking themselves a match for him: "*They say, in the pride and stoutness of their heart, Let God himself do his worst; we will hold our own, and make our part good with him. If he ruin our houses, we will repair them, and make them stronger and finer than they were before. Our landlord shall not turn us out of doors, though we pay him no rent, but we will keep in possession. If the houses that were built of bricks be demolished in the war, we will rebuild them with hewn stones, that shall not so easily be thrown down. If the enemy cut down the sycamores, we will plant cedars in the room of them. We will make a hand of God's judgments, gain by them, and so outbrave them.*" Note, Those are ripening apace for ruin whose hearts are unhumiliated under humbling providences: for God will walk contrary to those who thus walk contrary to him and provoke him to jealousy, as if they were stronger than he. 2. Their incorrigibility under all the rebukes of Providence hitherto (v. 13): *The people turn not unto him that smiteth them* (they are not wrought upon to reform their lives, to forsake their sins, and to return to their duty), *neither do they seek the Lord of hosts*; either they are atheists, and have no religion, or idolaters, and seek to those gods that are the creatures of their own fancy and the works of their own hands. Note, That which God designs, in smiting us, is to turn us to himself and to set us a seeking him; and, if this point be not gained by less judgments, greater may be expected. God smites that he may not kill. 3. Their general corruption of manners and abounding profaneness. (1.) Those that should have reformed them helped to debauch them (v. 16): *The leaders of this people mislead them, and cause them to err*, by conniving at their wickedness and countenancing wicked people, and by setting them bad examples; and then no wonder if those that are led of them be deceived and so destroyed. But it is ill with a people when their phys-

With making wicked laws and edicts: They decree *unrighteous decrees*, contrary to natural equity and the law of God: and what mischief they *prescribe* those under them *write* it, enrol it, and put it into the formality of a law. "Woe to the superior powers that devise and decree these decrees! they are not too high to be under the divine check. And woe to the inferior officers that draw them up, and enter them upon record—the writers that write the grievousness, they are not too mean to be within the divine cognizance. Principal and accessaries shall fall under the same woe." Note, It is bad to do hurt, but it is worse to do it with design and deliberation, to do wrong to many, and to involve many in the guilt of doing wrong. 2. With perverting justice in the execution of the laws that were made. No people had statutes and judgments so righteous as they had, and yet corrupt judges found ways to *turn aside the needy from judgment*, to hinder them from coming at their right and recovering what was their due, because they were needy and poor, and such as they could get nothing by nor expect any bribes from. 3. With enriching themselves by oppressing those that lay at their mercy, whom they ought to have protected. They make widows' houses and estates their prey, and they *rob the fatherless* of the little that is left them, because they have no friend to appear for them. Not to relieve them if they had wanted, not to right them if they were wronged, would have been crime enough in men that had wealth and power; but to rob them because on the side of the oppressors there was power, and the oppressed had no comforter (Eccl. iv. 1), was such a piece of barbarity as one would think none could ever be guilty of that had either the nature of a man or the name of an Israelite.

II. A challenge given them with all their pride and power to outface the judgments of God (v. 3): "*What will you do? To whom will you flee?*" You can trample upon the widows and fatherless; but *what will you do when God riseth up?*" Job xxxi. 14. Great men, who tyrannise over the poor, think they shall never be called to account for their tyranny, shall never hear of it again, or fare the worse for it; but *shall not God visit for these things?* Jer. v. 29. Will there not come a desolation upon those that have made others desolate? Perhaps it may come from far, and therefore may be long in coming; but it will come at last (reprieves are not pardons), and coming from far, from a quarter whence it was least expected, it will be the greater surprise and the more terrible. What will then become of these unrighteous judges? Now they *see their help in the gate* (Job xxxi. 21); but to whom will they then flee for help? Note, 1. There is a day of visitation coming, a day of enquiry and discovery, a searching day, which

will bring to light, to a true light, every man, and every man's work. 2. The day of visitation will be a day of desolation to all wicked people, when all their comforts and hopes will be lost and gone, and buried in ruin, and themselves left desolate. 3. Impenitent sinners will be utterly at a loss, and will not know what to do in the day of visitation and desolation. They cannot fight and hide themselves, cannot fight it out and defend themselves; they have no refuge in which either to shelter themselves from the present evil (*to whom will you flee for help?*) or to secure to themselves better times hereafter: "*Where will you leave your glory, to find it again when the storm is over?*" The wealth they had got was their glory, and they had no place of safety in which to deposit that, but they should certainly see it flee away. If our souls be our glory, as they ought to be, and we make them our chief care, we know where to leave them, and into whose hands to commit them, even those of a faithful Creator. 4. It concerns us all seriously to consider what we shall do in the day of visitation, in a day of affliction, in the day of death and judgment, and to provide that we may do well.

III. Sentence passed upon them, by which they are doomed, some to imprisonment and captivity (*they shall bow down among the prisoners, or under them*)—those that were most highly elevated in sin shall be most heavily loaded and most deeply sunk in trouble), others to death: they shall fall first, and so shall fall under the rest of the slain. Those that had trampled upon the widows and fatherless shall themselves be trodden down, v. 4. "This it will come to," says God, "*without me*, that is, because you have deserted me and driven me away from you." Nothing but utter ruin can be expected by those that live without God in the world, that cast him behind their back, and so cast themselves out of his protection.

And yet, for all this, his anger is not turned away, which intimates not only that God will proceed in his controversy with them, but that they shall be in a continual dread of it; they shall, to their unspeakable terror, see his hand still stretched out against them, and there shall remain nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment.

5 O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. 6 I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in

his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few. 8 For he saith, *Are not my princes altogether kings? 9 Is not Calno as Carchemish? Is not Hamath as Arpad? Is not Samaria as Damascus? 10 As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, and whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria; 11 Shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols? 12 Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the LORD hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks. 13 For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; or I am prudent: and I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures, and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man. 14 And my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people: and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped. 15 Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? Or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? As if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood. 16 Therefore shall the LORD, the LORD of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness; and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire. 17 And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame: and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day; 18 And shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body: and they shall be as when a standard-bearer fainteth. 19 And the rest of the trees of his forest shall be few, that a child may write them.*

The destruction of the kingdom of Israel by Shalmaneser king of Assyria was fore-

told in the foregoing chapter, and it had its accomplishment in the sixth year of Hezekiah, 2 Kings xviii. 10. It was total and final, head and tail were all cut off. Now the correction of the kingdom of Judah by Sennacherib king of Assyria is foretold in this chapter; and this prediction was fulfilled in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah, when that potent prince, encouraged by the successes of his predecessor against the ten tribes, *came up against all the fenced cities of Judah and took them, and laid siege to Jerusalem* (2 Kings xviii. 13, 17), in consequence of which we may well suppose Hezekiah and his kingdom were greatly alarmed, though there was a good work of reformation lately begun among them: but it ended well, in the confusion of the Assyrians and the great encouragement of Hezekiah and his people in their return to God. Now let us see here,

I. How God, in his sovereignty, deputed the king of Assyria to be his servant, and made use of him as a mere tool to serve his own purposes with (v. 5, 6): "*O Assyrian! know this, that thou art the rod of my anger; and I will send thee to be a scourge to the people of my wrath.*" Observe here,

1. How bad the character of the Jews was, though they appeared very good. They were a *hypocritical nation*, that made a profession of religion, and at this time particularly of reformation, but were not truly religious, not truly reformed, not so good as they pretended to be now that Hezekiah had brought goodness into fashion. When rulers are pious, and so religion is in reputation, it is common for nations to be hypocritical. They are a *profane nation*; so some read it. Hezekiah had in a great measure cured them of their idolatry, and now they ran into profaneness; nay, hypocrisy is profaneness: none profane the name of God so much as those who are called by that name and call upon it, and yet live in sin. Being a profane hypocritical nation, they are the people of God's wrath; they lie under his wrath, and are likely to be consumed by it. Note, Hypocritical nations are the people of God's wrath: nothing is more offensive to God than dissimulation in religion. See what a change sin made: those that had been God's chosen and hallowed people, above all people, had now become the *people of his wrath*. See Amos iii. 2. 2. How mean the character of the Assyrian was, though he appeared very great. He was but *the rod of God's anger*, an instrument God was pleased to make use of for the chastening of his people, that, being thus *chastened of the Lord, they might not be condemned with the world*. Note, The tyrants of the world are but the tools of Providence. Men are God's hand, his sword sometimes, to kill and slay (Ps. xvii. 13, 14), at other times his rod to correct. *The staff in their hand, wherewith they smite his people, is his indignation; it*

is his wrath that puts the staff into their hand and enables them to deal blows at pleasure among such as thought themselves a match for them. Sometimes God makes an idolatrous nation, that serves him not at all, a scourge to a hypocritical nation, that serves him not in sincerity and truth. The Assyrian is called the *rod of God's anger* because he is employed by him. (1.) From him his power is derived: *I will send him; I will give him a charge.* Note, All the power that wicked men have, though they often use it against God, they always receive from him. Pilate could have no power against Christ unless it were *given him from above*, John xix. 11. (2.) By him the exercise of that power is directed. The Assyrian is to *take the spoil and to take the prey*, not to shed any blood. We read not of any slain, but he is to plunder the country, rifle the houses, drive away the cattle, strip the people of all their wealth and ornaments, and *tread them down like the mire of the streets*. When God's professing people wallow in the mire of sin it is just with God to suffer their enemies to tread upon them like mire. But why must the Assyrian prevail thus against them? Not that they might be ruined, but that they might be thoroughly reformed.

II. See how the king of Assyria, in his pride, magnified himself as his own master, and pretended to be absolute and above all control, to act purely according to his own will and for his own honour. *God ordained him for judgment, even the mighty God established him for correction* (Hab. i. 12), to be an instrument of bringing his people to repentance, *howbeit he means not so, nor does his heart think so*, v. 7.

1. He does not think that he is either God's servant or Israel's friend, either that he *can* do no more than God will let him or that he *shall* do no more than God will make to work for the good of his people. God designs to correct his people for, and so to cure them of, their hypocrisy, and bring them nearer to himself; but was that Sennacherib's design? No, it was the furthest thing from his thoughts—he *means not so*. Note, (1.) The wise God often makes even the sinful passions and projects of men subservient to his own great and holy purposes. (2.) When God makes use of men as instruments in his hand to do his work it is very common for him to mean one thing and them to mean another, nay, for them to mean quite the contrary to what he intends. What Joseph's brethren designed for hurt God overruled for good, Gen. i. 20. See Mic. iv. 11, 12. Men have their ends and God has his, but we are sure *the counsel of the Lord shall stand*. But what is it the proud Assyrian aims at? The heart of kings is unsearchable, but God knew what was in his heart.

2. He designs nothing but *to destroy and to cut off nations not a few*, and to make

himself master of them. [1.] He designs to gratify his own cruelty; nothing will serve but to destroy and cut off. He hopes to regale himself with blood and slaughter; that of particular persons will not suffice, he must cut off nations. It is below him to deal by retail; he traffics in murders by wholesale. Nations, and those not a few, must have but one neck, which he will have the pleasure of cutting off. [2.] He designs to gratify his own covetousness and ambition, to set up for a universal monarch, and *to gather unto him all nations*, Hab. ii. 5. An insatiable desire of wealth and dominion is that which carries him on in this undertaking.

3. The prophet here brings him in vaunting and hectoring; and by his general letter to Hezekiah, written in his name, vainglory and arrogance seem to have entered very far into the spirit and genius of the man. His haughtiness and presumption are here described very largely, and his very language copied out, partly to represent him as ridiculous and partly to assure the people of God that he would be brought down; for that maxim generally holds true, that pride goes before destruction. It also intimates that God takes notice, and keeps an account of all men's proud and haughty words, with which they set heaven and earth at defiance. Those that speak *great swelling words of vanity* shall hear of them again.

(1.) He boasts of the great things he had done to other nations. [1.] He had made their kings his courtiers (v. 8): "*My princes are altogether kings.*" Those that are now my princes are such as have been kings." Or he means that he had raised his throne to such a degree that his servants, and those that were in command under him, were as great, and lived in as much pomp, as the kings of other countries. Or those that were absolute princes in their own dominions held their crowns under him, and did him homage. This was a vainglorious boast, but how great is our God whom we serve who is indeed King of kings, and whose subjects are made to him kings! Rev. i. 6. [2.] He had made himself master of their cities. He names several (v. 9) that were all alike reduced by him. *Cush* soon yielded as *Carchemish* did, *Hamath* could not hold out any more than *Arpad*, and *Samaria* had become his as well as *Damascus*. To support his boasts he is obliged to bring the victories of his predecessor into the account; for it was he that conquered Samaria, not Sennacherib. [3.] He had been too hard for their idols, their tutelar gods, *had smitten out the kingdoms of the idols* and found out ways to make them his own, v. 10. Their kingdoms took denomination from the idols they worshipped; the Moabites are called *the people of Chemosh* (Jer. xlviii. 46), because they imagined their gods were their patrons and protectors; and therefore Sennacherib vainly imagined that every conquest

of a kingdom was the conquest of a god. [4.] He had enlarged his own dominions, and removed the bounds of the people (v. 13), enclosing many large territories within the limits of his own kingdom and shifting a great way further the ancient land-marks which his fathers had set; he could not bear to be hemmed in so closely, but must have more room to thrive. By his removing the border of the people Mr. White understands his arbitrarily transplanting colonies from place to place, which was the constant practice of the Assyrians in all their conquests; and this is a probable interpretation. [5.] He had enriched himself with their wealth, and brought it into his own exchequer: *I have robbed their treasures*. In this he said truly. Great conquerors are often no better than great robbers. [6.] He had mastered all the opposition he met with: "*I have put down the inhabitants as a valiant man*. Those that are high, and thought they sat firmly, I have tumbled and made to come down."

(2.) He boasts of the manner in which he had done them. [1.] That he had done all this by his own policy and power (v. 13): *By the strength of my hand, for I am valiant; and by my wisdom, for I am prudent*;" not by the permission of Providence and the blessing of God. He knows not that it is God that makes him what he is, and puts the staff into his hand, but sacrifices to his own net, Job. i. 16. "This wealth is all gotten by my might and the power of my hand," Deut. xiii. 17. Downright atheism and profaneness, as well as pride and vanity, are at the bottom of men's attributing their prosperity and success thus to themselves and their own conduct, and raising their own character upon it. [2.] That he had done all this with a great deal of ease, and had made it out a sport and diversion of it, as if he had been taking birds' nests (v. 14): *My hand has found as a nest the riches of the people*; and when he had found them there was no more difficulty in taking them than in rifling a nest, nor any more reluctance or regret within his own breast in destroying families and cities than in destroying crows' nests; killing children was no more to him than killing birds. "*As one gathers the eggs that are left in the nest by the dam, so easily have I gathered all the earth*." Like Alexander, he thought he had conquered the world; and whatever prey he seized there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped, as birds do when their nests are rifled. They durst not make any opposition, no, nor any complaint; such awe did they stand in of this mighty conqueror. They were so weak that they knew it was to no purpose to resist, and he was so arbitrary that they knew it was to no purpose to complain. Strange that ever men who were made to do good should take a pride and a pleasure in doing wrong, and doing mischief to all about them without control, and should

reckon that their glory which is their shame! But their day will come to fall who thus make themselves the terror of the mighty, and much more of the feeble, in the land of the living.

(3.) He threatens what he will do to Jerusalem, which he was now about to lay siege to, v. 10, 11. He would master Jerusalem and her idols, as he had subdued other places and their idols, particularly Samaria. [1.] He blasphemously calls the God of Israel an idol, and sets him on a level with the false gods of other nations, as if none were the true God but Mithras, the sun, whom he worshipped. See how ignorant he was, and then we shall the less wonder that he was so proud. [2.] He prefers the graven images of other countries before those of Jerusalem and Samaria, when he might have known that the worshippers of the God of Israel were expressly forbidden to make any graven images, and if any did it must be by stealth, and therefore they could not be so rich and pompous as those of other nations. If he means the ark and the mercy-seat, he speaks like himself, very foolishly, and as one that judged by the sight of the eye, and might therefore be easily deceived in matters of spiritual concern. Those who make external pomp and splendour a mark of the true church go by the same rule. [3.] Because he had conquered Samaria, he concluded Jerusalem would fall of course: "*Shall not I do so to Jerusalem?*" can I not as easily, and may I not as justly?" But it did not follow; for Jerusalem adhered to her God, whereas Samaria had forsaken him.

III. See how God, in his justice, rebukes his pride and reads his doom. We have heard what the great king, the king of Assyria, says, and how big he talks. Let us now hear what the great God has to say by his servant the prophet, and we shall find that, wherein he deals proudly, God is above him.

1. He shows the vanity of his insolent and audacious boasts (v. 15): *Shall the axe boast itself against him that hews therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that draws it?* So absurd are the boasts of this proud man. "O what a dust do I make!" said the fly upon the cart-wheel in the fable. "What destruction do I make among the trees!" says the axe. Two ways the axe may be said to *boast itself against him that hews with it*:—(1.) By way of resistance and opposition. Sennacherib blasphemed God, insulted him, threatened to serve him as he had served the gods of the nations; now this was as if the axe should fly in the face of him that hews with it. The tool striving with the workman is no less absurd than the clay striving with the potter; and as it is a thing not to be justified that men should fight against God with the wit, and wealth, and power, which he gives them, so it is a thing not to be suffered

But if men will be thus proud and daring, and bid defiance to all that is just and sacred, let them expect that God will reckon with them; the more insolent they are the surer and sorer will their ruin be. (2.) By way of rivalry and competition. Shall the axe take to itself the praise of the work it is employed in? So senseless, so absurd was it for Sennacherib to say, *By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, v. 13.* It is as if the rod, when it is shaken, should boast that it guides the hand which shakes it; whereas, *when the staff is lifted up, is it not wood still?* so the last clause may be read. If it be an ensign of authority (as the nobles of the people carried staves, Num. xxi. 18), if it be an instrument of service, either to support a weak man or to correct a bad man, still it is wood, and can do nothing but as it is directed by him that uses it. The psalmist prays that God would make the nations to know that they were but men (Ps. ix. 20), the staff to know that it is but wood.

2. He foretels his fall and ruin.

(1.) That when God had done his work by him he would then do his work upon him, v. 12. For the comfort of the people of God in reference to Sennacherib's invasion, though it was a dismal time with them, let them know, [1.] That God designed to do good to Zion and Jerusalem by this providence. There is a work to be done upon them, which God intends, and which he will perform. Note, When God lets loose the enemies of his church and people, and suffers them for a time to prevail, it is in order to the performing of some great good work upon them; and, when that is done, then, and not till then, he will work deliverance for them. When God brings his people into trouble it is to try them (Dan. xi. 35), to bring sin to their remembrance and humble them for it, and to awaken them to a sense of their duty, to teach them to pray and to love and help one another; and *this must be the fruit, even the taking away of sin, ch. xxvii. 9.* When these points are, in some measure, gained by the affliction, it shall be removed, in mercy (Lev. xxvi. 41, 42), otherwise not; for, as the word, so the rod shall accomplish that for which God sends it.

[2.] That when God had wrought this work of grace for his people he would work a work of wrath and vengeance upon their invaders: *I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria.* His big words are here said to come from his stout heart, and they are the fruit of it; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. Notice is taken too of the glory of his high looks, for a proud look is the indication of a proud spirit. The enemies of the church are commonly very high and haughty; but, sooner or later, God will reckon for their haughtiness. He glories in it as an incontestable proof of his power and sovereignty that he looks upon proud men and abases them, Job xl. 11, &c.

(2.) That, how threatening soever this attempt was upon Zion and Jerusalem, it should certainly be baffled, and broken, and come to nothing, and he should not be able to bring to pass his enterprise, v. 16, 19. Observe,

[1.] Who it is that undertakes his destruction, and will be the author of it; not Hezekiah, or his princes, or the militia of Judah and Jerusalem (what can they do against such a potent force?), but God himself will do it, as the Lord of hosts, and as the light of Israel. First, We are sure he can do it, for he is the Lord of hosts, of all the hosts of heaven and earth. All the creatures are at his command; he makes what use he pleases of them and lays what restraints he pleases on them. He is the Lord of the hosts both of Judah and of Assyria, and can give the victory to which he pleases. Let us not fear the hosts of any enemy if we have the Lord of hosts for us. Secondly, We have reason to hope he will do it, for he is the light of Israel, and his Holy One. God is light; in him are perfect brightness, purity, and happiness. He is light, for he is the Holy One; his holiness is his glory. He is Israel's light, to direct and counsel his people, to favour and countenance them, and so to gladden and comfort them in the worst of times. He is their Holy One, for he is in covenant with them; his holiness is engaged and employed for them. God's holiness is the saints' comfort; they give thanks at the remembrance of it, and with a great deal of pleasure call him their Holy One, Hab. i. 12.

[2.] How this destruction is represented. It shall be, First, As a consumption of the body by a disease: *The Lord shall send leanness among his fatnesses, or his fat ones.* His numerous army, that was like a body covered with fatness, shall be diminished, and waste away, and become like a skeleton. Secondly, As a consumption of buildings, or trees and bushes, by fire: *Under his glory, that very thing which he glories in, he will kindle a burning, as the burning of a fire, which shall lay his army in ruins as suddenly as a raging fire lays a stately house in ashes.* Some make it an allusion to the fire kindled under the sacrifices; for proud sinners fall as sacrifices to divine justice. Observe, 1. How this fire shall be kindled, v. 17. The same God that is a rejoicing light to those that serve him faithfully will be a consuming fire to those that trifle with him or rebel against him. *The light of Israel shall be for a fire* to the Assyrians, as the same pillar of cloud was a light to the Israelites and a terror to the Egyptians in the Red Sea. What can oppose, what can extinguish, such a fire?

2. What desolation it shall make: *It shall burn and devour its thorns and briers, his officers and soldiers, which are of little worth, and vexations to God's Israel, as thorns and briers, whose end is to be burned, and which are easily and quickly consumed by*

a devouring fire. "*Who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle?*" They would be so far from stopping the fire that they would inflame it. *I would go through them and burn them together* (ch. xxvii. 4); they shall be devoured in one day, all cut off in an instant." When they cried not only Peace and safety, but Victory and triumph, then sudden destruction came; it came surprisingly, and was completed in a little time. "*Even the glory of his forest* (v. 18), the choice troops of his army, the veterans, the troops of the household, the bravest regiments he had, that he was most proud of and depended most upon, that he valued as men do their timber-trees (the glory of their forest) or their fruit-trees (the glory of their Carmel), shall be put as briers and thorns before the fire; they shall be consumed both soul and body, entirely consumed, not only a limb burned, but life taken away." Note, God is able to destroy both soul and body, and therefore we should fear him more than man, who can but kill the body. Great armies before him are but as great woods, which he can fell or fire when he pleases.

[3.] What would be the effect of this great slaughter. The prophet tells us, *First*, That the army would hereby be reduced to a very small number: *The rest of the trees of his forest shall be few*; very few shall escape the sword of the destroying angel, so few that there needs no artist, no muster-master or secretary of war, to take an account of them, for even a child may soon reckon the numbers of them, and write the names of them. *Secondly*, That those few who remained should be quite dispirited: *They shall be as when a standard-bearer fainteth*. When he either falls or flees, and his colours are taken by the enemy, this discourages the whole army, and puts them all into confusion. Upon the whole matter we must say, *Who is able to stand before this great and holy Lord God?*

20 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. 21 The remnant shall return, *even* the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God. 22 For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, *yet* a remnant of them shall return: the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness. 23 For the Lord God of hosts shall make a consumption, even determined, in the midst of all the land.

The prophet had said (v. 12) that *the Lord*

would perform his whole work upon Mount Zion and upon Jerusalem, by Sennacherib's invading the land. Now here we are told what that work should be, a twofold work:—

I. The conversion of some, to whom this providence should be sanctified and yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness, though for the present it was not joyous, but grievous; these are but a remnant (v. 22), *the remnant of Israel* (v. 20), *the remnant of Jacob* (v. 21), but a very few in comparison with the vast numbers of the people of Israel, who were as the sand of the sea. Note, Converting work is wrought but on a remnant, who are distinguished from the rest and set apart for God. When we see how populous Israel is, how numerous the members of the visible church are, as the sand of the sea, and yet consider that of these a remnant only shall be saved, that of the many that are called there are but few chosen, we shall surely *strive to enter in at the strait gate* and fear lest we *seem to come short*. This remnant of Israel are said to be *such as had escaped of the house of Jacob*, such as escaped the corruptions of the house of Jacob, and kept their integrity in times of common apostasy; and that was a fair escape. And therefore they escape the desolations of that house, and shall be preserved in safety in times of common calamity; and that also will be a fair and narrow escape. *Their lives shall be given them for a prey*, Jer. xlv. 5. *The righteous scarcely are saved*. Now, 1 This remnant shall come off from all confidence in an arm of flesh, this providence shall cure them of that: "*They shall no more again stay upon him that smote them*, shall never depend upon the Assyrians, as they have done, for help against their other enemies, finding that they are themselves their worst enemies." *Ictus piscator sapit—sufferings teach caution*. "They have now learned by dear-bought experience the folly of leaning upon that staff as a stay to them which may perhaps prove a staff to beat them." It is part of the covenant of a returning people (Hos. xiv. 3), *Assyria shall not save us*. Note, By our afflictions we may learn not to make creatures our confidence. 2. They shall come home to God, to the mighty God (one of the names given to the Messiah, ch. ix. 6), to the Holy One of Israel: "*The remnant shall return* (that was signified by the name of the prophet's son, *Shear-jashub*, ch. vii. 3), *even the remnant of Jacob*. They shall return, after the raising of the siege of Jerusalem, not only to the quiet possession of their houses and lands, but to God and to their duty; they shall repent, and pray, and seek his face, and reform their lives." The remnant that escape are a returning remnant: they shall return to God, and shall stay upon him. Note, Those only may with comfort stay upon God that return to him; then may we have a humble confidence in God when we make conscience of

our duty to him. They shall stay upon the Holy One of Israel, in truth, and not in pretence and profession only. This promise of the conversion and salvation of a remnant of Israel is applied by the apostle (Rom. ix. 27) to the remnant of the Jews which at the first preaching of the gospel received and entertained it, and sufficiently proves that it was no new thing for God to abandon to ruin a great many of the seed of Abraham and yet preserve his promise to Abraham in full force and virtue; for so it was now. The number of the children of Israel was *as the sand of the sea* (according to the promise, Gen. xxii. 17), and yet only a remnant shall be saved.

II. The consumption of others: *The Lord God of hosts shall make a consumption, v. 23.* This is not meant (as that v. 18) of the consumption of the Assyrian army, but of the consumption of the estates and families of many of the Jews by the Assyrian army. This is taken notice of to magnify the power and goodness of God in the escape of the distinguished remnant, and to let us know what shall become of those that will not return to God; they shall be wasted away by this consumption, this general decay in the midst of the land. Observe, 1. It is a consumption of God's own making; he is the author of it. The Lord God of hosts, whom none can resist, shall make this consumption. 2. It is decreed. It is not the product of a sudden resolve, but was before ordained. It is determined, not only that there shall be such a consumption, but it is cut out (so the word is); it is particularly appointed how far it shall extend and how long it shall continue, who shall be consumed by it and who not. 3. It is an overflowing consumption, that shall overspread the land, and, like a mighty torrent or inundation, bear down all before it. 4. Though it overflows, it is not at random, but in righteousness, which signifies both wisdom and equity. God will justly bring this consumption upon a provoking people, but he will wisely and graciously set bounds to it: *Hitherto it shall come, and no further.*

24 Therefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts, O my people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian: he shall smite thee with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of Egypt. 25 For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease, and mine anger in their destruction. 26 And the Lord of hosts shall stir up a scourge for him according to the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb: and as his rod was upon the sea, so shall he lift it up after the manner of Egypt. 27 And

it shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing. 28 He is come to Aiath, he is passed to Migron; at Michmash he hath laid up his carriages: 29 They are gone over the passage: they have taken their lodging at Geba; Ramah is afraid; Gibeah of Saul is fled. 30 Lift up thy voice, O daughter of Galilee: cause it to be heard unto Laish. O poor Anathoth. 31 Madmenah is removed; the inhabitants of Geba gather themselves to flee. 32 As yet shall he remain at Nob that day: he shall shake his hand against the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem. 33 Behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, shall lay the bough with terror: and the high ones of stature shall be hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled. 34 And he shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one.

The prophet, in his preaching, distinguishes between the precious and the vile for God in his providence, even in the same providence, does so. He speaks terror, of Sennacherib's invasion, to the hypocrites who were the people of God's wrath. But here he speaks comfort to the sincere who were the people of God's love. The judgment was sent for the sake of the former; the deliverance was wrought for the sake of the latter. Here we have,

I. An exhortation to God's people not to be frightened at this threatening calamity nor to be put into any confusion or consternation by it. *Let the sinners in Zion be afraid (ch. xxxiii. 14); but O my people, that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian, v. 24.* Note, It is against the mind and will of God that his people, whatever may happen, should give way to that fear which has torment and amazement. Those that dwell in Zion, where God dwells and where his people attend him, and are employed in his service that are under the protection of the bulwark that are round about Zion (Ps. xlviii. 13), need not be afraid of any enemy. Let their souls dwell at ease in God.

II. Considerations offered for the silence of their fear.

1. The Assyrian shall do nothing against them but what God has appointed and determined. They are here told beforehand what he shall do, that it may be no surprise to them. *He shall smite thee by the divine*

permission, but it shall be only *with a rod* to correct thee, not with a sword to wound and kill; nay, *he shall but lift up his staff against thee*, threaten thee, and frighten thee, and make the rod at thee, *after the manner of Egypt*, as the Egyptians shook their staff against your fathers at the Red Sea, when they said, *We will pursue, we will overtake* (Exod. xv. 9), but could not reach to do them any hurt." Note, We should not be frightened at those enemies that can do no more than frighten us.

2. The storm shall soon blow over (v. 25): *'t is but a very little while—a little, little while* (so the word is); *and the indignation shall cease, even my anger*, which is *the staff in their hand* (v. 5), so that when that ceases they are armed and disabled to do any further mischief. Note, God's anger against his people is but for a moment (Ps. xxx. 5), and when that ceases, and is turned away from us, we need not fear the fury of any man, or it is impotent passion.

3. The enemy that threatens them shall himself be reckoned with. God's anger against his people shall cease in the destruction of their enemies; when he turns away his wrath from Israel he shall turn it against the Assyrian; and the rod with which he corrected his people shall not only be laid aside, but thrown into the fire. *He lifted up his staff against Zion*, but *God shall stir up a scourge for him* (v. 26); he is a terror to God's people, but God will be a terror to him. The destroying angel shall be this scourge, which he can neither flee from nor contend with. The prophet, for the encouragement of God's people, quotes precedents, and puts them in mind of what God had done formerly against the enemies of his church, who were very strong and formidable, but were brought to ruin. The destruction of the Assyrian shall be, (1.) *According to the slaughter of Midian*, which was effected by an invisible power, but effected suddenly, and it was a total rout; and as, *at the rock of Oreb*, one of the princes of Midian, after the battle, was slain, so shall Sennacherib be in the temple of his god Nisroch, after the defeat of his forces, when he thinks the bitterness of death is past. Compare with this Ps. lxxxiii. 11, *Make their nobles like Oreb and like Zeeb*; and see how God's promises and his people's prayers agree. (2.) *As his rod was upon the sea*, the Red Sea, as Moses' rod was upon that, to divide it first for the escape of Israel and then to close it again for the destruction of their pursuers, so shall his rod now be *lifted up, after the manner of Egypt*, for the deliverance of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Assyrian. Note, It is good to observe a resemblance between God's latter and former appearances for his people, and against his and their enemies.

4. They shall be wholly delivered from the power of the Assyrian, and from the fear of it, v. 27. "They shall not only be eased

of the Assyrian army, which is now quartered upon them and which is a grievous yoke and burden to them, but they shall no more pay that tribute to the king of Assyria which before this invasion he exacted from them (2 Kings xviii. 14), shall be no longer at his service, nor lie at his mercy, as they have done; nor shall he ever again put the country under contribution." Some think it looks further, to the deliverance of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon; and further yet, to the redemption of believers from the tyranny of sin and Satan. The yoke shall not only be taken away, but it *shall be destroyed*. The enemy shall no more recover his strength, to do the mischief he has done; and this *because of the anointing*, for their sakes who were partakers of the anointing. (1.) For Hezekiah's sake, who was the anointed of the Lord, who had been an active reformer, and was dear to God. (2.) For David's sake. This is particularly given as the reason why God would defend Jerusalem from Sennacherib (ch. xxxvii. 35), *For my own sake, and for my servant David's sake*. (3.) For his people Israel's sake, the good people among them that had received the unction of divine grace. (4.) For the sake of the Messiah, the Anointed of God, whom God had an eye to in all the deliverances of the Old-Testament church, and hath still an eye to in all the favours he shows to his people. It is for his sake that the yoke is broken, and that we are made free indeed.

III. A description both of the terror of the enemy and the terror with which many were struck by it, and the folly of both exposed, v. 28, to the end. Here observe,

1. How formidable the Assyrians were and how daring and threatening they affected to appear. Here is a particular description of the march of Sennacherib, what course he steered, what swift advances he made: *He has come to Aiath*, &c. "This and the other place he has made himself master of, and has met with no opposition." *At Michmash he has laid up his carriages*, as if he had no further occasion for his heavy artillery, so easily was every place he came to reduced; or the store-cities of Judah, which were fortified for that purpose, had now become his magazines. Some remarkable pass, and an important one, he had taken: *They have gone over the passage*.

2. How cowardly the men of Judah were, the degenerate seed of that lion's whelp. They were *afraid*; they fled upon the first alarm, and did not offer to make any head against the enemy. Their apostasy from God had dispirited them, so that one chased a thousand of them. Instead of a valiant shout, to animate one another, nothing was heard but lamentation, to discourage and weaken one another. And *poor Anathoth*, a priests' city, that should have been a pattern of courage, shrieks louder than any,

v. 30. With respect to those that *gathered themselves* together, it was not to fight, but to flee by consent, v. 31. This is designed either, (1.) To show how fast the news of the enemy's progress flew through the kingdom: *He has come to Aiath*, says one; nay, says another, *He has passed to Migron*, &c. And yet, perhaps, it was not altogether so bad as common fame represented it. But we must watch against the fear, not only of evil tidings, but of evil tidings, which often make things worse than really they are, Ps. cxii. 7. Or, (2.) To show what imminent danger Jerusalem was in, when its enemies made so many bold advances towards it and its friends could not make one bold stand to defend it. Note, The more daring the church's enemies are, and the more dastardly those are that should appear for her, the more will God be exalted in his own strength, when, notwithstanding this, he works deliverance for her.

3. How impotent his attempt upon Jerusalem shall be: *He shall remain at Nob*, whence he may see Mount Zion, and there *he shall shake his hand against it*, v. 32. He shall threaten it, and that shall be all; it shall be safe, and shall set him at defiance. The daughter of Jerusalem, to be even with him, shall *shake her head at him*, ch. xxxvii. 22.

4. How fatal it would prove, in the issue, to himself. When he *shakes his hand at Jerusalem*, and is about to lay hands on it, then is God's time to appear against him; for Zion is the place of which God has said, *This is my rest for ever*; therefore those who threaten it affront God himself. Then *the Lord shall lop the bough with terror and cut down the thickets of the forest*, v. 33, 34.

(1.) The pride of the enemy shall be humbled, the boughs that are lifted up on high shall be lopped off, the high and stately trees shall be hewn down; that is, the haughty shall be humbled. Those that lift up themselves in competition with God or opposition to him shall be abased. (2.) The power of the enemy shall be broken: *The thickets of the forest he shall cut down*. When the Assyrian soldiers were under their arms, and their spears erect, they looked like a forest, like Lebanon; but, when in one night they all became as dead corpses, the pikes were laid on the ground, and Lebanon was of a sudden cut down by a mighty one, by the destroying angel, who in a little time slew so many thousands of them: and, if this shall be the exit of that proud invader, let not God's people be afraid of him. *Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die?*

CHAP. XI.

It is a very good transition in prophecy (whether it be so in rhetoric or no), and a very common one, to pass from the prediction of the temporal deliverances of the church to that of the great salvation, which in the fulness of time should be wrought out by Jesus Christ, of which the other were types and figures, to which all the prophets bore witness; and so the ancient Jews understood

them. For what else was it that raised so great an expectation of the Messiah at the time he came. Upon occasion of the prophecy of the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib, here comes a prophecy concerning Messiah the Prince. I. His rise out of the house of David, ver. 1. II. His qualifications for his great undertaking, ver. 2, 3. III. The justice and equity of his government, ver. 4-5. IV. The peaceableness of his kingdom, ver. 6-9. V. The accession of the Gentiles to it (ver. 10), and with them a remnant of the Jews, that should be united with them in the Messiah's kingdom, ver. 11-16. And of all this God would not shortly give them a type, and some dark representation, in the excellent government of Hezekiah, the great peace which that nation should enjoy under him, after the ruin of Sennacherib's design, and the return of many of the ten tribes out of their perdition to their brethren of the land of Judah, when they enjoyed that great tranquillity.

AND there shall come forth a root out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. 2 And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. 3 And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD, and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: 4 But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. 5 And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. 6 The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. 7 And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. 8 And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. 9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

The prophet had before, in this sermon spoken of a child that should be born, a son that should be given, on whose shoulder the government should be, intending this for the comfort of the people of God in times of trouble, as dying Jacob, many ages before had intended the prospect of Shiloh for the comfort of his seed in their affliction in Egypt. He had said (ch. x. 27) that *the yoke*

should be destroyed because of the anointing; now here he tells us on whom that anointing should rest. He foretels,

I. That the Messiah should, in due time, arise out of the house of David, as that branch of the Lord which he had said (*ch. ix. 2*) should be excellent and glorious; the word is *Netzer*, which some think is referred to in *Matt. ii. 23*, where it is said to be spoken by the prophets of the Messiah that he should be called a Nazarene. Observe here, 1. Whence this branch should arise—from *Jesse*. He should be the son of David, with whom the covenant of royalty was made, and to whom it was promised with an oath that of the fruit of his loins God would raise up Christ, *Acts ii. 30*. David is often called the son of *Jesse*, and Christ is called so, because he was to be not only the Son of David, but David himself, *Hos. iii. 5*. 2. The meanness of his appearance. (1.) He is called a *rod*, and a *branch*; both the words here used signify a weak, small, tender product, a *twig* and a *sprig* (so some render them), such as is easily broken off. The enemies of God's church were just before compared to strong and stately boughs (*ch. x. 33*), which will not, without great labour, be hewn down, but Christ to a tender branch (*ch. liii. 2*); yet he shall be victorious over them. (2.) He is said to come out of *Jesse* rather than David, because *Jesse* lived and died in meanness and obscurity; his family was of small account (*1 Sam. xviii. 18*), and it was in a way of contempt and reproach that David was sometimes called the son of *Jesse*, *1 Sam. xxii. 7*. (3.) He comes forth out of the *stem*, or *stump*, of *Jesse*. When the royal family, that had been as a cedar, was cut down, and only the stump of it left, almost levelled with the ground and lost in the grass of the field (*Dan. iv. 15*), yet it shall sprout again (*Job xiv. 7*); nay, it shall grow out of his roots, which are quite buried in the earth, and, like the roots of flowers in the winter, have no stem appearing above ground. The house of David was reduced and brought very low at the time of Christ's birth, witness the obscurity and poverty of Joseph and Mary. The Messiah was thus to begin his estate of humiliation, for submitting to which he should be highly exalted, and would thus give early notice that his kingdom was not of this world. The Chaldee paraphrase reads this, *There shall come forth a King from the sons of Jesse, and the Messiah (or Christ) shall be anointed out of his sons' sons*.

II. That he should be every way qualified for that great work to which he was designed, that this tender branch should be so watered with the dews of heaven as to become a strong rod for a sceptre to rule, *v. 2. 1*. In general, the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him. The Holy Spirit, in all his gifts and graces, shall not only come, but rest

and abide upon him; he shall have the Spirit not by measure, but without measure, the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him, *Col. i. 19*; *ii. 9*. He began his preaching with this (*Luke iv. 18*), *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me*. 2. In particular, the spirit of government, by which he should be every way fitted for that judgment which the Father has committed to him and given him authority to execute (*John v. 22, 27*), and not only so, but should be made the fountain and treasury of all grace to believers, that from his fulness they might all receive the Spirit of grace, as all the members of the body derive animal spirits from the head. (1.) He shall have the spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and knowledge; he shall thoroughly understand the business he is to be employed in. No man knows the Father but the Son, *Matt. xi. 27*. What he is to make known to the children of men concerning God, and his mind and will, he shall be himself acquainted with and apprised of, *John i. 18*. He shall know how to administer the affairs of his spiritual kingdom in all the branches of it, so as effectually to answer the two great intentions of it, the glory of God and the welfare of the children of men. The terms of the covenant shall be settled by him, and ordinances instituted, in wisdom: treasures of wisdom shall be hid in him; he shall be our counsellor, and shall be made of God to us wisdom. (2.) The spirit of courage, or might, or fortitude. The undertaking was very great, abundance of difficulty must be broken through, and therefore it was necessary that he should be so endowed that he might not fail or be discouraged, *ch. xlii. 4*. He was famed for courage in his teaching the way of God in truth, and not caring for any man, *Matt. xxii. 16*. (3.) The spirit of religion, or the fear of the Lord; not only he shall himself have a reverent affection for his Father, as his servant (*ch. xlii. 1*), and he was heard in that he feared (*Heb. v. 7*), but he shall have a zeal for religion, and shall design the advancement of it in his whole undertaking. Our faith in Christ was never designed to supersede and jostle out, but to increase and support, our fear of the Lord.

III. That he should be accurate, and critical, and very exact in the administration of his government and the exercise of the power committed to him (*v. 3*): The Spirit wherewith he shall be clothed shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord—of an acute smell or scent (so the word is), for the apprehensions of the mind are often expressed by the sensations of the body. Note, 1. Those are must truly and valuably intelligent that are so in the fear of the Lord, in the business of religion, for that is both the foundation and top-stone of wisdom. 2. By this it will appear that we have the Spirit of God, if we have spiritual

senses exercised, and are of *quick understanding in the fear of the Lord*. Those have divine illumination that know their duty and know how to go about it. 3. Therefore Jesus Christ had the spirit without measure, that he might perfectly understand his undertaking; and he did so, as appears not only in the admirable answers he gave to all that questioned with him, which proved him to be of *quick understanding in the fear of the Lord*, but in the management of his whole undertaking. He has settled the great affair of religion so unexceptionably well (so as effectually to secure both God's honour and man's happiness) that, it must be owned, he thoroughly understood it.

IV. That he should be just and righteous in all the acts of his government, and there should appear in it as much equity as wisdom. He shall judge as he expresses it himself, and as he himself would be judged of, John vii. 24. 1. Not according to outward appearance (v. 3): *He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes*, with respect of persons (Job xxxiv. 19) and according to outward shows and appearances, nor *reprove after the hearing of his ears*, by common fame and report, and the representations of others, as men commonly do; nor does he judge of men by the fair words they speak, *calling him, Lord, Lord*, or their plausible actions before the eye of the world, which they do to be seen of men; but he will judge by the hidden man of the heart, and the inward principles men are governed by, of which he is an infallible witness. Christ will judge the secrets of men (Rom. ii. 16), will determine concerning them, not according to their own pretensions and appearances (that were to *judge after the sight of the eyes*), not according to the opinion others have of them (that were to judge after the hearing of the ears), but we are sure that *his judgment is according to truth*. 2. He will judge righteous judgment (v. 5): *Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins*. He shall be righteous in the administration of his government, and his righteousness shall be his girdle; it shall constantly compass him and cleave to him, shall be his ornament and honour; he shall gird himself for every action, shall gird on his sword for war in righteousness; his righteousness shall be his strength, and shall make him expeditious in his undertakings, as a man with his loins girt. In conformity to Christ, his followers must have the girdle of truth (Eph. vi. 14) and it will be the stability of the times. Particularly, (1.) He shall in righteousness plead for the people that are poor and oppressed; he will be their protector (v. 4): *With righteousness shall he judge the poor*; he shall judge in favour and defence of those that have right on their side, though they are poor in the world, and because they are poor in spirit. It is the duty of princes to defend and deliver

the poor (Ps. lxxxii. 3, 4), and the honour of Christ that he is the poor man's King (Ps. lxxii. 2, 4). He shall *debate with evenness for the meek of the earth*, or of the land, those that bear the injuries done them with meekness and patience are in a special manner entitled to the divine care and protection. 1, *as a deaf man, heard not, for thou wilt hear*, Ps. xxxviii. 13, 14. Some read it, *He shall reprove or correct the meek of the earth with equity*. If his own people, the meek of the land, do amiss, he will visit *their transgression with the rod*. (2.) He shall in righteousness plead against his enemies that are proud and oppressors (v. 4): *But he shall smite the earth*, the man of the earth, that doth oppress (see Ps. x. 18), the men of the world, that *mind earthly things only* (Ps. xvii. 14); these he shall smite *with the rod of his mouth*, the word of his mouth, speaking terror and ruin to them, his threatenings shall take hold of them, and be executed upon them. *With the breath of his lips*, by the operation of his Spirit, according to his word, and working with and by it, *he shall slay the wicked*. He will do it easily, with a word's speaking, as he laid those flat who came to seize him, by saying *I am he*, John xviii. 6. Killing terrors shall arrest their consciences, killing judgments shall ruin them, their power, and all their interests; and in the other world everlasting tribulation will be recompensed to those that trouble his poor people. The apostle applies this to the destruction of the man of sin, whom he calls *that wicked one* (2 Thess. ii. 8) *whom the Lord will consume with the spirit of his mouth*. And the Chaldee here reads it, *He shall slay that wicked Romulus*, or Rome, as Mr. Hugh Broughton understands it.

V. That there should be great peace and tranquillity under his government; this is an explication of what was said in ch. ix. 6, that he should be the Prince of peace. Peace signifies two things:—

1. Unity or concord, which is intimated in these figurative promises, that even *the wolf shall dwell peaceably with the lamb*; men of the most fierce and furious dispositions, who used to bite and devour all about them, shall have their temper so strangely altered by the efficacy of the gospel and grace of Christ that they shall live in love even with the weakest and such as formerly they would have made an easy prey of. So far shall the sheep be from hurting one another, as *sometimes* they have done (Ezek. xxxiv. 20, 21), that even the wolves shall agree with them. Christ, who is our peace, came to slay all enemies and to settle lasting friendships among his followers, particularly between Jews and Gentiles: when multitudes of both, being converted to the faith of Christ, united in one sheep-fold, then the wolf and the lamb dwelt together; the wolf did not so much

as threaten the lamb, nor was the lamb afraid of the wolf. *The leopard shall not only not tear the kid, but shall lie down with her: even their young ones shall lie down together, and shall be trained up in a blessed amity, in order to the perpetuating of it. The lion shall cease to be ravenous and shall eat straw like the ox, as some think all the beasts of prey did before the fall. The asp and the cockatrice shall cease to be venomous, so that parents shall let their children play with them and put their hands among them. A generation of vipers shall become a seed of saints, and the old complaint of *homo homini lupus*—man is a wolf to man, shall be at an end. Those that inhabit the holy mountain shall live as amicably as the creatures did that were with Noah in the ark, and it shall be a means of their preservation, for *they shall not hurt nor destroy one another as they have done.* Now, (1.) This is fulfilled in the wonderful effect of the gospel upon the minds of those that sincerely embrace it; it changes the nature, and makes those that trampled on the meek of the earth, not only meek like them, but affectionate towards them. When Paul, who had persecuted the saints, joined himself to them, then the *wolf dwelt with the lamb.* (2.) Some are willing to hope it shall yet have a further accomplishment in the latter days, when *swords shall be beaten into ploughshares.**

2. Safety or security. Christ, the great Shepherd, shall take such care of his flock that those who would hurt them shall not; they shall not only not destroy one another, but no enemy from without shall be permitted to give them any molestation. The property of troubles, and of death itself, shall be so altered that they shall not do any real hurt to, much less shall they be the destruction of, any that *have their conversation in the holy mountain,* 1 Pet. iii. 13. *Who, or what, can harm us, if we be followers of him that is good?* God's people shall be delivered, not only from evil, but from the fear of it. Even the *sucking child* shall without any terror *play upon the hole of the asp*; blessed Paul does so when he says, *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?* and, *O death! where is thy sting?*

Lastly, Observe what shall be the effect, and what the cause, of this wonderful softening and sweetening of men's tempers by the grace of God. 1. The effect of it shall be tractableness, and a willingness to receive instruction: *A little child shall lead those who formerly scorned to be controlled by the strongest man.* Calvin understands it of their willing submission to the ministers of Christ, who are to instruct with meekness and not to use any coercive power, but to be as *little children*, Matt. xviii. 3. See 2 Cor. viii. 5. 2. The cause of it shall be the knowledge of God. The more there is of that the more there is of a disposition to

peace. They shall thus live in love, *for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord*, which shall extinguish men's heats and animosities. The better acquainted we are with the God of love the more shall we be changed into the same image and the better affected shall we be to all those that bear his image. The earth shall be as full of this knowledge as the channels of the sea are of water—so broad and extensive shall this knowledge be and so far shall it spread—so deep and substantial shall this knowledge be, and so long shall it last. There is much more of the knowledge of God to be got by the gospel of Christ than could be got by the law of Moses; and, whereas then in Judah only was God known, now *all shall know him*, Heb. viii. 11. But that is knowledgè falsely so called which sows discord among men; the right knowledge of God settles peace.

10 And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. 11 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the LORD shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. 12 And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. 13 The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. 14 But they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west; they shall spoil them of the east together: they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them. 15 And the LORD shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make *men* go over dry-shod. 16 And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left,

from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.

We have here a further prophecy of the enlargement and advancement of the kingdom of the Messiah, under the type and figure of the flourishing condition of the kingdom of Judah in the latter end of Hezekiah's reign, after the defeat of Sennacherib.

I. This prediction was in part accomplished when the great things God did for Hezekiah and his people proved as an ensign, inviting the neighbouring nations to them to enquire of the wonders done in the land, on which errand the king of Babylon's ambassadors came. To them the Gentiles sought; and Jerusalem, the rest or habitation of the Jews, was then glorious, v. 10. Then many of the Israelites who belonged to the kingdom of the ten tribes, who upon the destruction of that kingdom by the king of Assyria were forced to flee for shelter into all the countries about and to some that lay very remote, even to the islands of the sea, were encouraged to return to their own country and put themselves under the protection and government of the king of Judah, the rather because it was an Assyrian army by which their country had been ruined and that was now routed. This is said to be a recovery of them the second time (v. 11), such an instance of the power and goodness of God, and such a reviving to them, as their first deliverance out of Egypt was. Then the outcasts of Israel should be gathered in, and brought home, and those of Judah too, who, upon the approach of the Assyrian army, shifted for their own safety. Then the old feud between Ephraim and Judah shall be forgotten, and they shall join against the Philistines and their other common enemies, v. 13, 14. Note, Those who have been sharers with each other in afflictions and mercies, dangers and deliverances, ought in consideration thereof to unite for their joint and mutual safety and protection; and it is likely to be well with the church when Ephraim and Judah are one against the Philistines. Then, whatever difficulties there may be in the way of the return of the dispersed, the Lord shall find out some way or other to remove them, as when he brought Israel out of Egypt he dried up the Red Sea and Jordan (v. 15) and led them to Canaan through the invincible embarrassments of a vast howling wilderness, v. 16. The like will he do this second time, or that which shall be equivalent. When God's time has come for the deliverance of his people mountains of opposition shall become plain before him. Let us not despair therefore when the interests of the church seem to be brought very low; God can soon turn gloomy days into glorious ones.

II. It had a further reference to the day of the Messiah and the accession of the Gentiles to his kingdom; for to these the apostle applies v. 10, of which the following verses are a continuation. Rom. xv. 12. *There shall be a root of Jesse; and he shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in him shall the Gentiles trust.* That is a key to this prophecy, which speaks of Christ as the root of Jesse, or a branch out of his root (v. 1), a root out of a dry ground, ch. liii. He is the root of David (Rev. v. 5), the root and offspring of David Rev. xxii. 16.

1. He shall stand, or be set up, for an ensign of the people. When he was crucified he was lifted up from the earth, that, as an ensign or beacon, he might draw the eyes and the hearts of all men unto him, John xi. 32. He is set up as an ensign in the preaching of the everlasting gospel, in which the ministers, as standard-bearers, display the banner of his love, to allure us to him (Cant. i. 4), the banner of his truth, under which we may enlist ourselves, to engage in a holy war against sin and Satan. Christ is the ensign to which the children of God that were scattered abroad are gathered together (John xi. 52), and in him they meet as the centre of their unity.

2. To him shall the Gentiles seek. We read of Greeks that did so (John xii. 21, *Who would see Jesus*), and upon that occasion Christ spoke of his being lifted up, to draw all men to him. The apostle, from the LXX. (or perhaps the LXX. from the apostle, in the editions after Christ) reads (Rom. xv. 12), *In him shall the Gentiles trust*; they shall seek to him with a dependence on him.

3. His rest shall be glorious. Some understand this of the death of Christ (the triumphs of the cross made even that glorious), others of his ascension, when he sat down to rest at the right hand of God. Or rather it is meant of the gospel church, the Mount Zion of which Christ has said, *This is my rest*, and in which he resides. Though despised by the world, having up to it the beauty of holiness, is truly glorious, glorious high throne, Jer. xvii. 12.

4. Both Jews and Gentiles shall be gathered to him, v. 11. A remnant of both, little remnant in comparison, which shall be recovered, as it were, with great difficulty and hazard. As formerly God delivered his people, and gathered them out of all the countries whither they were scattered (Ps. cvi. 47; Jer. xvi. 15, 16), so he will, second time, in another way, by the powerful working of the Spirit of grace with the word. He shall set his hand to do it; he shall exert his power, the arm of the Lord shall be revealed to do it. (1.) There shall be a remnant of the Jews gathered in: *The outcasts of Israel and the dispersed of Judah* (v. 12), many of whom, at the time of the bringing of them in to Christ, were Jews

II. "Thou shalt have a heart to say so." All God's other gifts to his people shall be crowned with this. He will give them grace to ascribe all the glory of them to him, and to speak of them upon all occasions with thankfulness to his praise. *Thou shalt say*, that is, thou oughtest to say so. *In that day*, when many are brought home to Jesus Christ and flock to him as doves to their windows, instead of envying the kind reception they find with Christ, as the Jews grudged the favour shown to the Gentiles, *thou shalt say, O Lord! I will praise thee.* Note, We ought

to rejoice in, and give thanks for, the grace of God to others as well as to ourselves.

1. Believers are here taught to give thanks to God for the turning away of his displeasure from them and the return of his favour to them (v. 1): *O Lord! I will praise thee, though thou wast angry with me.* Note, Even God's frowns must not put us out of tune for praising him; though he be angry with us, though he slay us, yet we must put our trust in him and give him thanks. God has often just cause to be angry with us, but we have never any reason to be angry with him, nor to speak otherwise than well of him; even when he blames us we must praise him. *Thou wast angry with us, but thy anger is turned away.* Note, (1.) God is sometimes angry with his own people and the fruits of his anger do appear, and they ought to take notice of this, that they may humble themselves under his mighty hand. (2.) Though God may for a time be angry with his people, yet his anger shall at length be turned away; it endures but for a moment, nor will he contend for ever. By Jesus Christ, the root of Jesse, God's anger against mankind was turned away; for *he is our peace.* (3.) Those whom God is reconciled to he comforts; even the turning away of his anger is a comfort to them; yet that is not all: those that are *at peace with God may rejoice in hope of the glory of God*, Rom. v. 1. 2. Nay, God sometimes brings his people into a wilderness that there he may *speak comfortably to them*, Hosea ii. 14. (4.) The turning away of God's anger, and the return of his comforts to us, ought to be the matter of our joyful thankful praises.

2. They are taught to triumph in God and their interest in him (v. 2): "*Behold, and wonder; God is my salvation; not only my Saviour, by whom I am saved, but my salvation, in whom I am safe. I depend upon him as my salvation, for I have found him to be so. He shall have the glory of all the salvations that have been wrought for me, and from him only will I expect the salvations I further need, and not from hills and mountains: and if God be my salvation, if he undertake my eternal salvation, I will trust in him to prepare me for it and preserve me to it. I will trust him with all my temporal concerns, not doubting but he will make all to work for my good. I will be confident, that is, I will be always easy in my own mind.*" Note, Those that have God for their salvation may enjoy themselves with a holy security and serenity of mind. Let faith in God as our salvation be effectual, (1.) To silence our fears. *We must trust, and not be afraid*, not be afraid that the God we trust in will fail us; no, there is no danger of that; not be afraid of any creature, though ever so formidable and threatening. Note, Faith in God is a sovereign remedy against disquieting tormenting fears. (2.) To support our hopes. Is the Lord Jehovah our

salvation? Then he will be our *strength and song*. We have work to do and temptation to resist, and we may depend upon him to enable us for both, to *strengthen us with might by his Spirit in the inner man*, for it is our strength; his grace is so, and his grace shall be sufficient for us. We have many troubles to undergo, and must expect griefs in a vale of tears; and we may depend upon him to comfort us in all our tribulations, for he is our song; he *giveth song the night*. If we make God our strength and put our confidence in him, he will be our strength; if we make him our song, and place our comfort in him, he will be our song. Many good Christians have God for their strength who have him not for their song; they walk in darkness: but light is sown for them. And those that have God for their strength ought to make him their song, that is, to give him the glory of it (Ps. lxxviii. 35) and to take to themselves the comfort of it, for he will become their salvation. Observe the title here given to God *Jah, Jehovah*. *Jah* is the contraction of *Jehovah*, and both signify his eternity and unchangeableness, which are a great comfort to those that depend upon him as their strength and their song. Some make *Jah* to signify the Son of God made man; he is *Jehovah*, and in him we may glory as our strength, and song, and salvation.

3. They are taught to derive comfort themselves from the love of God and all the tokens of that love (v. 3): "*Therefore, because the Lord Jehovah is your strength and song and will be your salvation, you shall draw water with joy.*" Note, The assurances God has given us of his love, and the experiences we have had of the benefit and comfort of his grace, should greatly encourage our faith in him and our expectations from him: "*Out of the wells of salvation in God, who is the fountain of all good to his people, you shall draw water with joy.*" God's favour shall flow forth to you, and you shall have the comfort of it and make use of the blessed fruits of it." Note, (1.) God's promises revealed, ratified, and given out to us, in his ordinances, are wells of salvation, wells of *the Saviour* (so some read it), for them the Saviour and salvation are made known to us and made over to us. (2.) It is our duty by faith to draw water out of these wells, to take to ourselves the benefit and comfort that are treasured up for us in them, as those that acknowledge all our fresh springs to be there and all our fresh streams to be thence, Ps. lxxxvii. 7. (3.) Water to be drawn out of the wells of salvation will be a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction. It is the will of God that we should rejoice before him and rejoice in him (Deut. xxvi. 19) be joyful in his house of prayer (Isa. lvi. 1) and keep his feasts with gladness, Acts ii. 46.

4 And in that day shall ye sa

raise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, like mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this is known all over the earth. 6 Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst thereof.

This is the second part of this evangelical song, and to the same purport with the former; there believers stir up themselves to praise God, here they invite and encourage another to do it, and are contriving to read his praise and draw in others to join with them in it. Observe,

I. Who are here called upon to praise God the inhabitants of Zion and Jerusalem, from God had in a particular manner protected from Sennacherib's violence, c. 6. Those that have received distinguishing favours from God ought to be most forward and zealous in praising him. The gospel church is Zion. Christ is Zion's King. Those that have a place and a name in the church should lay out themselves to diffuse the knowledge of Christ and to bring many to him. *Thou inhabitress of Zion*; the word feminine. Let the weaker sex be strong for the Lord, and out of their mouth praise all be perfected.

II. How they must praise the Lord. 1. By prayer: *Call upon his name*. As giving thanks for former mercy is a decent way of begging further mercy, so begging further mercy is graciously accepted as a thankful acknowledgment of the mercies we have received. In calling upon God's name we give unto him some of the glory that is due to his name as our powerful and bountiful benefactor. 2. By preaching and writing. We must not only speak to God, but speak to others concerning him, not only call upon his name, but (as the margin reads it) *proclaim his name*; let others know something more from us than they did before concerning God, and those things whereby he has made himself known. *Declare his doings, his counsels* (so some read it); the work of redemption is according to the counsel of his will, and in that and other wonderful works that he has done we must take notice of his thoughts which are to us-ward, Ps. xl. *Declare these among the people*, among the heathen, that they may be brought into communion with Israel and the God of Israel. When the apostles preached the gospel to the nations, beginning at Jerusalem, then this scripture was fulfilled, that his doings could be declared among the people and at what he has done should be known in the earth. 3. By a holy exultation and transport of joy: "*Cry out and shout*"; welcome the gospel to yourselves and publish it to others with huzzas and loud acclamations,

as those that shout for victory (Exod. xxxii. 18) or for the coronation of a king," Num. xxiii. 21.

III. For what they must praise the Lord. 1. Because he has glorified himself. Remember it yourselves, and make mention of it to others, that his name is exalted, has become more illustrious and more conspicuous; in this every good man rejoices. 2. Because he has magnified his people: *He has done excellent things* for them, which make them look great and considerable. 3. Because he is, and will be, great among them: *Great is the Holy One*, for he is glorious in holiness; therefore great, because holy. True goodness is true greatness. He is great as the Holy One of Israel. and in the midst of them, praised by them (Ps. lxxvi. 1), manifesting himself among them, and appearing gloriously in their behalf. It is the honour and happiness of Israel that the God who is in covenant with them, and in the midst of them, is infinitely great.

CHAP. XIII.

Hitherto the prophecies of this book related only to Judah and Israel, and Jerusalem especially; but now the prophet begins to look abroad, and to read the doom of divers of the neighbouring states and kingdoms: for he that is King of saints is also King of nations, and rules in the affairs of the children of men as well as in those of his own children. But the nations to whom these prophecies do relate were all such as the people of God were in some way or other conversant and concerned with; such as had been kind or unkind to Israel, and accordingly God would deal with them, either in favour or in wrath; for the Lord's portion is his people, and to them he has an eye in all the dispensations of his providence concerning those about them, Deut. xxxii. 9. The threatenings we find here against Babylon, Moab, Damascus, Egypt, Tyre, &c., were intended for comfort to those in Israel that feared God, but were terrified and oppressed by those potent neighbours, and for alarm to those among them that were wicked. If God would thus severely reckon with those for their sins that knew him not, and made no profession of his name, how severe would he be with those that were called by his name and yet lived in rebellion against him! And perhaps the directing of particular prophecies to the neighbouring nations might invite some of those nations to the reading of the Jews' Bible, and so they might be brought to their religion. This chapter, and that which follows, contain what God had to say to Babylon and Babylon's king, who were at present little known to Israel, but would in process of time become a greater enemy to them than any other had been, for which God would at last reckon with them. In this chapter we have, I. A general rendezvous of the forces that were to be employed against Babylon, ver. 1-5. II. The dreadfully bloody work that those forces should make in Babylon, ver. 6-18. III. The utter ruin and desolation of Babylon, which this should end in, ver. 19-22.

THE burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see. 2 Lift ye up a banner upon the high mountain, exalt the voice unto them, shake the hand, that they may go into the gates of the nobles. 3 I have commanded my sanctified ones, I have also called my mighty ones for mine anger, even them that rejoice in my highness. 4 The noise of a multitude in the mountains, like as of a great people; a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together: the LORD of hosts mustereth the host of the battle. 5 They come from a far country, from

the end of heaven, *even the LORD*, and the weapons of his indignation, to destroy the whole land.

The general title of this book was, *The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, ch. i. 1.* Here we have that which Isaiah saw, which was represented to his mind as clearly and fully as if he had seen it with his bodily eyes; but the particular inscription of this sermon is *the burden of Babylon.* 1. It is a burden, a lesson they were to learn (so some understand it), but they would be loth to learn it, and it would be a burden to their memories, or a load which should lie heavily upon them and under which they should sink. Those that will not make the word of God their rest (*ch. xxviii. 12; Jer. vi. 16*) shall find it made a burden to them. 2. It is the burden of Babylon or Babel, which at this time was a dependent upon the Assyrian monarchy (the metropolis of which was Nineveh), but soon after revolted from it and became a monarchy of itself, and a very potent one, in Nebuchadnezzar. This prophet afterwards foretold the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, *ch. xxxix. 6.* Here he foretels the reprisals God would make upon Babylon for the wrongs done to his people. In these verses a summons is given to those powerful and warlike nations whom God would make use of as the instruments of his wrath for the destruction of Babylon: he afterwards names them (*v. 17*) the *Medes*, who, in conjunction with the Persians, under the command of Darius and Cyrus, were the ruin of the Babylonian monarchy.

I. The place doomed to destruction is Babylon, it is here called *the gates of the nobles* (*v. 2*), because of the abundance of nobleman's houses that were in it, stately ones and richly furnished, which would invite the enemy to come, in hopes of a rich booty. The gates of nobles were strong and well guarded, and yet they would be no fence against those who came with commission to execute God's judgments. Before his power and wrath palaces are no more than cottages. Nor is it only the gates of the nobles, but *the whole land*, that is doomed to destruction (*v. 5*); for, though the nobles were the leaders in persecuting and oppressing God's people, yet the whole land concurred with them in it.

II. The persons brought together to lay Babylon waste are here called, 1. God's *sanctified ones* (*v. 3*), designed for this service and set apart to it by the purpose and providence of God, disengaged from other projects, that they might wholly apply themselves to this, such as were qualified for that to which they were called, for what work God employs men in he does in some measure fit them for. It intimates likewise that in God's intention, though not in theirs, it was a holy war; they designed only the enlargement of their own empire, but God

designed the release of his people and a type of the destruction of the New-Testament Babylon. Cyrus, the person principally concerned, was justly called a *sanctified one*, he was God's anointed (*ch. xlv. 1*) and figure of him that was to come. It is a pity but all soldiers, especially those that fight the Lord's battles, should be in the strict sense sanctified ones; and it is a wonder that those dare be profane ones who cast their lives in their hands. 2. They are called God's *mighty ones*, because they have their might from God and were now to use it for him. It is said of Cyrus that in this expedition *God held his right hand*, *ch. xlv.* God's sanctified ones are his mighty ones. Those whom God calls he qualifies; and those whom he makes holy he makes strong in spirit. 3. They are said to rejoice in his highness, that is, to serve his glory and the purposes of it with great alacrity. Though Cyrus did not know God, nor actually desire his honour in what he did, yet God used him as his servant (*ch. xlv. 4*), *I have named thee as my servant*, though thou hast not known me, and he rejoiced in the successes by which God exalted his own name. 4. They are very numerous, *a multitude, a great people, kingdoms of nations* (*v. 4*), not rude and barbarous, but modelled and regular troops, such as are furnished out by well-ordered kingdoms. The great God has hosts at his command. 5. They are far-fetched: *They come from a far country from the end of heaven.* The vast country of Assyria lay between Babylon and Persia. God can make those a scourge and ruin to his enemies that lie most remote from him, and therefore are least dreaded.

III. The summons given them is effectual to their obedience ready, and they make a very formidable appearance: *A banner is lifted up upon the high mountain*, *v. 2.* God's standard is set up, a flag of defiance brought out against Babylon. It is erected on high where all may see it; whoever will may come and enlist themselves under it, and they shall be taken immediately into God's pay. Those that beat up for volunteers must *exalt the voice* in making proclamation, encourage soldiers to come in; they must *shake the hand*, to beckon those at a distance and to animate those that have enlisted themselves. And they shall not do this in vain; God has commanded and called them whom he designs to make use of (*v. 3*); and power goes along with his calls and commands, which cannot be resisted. He that makes men able to serve him can, when he pleases, make them willing too. It is the *Lord of hosts that musters the host of the battle*, *v. 4.* He raises them, brings them together, puts them in order, reviews them, has an exact account of them in his muster-roll, sees that they be all in their respective positions and gives them their necessary orders. No. All the hosts of war are under the command

of the Lord of hosts; and that which makes them truly formidable is that, when they come against Babylon, the Lord comes, and rings them with him as *the weapons of his indignation*, v. 5. Note, Great princes and armies are but tools in God's hand, weapons that he is pleased to make use of in doing his work, and it is his wrath that arms them and gives them success.

6 Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. 7 Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt: 8 And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames. 9 Behold, the day of the LORD cometh; cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. 10 For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. 11 And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. 12 I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir. 13 Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger. 14 And it shall be as the chased roe, and as a sheep that no man taketh up: they shall every man turn to his own people, and flee every one into his own land. 15 Every one that is found shall be thrust through; and every one that is joined unto them shall fall by the sword. 16 Their children also shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes; their houses shall be spoiled, and their wives ravished. 17 Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver; and as for gold, they shall not delight in it. 18 Their bows also shall dash the young

men to pieces; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eye shall not spare children.

We have here a very elegant and lively description of the terrible confusion and desolation which should be made in Babylon by the descent which the Medes and Persians should make upon it. Those that were now secure and easy were bidden to *howl* and make sad lamentation; for,

I. God was about to appear in wrath against them, and it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands: *The day of the Lord is at hand* (v. 6), a little day of judgment, when God will act as a just avenger of his own and his people's injured cause. And there are those who will have reason to tremble when that day is at hand. *The day of the Lord cometh*, v. 9. Men have their day now, and they think to carry the day; but God laughs at them, for he sees that *his day is coming*, Ps. xxxvii. 13. Fury is not with God, and yet his day of reckoning with the Babylonians is said to be *cruel with wrath and fierce anger*. God will deal in severity with them for the severities they exercised upon God's people; with the froward, with the cruel, he will show himself froward, will show himself cruel, and give the blood-thirsty blood to drink.

II. Their hearts shall fail them, and they shall have neither courage nor comfort left; they shall not be able either to resist the judgment coming or to bear up under it, either to oppose the enemy or to support themselves, v. 7, 8. Those that in the day of their peace were *proud*, and *haughty*, and *terrible* (v. 11), shall, when trouble comes, be quite dispirited and at their wits' end: *All hands shall be faint*, and unable to hold a weapon, and *every man's heart shall melt*, so that they shall be ready to die for fear. The pangs of their fear shall be like those of a woman in hard labour, and *they shall be amazed one at another*. In frightening themselves, they shall frighten one another; they shall wonder to see those tremble that used to be bold and daring; or they shall be amazed looking one at another, as men at a loss, Gen. xlii. 1. *Their faces shall be as flames*, pale as flames, through fear (so some), or red as flames sometimes are, blushing at their own cowardice; or their faces shall be as faces scorched with the flame, or as theirs that labour in the fire, *their visage blacker than a coal*, or like a *bottle in the smoke*, Ps. cxix. 83.

III. All comfort and hope shall fail them (v. 10): *The stars of heaven shall not give their light*, but shall be clouded and overcast; *the sun shall be darkened in his going forth*, rising bright, but lost again, a certain sign of foul weather. They shall be as men in distress at sea, when neither sun nor stars appear, Acts xxvii. 20. It shall be as dreadful a time with them as it would be with

the earth if all the heavenly luminaries were turned into darkness, a resemblance of the day of judgment, when the sun shall be turned into darkness. The heavens frowning thus is an indication of the displeasure of the God of heaven. When things look dark on earth, yet it is well enough if all be clear upwards; but, if we have no comfort thence, wherewith shall we be comforted?

IV. God will visit them for their iniquity; and all this is intended for the punishment of sin, and particularly the sin of pride, *v. 11*. This puts wormwood and gall into the affliction and misery, 1. That sin must now have its punishment. Though Babylon be a little world, yet, being a wicked world, it shall not go unpunished. Sin brings desolation on the world of the ungodly; and when the kingdoms of the earth are quarrelling with one another it is the fruit of God's controversy with them all. 2. That pride must now have its fall: *The haughtiness of the terrible must now be laid low*, particularly of Nebuchadnezzar and his son Belshazzar, who had, in their pride, trampled upon, and made themselves very terrible to, the people of God. *A man's pride will bring him low*.

V. There shall be so great a slaughter as will produce a scarcity of men (*v. 12*): *I will make a man more precious than fine gold*. You could not have a man to be employed in any of the affairs of state, not a man to be enlisted in the army, not a man to match a daughter to, for the building up of a family, if you would give any money for one. The troops of the neighbouring nations would not be hired into the service of the king of Babylon, because they saw every thing go against him. Populous countries are soon depopulated by war. And God can soon make a kingdom that has been courted and admired to be dreaded and shunned by all, as a house that is falling, or a ship that is sinking.

VI. There shall be a universal confusion and consternation, such a confusion of their affairs that it shall be like the *shaking of the heavens with dreadful thunders and the removing of the earth by no less dreadful earthquakes*. All shall go to rack and ruin in the day of the wrath of the Lord of hosts, *v. 13*. And such a consternation shall seize their spirits that Babylon, which used to be like a roaring lion and a raging bear to all about her, shall become *as a chased roe and as a sheep that no man takes up*, *v. 14*. The army they shall bring into the field, consisting of troops of divers nations (as great armies usually do), shall be so dispirited by their own apprehensions and so dispersed by their enemies' sword that they shall *turn every man to his own people*; each man shall shift for his own safety; *the men of might shall not find their hands* (Ps. lxxvi. 5), but take to their heels.

VII. There shall be a general scene of

blood and horror, as is usual where the sword devours. No wonder that every one makes the best of his way, since the conqueror gives no quarter, but puts a man to the sword, and not those only that are found in arms, as is usual with the enemy in the most cruel slaughters (*v. 15*): *Every one that is found alive shall be run through*, as soon as ever it appears that he is a Babylonian. Nay, because the sword devours one as well as another, *every one that is joined to them shall fall by the sword*; those of other nations that come in to their assistance shall be cut off with them. It is dangerous being in bad company, and helping those whom God is about to destroy. Those particularly that join themselves to Babylon must expect to share in her plagues. Rev. xviii. 4. And, since the most sacred laws of nature, and of humanity itself, are silenced by the fury of war (though they cannot be cancelled), the conquerors shall, in the most barbarous brutish manner, *dash the children to pieces, and ravish the wives*. *Jusque dans la scelerie—Wickedness shall have free course*, *v. 16*. They had thus dealt with God's people (Lam. v. 11), and now they shall be paid in their own coin, Rev. xiii. 10: *It was particularly foretold* (Ps. cxxxvii. 9) *that the little ones of Babylon should be dashed against the stones*. How cruel sould and unjust those were that did it, God was righteous who suffered it to be done, and it was done before their eyes, to their great terror and vexation. It was just also that the houses which they had filled with the spoil of Israel should be spoiled and plundered. What is got by rapine is often lost in the same manner.

VIII. The enemy that God will send against them shall be inexorable, probably being by some provocation or other more than ordinarily exasperated against them, or, in whatever way it may be brought about, God himself will stir up the Medes to do this severity with the Babylonians. He will not only serve his own purposes by their dispositions and designs, but will put it into their hearts to make this attempt upon Babylon, and suffer them to prosecute it with all this fury. God is not the author of sin, but he would not permit it if he did not know how to bring glory to himself out of it. These Medes, in conjunction with the Persians, shall make thorough work of it; for, 1. They shall take no bribes, *v. 17*. All that men have they would give for their lives, but the Medes shall not regard silver; it is blood they thirst for, not gold; no man's riches shall with them be the ransom of his life. 2. They shall show no pity (*v. 18*), not to the young men that are in the prime of their time—they shall shoot them through with their bows, and *dash them to pieces*; not to the age of innocence—they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb, nor spare little children, who

ies and frights one would think should make even marble eyes to weep, and hearts as adamant to relent. Pause a little here and wonder, (1.) That men should be thus cruel and inhuman, and so utterly divested of all compassion; and in it see how corrupt and degenerate the nature of man has become. (2.) That the God of infinite mercy should suffer it, nay, and should make it to be the execution of his justice, which shows that, though he is gracious, yet he is the God to whom vengeance belongs. (3.) That little infants, who have never been guilty of any actual sin, should be thus abused, which shows that there is an original guilt by which life is forfeited as soon as it is had.

19 And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. 20 It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. 21 But wild beasts of the desert shall be there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. 22 And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.

The great havoc and destruction which it was foretold should be made by the Medes and Persians in Babylon here end in the final destruction of it. 1. It is allowed that Babylon was a noble city. It was the glory of kingdoms and the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency; it was that head of gold (Dan. ii. 37, 38); it was called the lady of kingdoms (ch. xlvii. 5), the praise of the whole earth (Jer. li. 41), like a pleasant roe (so the word signifies); but it shall be as a chased roe, v. 14. The Chaldeans gloried in the beauty and wealth of this their metropolis. It is foretold that it should be wholly destroyed, like Sodom and Gomorrah; not so miraculously, nor so suddenly, but as effectually, though gradually; and the destruction should come upon them as that upon Sodom, when they were secure, eating and drinking, Luke xvii. 28, 29. Babylon was taken when Belshazzar was in his revels; and, though Cyrus and Darius did not demolish it, yet by degrees it wasted away and in process of time it went all to ruin. It is foretold here (v. 20) that it shall never be inhabited; in Adrian's time nothing remained but the wall. And whereas it is

prophesied concerning Nineveh, that great city, that when it should be deserted and left desolate yet flocks should lie down in the midst of it, it is here said concerning Babylon that the Arabians, who were shepherds, should not make their folds there; the country about should be so barren that there would be no grazing there; no, not for sheep. Nay, it shall be the receptacle of wild beasts, that affect solitude; the houses of Babylon, where the sons and daughters of pleasure used to rendezvous, shall be full of doleful creatures, owls and satyrs, that are themselves frightened thither, as to a place proper for them, and by whom all others are frightened thence. Historians say that this was fulfilled in the letter. Benjamin Bar-Jona, in his Itinerary, speaking of Babel, has these words: "This is that Babel which was of old thirty miles in breadth; it is now laid waste. There are yet to be seen the ruins of a palace of Nebuchadnezzar, but the sons of men dare not enter in, for fear of serpents and scorpions, which possess the place." Let none be proud of their pompous palaces, for they know not but they may become worse than cottages; nor let any think that their houses shall endure for ever (Ps. xlix. 11), when perhaps nothing may remain but the ruins and reproaches of them. 3. It is intimated that this destruction should come shortly (v. 22): *Her time is near to come.* This prophecy of the destruction of Babylon was intended for the support and comfort of the people of God when they were captives there and grievously oppressed; and the accomplishment of the prophecy was nearly 200 years after the time when it was delivered; yet it followed soon after the time for which it was calculated. When the people of Israel were groaning under the heavy yoke of Babylonish tyranny, sitting down in tears by the rivers of Babylon and upbraided with the songs of Zion, when their insolent oppressors were most haughty and arrogant (v. 11), then let them know, for their comfort, that Babylon's time, her day to fall, is near to come, and the days of her prosperity shall not be prolonged, as they have been. When God begins with her he will make an end. Thus it is said of the destruction of the New-Testament Babylon, whereof the former was a type, *In one hour has her judgment come.*

CHAP. XIV.

In this chapter, I. More weight is added to the burden of Babylon, enough to sink it like a mill-stone; 1. It is Israel's cause that is to be pleaded in this quarrel with Babylon, ver. 1-5. 2. The king of Babylon, for the time being, shall be remarkably brought down and triumphed over, ver. 4-20. 3. The whole race of the Chaldeans shall be cut off and extirpated, ver. 21-23. II. A confirmation of the prophecy of the destruction of Babylon, which was a thing at a distance, is here given in the prophecy of the destruction of the Assyrian army that invaded the land, which happened not long after, ver. 24-47. III. The success of Hezekiah against the Philistines is here foretold, and the advantages which his people would gain thereby, ver. 25-32.

FOR the LORD will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Is-

rael, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob. 2 And the people shall take them, and bring them to their place: and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the LORD for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captives, whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors. 3 And it shall come to pass in the day that the LORD shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and from thy fear, and from the hard bondage wherein thou wast made to serve,—

This comes in here as the reason why Babylon must be overthrown and ruined, because God has mercy in store for his people, and therefore, 1. The injuries done to them must be reckoned for and revenged upon their persecutors. Mercy to Jacob will be wrath and ruin to Jacob's impenitent implacable adversaries, such as Babylon was. 2. The yoke of oppression which Babylon had long laid on their necks must be broken off, and they must be set at liberty; and, in order to this, the destruction of Babylon is as necessary as the destruction of Egypt and Pharaoh was to their deliverance out of that house of bondage. The same prediction is a promise to God's people and a threatening to their enemies, as the same providence has a bright side towards Israel and a black or dark side towards the Egyptians. Observe,

I. The ground of these favours to Jacob and Israel—the kindness God had for them and the choice he had made of them (v. 1): “*The Lord will have mercy on Jacob*, the seed of Jacob now captives in Babylon; he will make it to appear that he has compassion on them and has mercy in store for them, and that he will not contend for ever with them, but *will yet choose them*, will yet again return to them; though he has seemed for a time to refuse and reject them, he will show that they are his chosen people and that the election stands sure.” However it may seem to us, God's mercy is not gone, nor does his promise fail, Ps. lxxvii. 8.

II. The particular favours he designed them. 1. He would bring them back to their native soil and air again: *The Lord will set them in their own land*, out of which they were driven. A settlement in the holy land, the land of promise, is a fruit of God's mercy, distinguishing mercy. 2. Many should be proselyted to their holy religion, and should return with them, induced to do so by the manifest tokens of God's favourable presence with them, the operations of God's grace in them, and his providence for them: *Strangers shall be joined with them*,

saying, *We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you*, Zech. viii. 2. It adds much to the honour and strength of Israel when strangers are joined with them, and there are added to the church many from without, Acts ii. 47. Let not the church's children be shy of strangers, but receive those whom God receives, and own those who cleave to the house of Jacob. These proselytes should not only be a credit to their cause, but very helpful and serviceable to them in their return home: *The people among whom they live shall take their care of them, take pity on them, and shall bring them to their place*—as friends, loth to part with such good company—servants, willing to do them all the good offices they could. God's people, wherever their lot is cast, should endeavour thus, by all the instances of an exemplary and winning conversation, to gain an interest in the affections of those about them, and recommend their religion to their good opinion. This was fulfilled in the return of the captives from Babylon, when all that were about them pursuant to Cyrus's proclamation, contributed to their removal (Ezra i. 4, 6), not the Egyptians, because they were sick of them, but because they loved them. They should have the benefit of their service when they had returned home, for many would of choice go with them in the meanest post, rather than not go with them: *They shall possess them in the land of the Lord for servants and handmaids*; and as the laws of that land saved it from being the purgatory of servants, providing that they should not be oppressed, so the advantages of that land made it the paradise of those servants that had been strangers to the covenants of promise, for there was one law to the strangers and to those that were born in the land. Those whose lot is cast in the land of the Lord, land of light, should take care that the servants and handmaids may share in the benefit of it, who will then find it better to be possessed in the Lord's land than to possessors in any other. 5. They should triumph over their enemies, and those that would not be reconciled to them should be reduced and humbled by them: *They shall take those captives whose captives they were and shall rule over their oppressors*, righteously, but not revengefully. The Jews perhaps bought Babylonian prisoners out of the hands of the Medes and Persians and made slaves of them. Or this might have its accomplishment in their victories over their enemies in the times of the Maccabees. It is applicable to the success of the gospel (when those were brought into obedience to it who had made the greatest opposition to it, as Paul) and the interest believers have in Christ's victories over their spiritual enemies, when led captivity captive, to the power they gain over their own corruptions, and to the dominion the upright shall have in the mor-

ing, Ps. xlix. 14. 6. They should see a happy termination of all their grievances (v. 3): *The Lord shall give thee rest from thy sorrow and thy fear, and from thy hard bondage.* God himself undertakes to work a blessed change, (1.) In their state. They shall have rest from their bondage; the days of their affliction, though many, shall have an end; and the God of the wicked, though it lie long, shall not always lie on their lot. (2.) In their spirit. They shall have rest from their sorrow and fear, sense of their present burdens and dread of worse. Sometimes fear puts the soul into a ferment as much as sorrow does, and those must needs feel themselves very easy to whom God has given rest from both. Those who are freed from the bondage of sin have a foundation laid for true rest from sorrow and fear.

4 That thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased! 5 The LORD hath broken the staff of the wicked, and the sceptre of the rulers. 6 He who smote the people in wrath with continual stroke, he that ruled the nations in anger, is persecuted, and none hindereth. 7 The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet: they break forth into singing. 8 Yea, the fir-trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, Since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us. 9 Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. 10 All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us? 11 Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols: the worms spread under thee, and the worms cover thee. 12 How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! 13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: 14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High. 15 Yet

thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. 16 They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; 17 That made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners? 18 All the kings of the nations, even all of them, lie in glory, every one in his own house. 19 But thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch, and as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of the pit; as a carcase trodden under feet. 20 Thou shalt not be joined with them in burial, because thou hast destroyed thy land, and slain thy people: the seed of evil doers shall never be renowned. 21 Prepare slaughter for his children for the iniquity of their fathers; that they do not rise, nor possess the land, nor fill the face of the world with cities. 22 For I will rise up against them, saith the LORD of hosts, and cut off from Babylon the name, and remnant, and son, and nephew, saith the LORD. 23 I will also make it a possession for the bittern, and pools of water: and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith the LORD of hosts.

The kings of Babylon, successively, were the great enemies and oppressors of God's people, and therefore the destruction of Babylon, the fall of the king, and the ruin of his family, are here particularly taken notice of and triumphed in. In the day that God has given Israel rest they shall take up this proverb against the king of Babylon. We must not rejoice when our enemy falls, as ours; but when Babylon, the common enemy of God and his Israel, sinks, then rejoice over her, thou heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, Rev. xviii. 20. The Babylonian monarchy bade fair to be an absolute, universal, and perpetual one, and, in these pretensions, vied with the Almighty; it is therefore very justly, not only brought down, but insulted over when it is down; and it is not only the last monarch, Belshazzar, who was slain on that night that Babylon was taken (Dan. v. 30), who is here triumphed over, but the whole monarchy, which sunk in him; not without special reference to Nebuchadnezzar, in whom that monarchy was at its height. Now here,

I. The fall of the king of Babylon is rejoiced in; and a most curious and elegant composition is here prepared, not to adorn his hearse or monument, but to expose his memory and fix a lasting brand of infamy upon it. It gives us an account of the life and death of this mighty monarch, how he went down slain to the pit, though he had been the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, Ezek. xxxii. 27. In this parable we may observe,

1. The prodigious height of wealth and power at which this monarch and monarchy arrived. Babylon was a *golden city*, v. 4 (it is a Chaldee word in the original, which intimates that she used to call herself so), so much did she abound in riches and excel all other cities, as gold does all other metals. She is *gold-thirsty*, or an exactress of gold (so some read it); for how do men get wealth to themselves but by squeezing it out of others? The New Jerusalem is the only truly golden city, Rev. xxi. 18, 21. The king of Babylon, having so much wealth in his dominions and the absolute command of it, by the help of that *ruled the nations* (v. 6), gave them law, read them their doom, and at his pleasure *weakened the nations* (v. 12), that they might not be able to make head against him. Such vast and victorious armies did he bring into the field, that, which way soever he looked, *he made the earth to tremble, and shook kingdoms* (v. 16); all his neighbours were afraid of him, and were forced to submit to him. No one man could do this by his own personal strength, but by the numbers he has at his beck. Great tyrants, by making some do what they will, make others suffer what they will. How piteous is the case of mankind, which thus seems to be in a combination against itself, and its own rights and liberties, which could not be ruined but by its own strength!

2. The wretched abuse of all this wealth and power, which the king of Babylon was guilty of, in two instances:—

(1.) Great oppression and cruelty. He is known by the name of the *oppressor* (v. 4); he has the *sceptre of the rulers* (v. 5), has the command of all the princes about him; but it is *the staff of the wicked*, a staff with which he supports himself in his wickedness and wickedly strikes all about him. *He smote the people*, not in justice, for their correction and reformation, but in *wrath* (v. 6), to gratify his own peevish resentments, and that *with a continual stroke*, pursued them with his forces, and gave them no respite, no breathing time, no cessation of arms. He ruled the nations, but he ruled them in *anger*, every thing he said and did was in a passion; so that he who had the government of all about him had no government of himself. *He made the world as a wilderness*, as if he had taken a pride in being the plague of his generation and a curse to mankind, v. 17. Great

princes usually glory in building cities; but he gloried in destroying them; see Ps. ix. 6. Two particular instances, worse than all the rest, are here given of his tyranny:—[1.] That he was severe to his captives (v. 17): *He opened not the house of his prisoners; he did not let them loose home-ward* (so the margin reads it); he kept them in close confinement, and never would suffer any to return to their own land. This reflects especially to the people of the Jews, and is that which fills up the measure of the king of Babylon's iniquity, that he had detained the people of God in captivity and would by no means release them; nay, and by profaning the vessels of God's temple at Jerusalem, did in effect say that they should never return to their former use, Dan. v. 3. For this he was quickly and justly turned out by one whose first act was to open the house of God's prisoners and send home the temple vessels. [2.] That he was oppressive to his own subjects (v. 20): *Thou hast destroyed thy land, and slain thy people*, and what did he get by that, when the wealth of the land and the multitude of the people are the strength and honour of the prince, who never rules so safely, so gloriously, as in the hearts and affections of the people? But tyrants sacrifice their interests to their lusts and passions; and God will reckon with them for their barbarous usage of those who are under their power, who they think they may use as they please.

(2.) Great pride and haughtiness. Notice is here taken of his *pomp*, the extravagancy of his retinue, v. 11. He affected to appear in the utmost magnificence. But that was not the worst: it was the temper of his mind, and the elevation of that, that ripened him for ruin (v. 13, 14): *Thou hast said in thy heart, like Lucifer, I will ascend into heaven*. Here is the language of his vain glory, borrowed perhaps from that of the angels who fell, who not content with their first estate, the post assigned them, would vie with God, and become not only independent of him, but equal with him. perhaps it refers to the story of Nebuchadnezzar, who, when he would be more than a man, was justly turned into a brute, Dan. iv. 30. The king of Babylon here promises himself, [1.] That in pomp and power he shall surpass all his neighbours, and shall arrive at the very height of earthly glory and felicity, that he shall be as great and happy as this world can make him; that is, the heaven of a carnal heart, and to that he hopes to ascend, and to be as far above those about him as the heaven is above the earth. Princes are the stars of God, which give some light to this dark world (Matt. xxiv. 29), but he will exalt his throne above them all. [2.] That he shall particularly insult over God's Mount Zion, which Belshazzar, in his last drunken frolic, seems to have had a particular spite against when

is called for the vessels of the temple at Jerusalem, to profane them; see Dan. v. 2. In the same humour he here said, *I will sit upon the mount of the congregation* (it is the same word that is used for the holy convocations), *in the sides of the north*; so Mount Zion is said to be situated, Ps. xlviii. 2. Perhaps Belshazzar was projecting an expedition to Jerusalem, to triumph in the ruins of it, at the time when God cut him off. [3.] That he shall vie with the God of Israel, of whom he had indeed heard glorious things, that he had his residence *above the heights of the clouds*. "But hitherto," says he, "*will I ascend*, and be as great as he; I will be like him whom they call the Most High." It is a gracious ambition to covet to be like the Most Holy, for he has said, *Be you holy, for I am holy*; but it is a sinful ambition to aim to be like the Most High, for he has said, *He that exalteth himself shall be abased*, and the devil drew our first parents in to eat forbidden fruit by promising them that they should be as gods. [4.] That he shall himself be deified after his death, as some of the first founders of the Assyrian monarchy were, and stars had even their names from them. "But," says he, "*I will exalt my throne above them all*." Such as this was his pride, which was the undoubted omen of his destruction.

3. The utter ruin that should be brought upon him. It is foretold, (1.) That his wealth and power should be broken, and a final period put to his pomp and pleasure. He has been long an oppressor, but he shall cease to be so, v. 4. Had he ceased to be so by true repentance and reformation, according to the advice Daniel gave to Nebuchadnezzar, it might have been a lengthening of his life and tranquillity. But those that will not cease to sin God will make to cease. "*The golden city*, which one would have thought might continue for ever, *has ceased*; there is an end of that Babylon. *The Lord, the righteous God, has broken the staff of that wicked prince*, broken it over his head, in token of the divesting him of his office. God has taken his power from him, and rendered him incapable of doing any more mischief: he has broken the sceptres; for even these are brittle things, soon broken and often justly." (2.) That he himself should be seized: *He is persecuted* (v. 6); violent hands are laid upon him, and noneinders. It is the common fate of tyrants, when they fall into the power of their enemies, to be deserted by their flatterers, whom they took for their friends. We read of another enemy like this, of whom it is foretold that *he shall come to his end and none shall help him*, Dan. xi. 45. Tiberius and Nero thus saw themselves abandoned. (3.) That he should be slain, and go down to the congregation of the dead, to be free among them, as the slain that are no more remembered, Ps. lxxxviii. 5. He shall be

weak as the dead are, and like unto them, v. 10. His pomp is brought down to the grave (v. 11), that is, it perishes with him; the pomp of his life shall not, as usual, end in a funeral pomp. True glory (that is, true grace) will go up with the soul to heaven, but vain pomp will go down with the body to the grave: there is an end of it. *The noise of his viols* is now heard no more. Death is a farewell to the pleasures, as well as to the pomps, of this world. This mighty prince, that used to lie on a bed of down, to tread upon rich carpets, and to have coverings and canopies exquisitely fine, now shall have the worms spread under him and the worms covering him, worms bred out of his own putrefied body, which, though he fancied himself a god, proved him to be made of the same mould with other men. When we are pampering and decking our bodies it is good to remember they will be worms'-meat shortly. (4.) That he should not have the honour of a burial, much less of a decent one and in the sepulchres of his ancestors. *The kings of the nations lie in glory* (v. 18), either their dead bodies themselves so embalmed as to be preserved from putrefaction, as of old among the Egyptians, or their effigies (as with us) erected over their graves. Thus, as if they would defy the ignominy of death, they lay in a poor faint sort of glory, *every one in his own house*, that is, his own burying-place (for the grave is the house appointed for all living), a sleeping house, where the busy and troublesome will lie quiet and the troubled and weary lie at rest. But this king of Babylon is cast out and has no grave (v. 19); his dead body is thrown, like that of a beast, into the next ditch or upon the next dunghill, *like an abominable branch* of some noxious poisonous plant, which nobody will touch, or as the clothes of malefactors put to death and by the hand of justice thrust through with a sword, on whose dead bodies heaps of stones are raised, or they are thrown into some deep quarry among the stones of the pit. Nay, the king of Babylon's dead body shall be as the carcases of those who are slain in a battle, which are trodden under feet by the horses and soldiers and crushed to pieces. Thus he shall not be joined with his ancestors in burial, v. 20. To be denied decent burial is a disgrace, which, if it be inflicted for righteousness' sake (as Ps. lxxix. 2), may, as other similar reproaches, be rejoiced in (Matt. v. 12); it is the lot of the two witnesses, Rev. xi. 9. But if, as here, it be the just punishment of iniquity, it is an intimation that evil pursues impenitent sinners beyond death, greater evil than that, and that they shall rise to everlasting shame and contempt.

4. The many triumphs that should be in his fall.

(1.) Those whom he had been a great tyrant and terror to will be glad that they

are rid of him, v. 7, 8. Now that he is gone *the whole earth is at rest and is quiet*, for he was the great disturber of the peace; now they all *break forth into singing*, for *when the wicked perish there is shouting* (Prov. xi. 10); the fir-trees and cedars of Lebanon now think themselves safe; there is no danger now of their being cut down, to make way for his vast armies or to furnish him with timber. The neighbouring princes and great men, who are compared to fir-trees and cedars (Zech. xi. 2), may now be easy, and out of fear of being dispossessed of their rights, for *the hammer of the whole earth is cut asunder and broken* (Jer. i. 23), the axe that *boasted itself against him that hewed with it*, ch. x. 15.

(2.) The congregation of the dead will bid him welcome to them, especially those whom he had barbarously hastened thither (v. 9, 10): "*Hell from beneath is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming, and to compliment thee upon thy arrival at their dark and dreadful regions.*" *The chief ones of the earth*, who when they were alive were kept in awe by him and durst not come near him, but rose from their thrones, to resign them to him, shall upbraid him with it when he comes into the state of the dead. They shall go forth to meet him, as they used to do when he made his public entry into cities he had become master of; with such a parade shall he be introduced into those regions of horror, to make his disgrace and torment the more grievous to him. They shall scoffingly rise from their thrones and seats there, and ask him if he will please to sit down in them, as he used to do in their thrones on earth? The confusion that will then cover him they shall make a jest of: "*Hast thou also become weak as we?*" Who would have thought it? It is what thou thyself didst not expect it would ever come to when thou wast in every thing too hard for us. Thou that didst rank thyself among the immortal gods, art thou come to take thy fate among us poor mortal men? Where is thy pomp now, and where thy mirth? *How hast thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer! son of the morning!* v. 11, 12. The king of Babylon shone as brightly as the morning star, and fancied that wherever he came he brought day along with him; and had such an illustrious prince as this fallen, such a star become a clod of clay? Did ever any man fall from such a height of honour and power into such an abyss of shame and misery?" This has been commonly alluded to (and it is a mere allusion) to illustrate the fall of the angels, who were as morning stars (Job xxxviii. 7), but *how have they fallen! How art thou cut down to the ground, and levelled with it, that didst weaken the nations!* God will reckon with those that invade the rights and disturb the peace of mankind, for he is King of nations as well as of saints. Now this recep-

tion of the king of Babylon into the region of the dead, which is here described, surely is something more than a flight of fancy, and is designed to teach these solid truths:—[1.] That there is an invisible world, a world of spirits, to which the souls of men remove at death and in which they exist and act in a state of separation from the body. [2.] That separate souls have acquaintance and converse with each other, though we have none with them: the parable of the rich man and Lazarus intimates this. [3.] That death and hell will be death and hell indeed to those that fall unsanctified from the height of this world's pomps and the fullness of its pleasures. *Son, remember*, Luke xvi. 25.

(3.) Spectators will stand amazed at his fall. When he shall be *brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit*, and be lodged there, *those that see him shall narrowly look upon him, and consider him* (v. 15, 16) they shall scarcely believe their own eyes "*Never was death so great a change to any man as it is to him. Is it possible that a man, who a few hours ago looked so great so pleasant, and was so splendidly adorned and attended, should now look so ghastly so despicable, and lie thus naked and neglected? Is this the man that made the earth to tremble and shook kingdoms? Who could have thought he should ever come to this?*" Ps. lxxxii. 7.

5. Here is an inference drawn from all this (v. 20): *The seed of evil-doers shall never be renowned.* The princes of the Babylonian monarchy were all a seed of evil-doers, oppressors of the people of God, and therefore they had this infamy entailed upon them. *They shall not be renowned for ever* (so some read it); they may look big for a time, but all their pomp will only render their disgrace at last the more shameful. There is no credit in a sinful way.

II. The utter ruin of the royal family is here foretold, together with the desolation of The royal city.

1. The royal family is to be wholly exterminated. The Medes and Persians, that are to be employed in this destroying work, are ordered, when they have slain Belshazzar, *to prepare slaughter for his children* (v. 21), and not to spare them. The little ones of Babylon must be *dashed against the stones*. Ps. cxxxvii. 9. These orders sound very harshly; but, (1.) They must suffer for the *iniquity of their fathers*, which is often visited upon the children, to show how much God hates sin and is displeased at it, and to deter sinners from it, which is the end of punishment. Nebuchadnezzar had slain Zedekiah's sons (Jer. lii. 10), and, for that iniquity of his, his seed are paid in the same coin. (2.) They must be cut off now, that they may not rise up to possess the land and do as much mischief in their day as their fathers had done in theirs—that they may

not be as vexatious to the world by building cities for the support of their tyranny (which, as Nimrod's policy, Gen. x. 10, 11) as their ancestors had been by destroying cities. Pharaoh oppressed Israel in Egypt by setting them to build cities, Exod. i. 11. The providence of God consults the welfare of nations more than we are aware of by cutting off some who, if they had lived, would have done mischief. Justly may the enemies be cut off the children: *For I will rise up against them, saith the Lord of hosts (v. 22), and if God reveal it as his mind that he will have it done, as none can hinder it, no none need scruple to further it.* Babylon perhaps was proud of the numbers of her royal family, but God had determined to cut off the name and remnant of it, so that none should be left, to have both the sons and grandsons of the king slain; and yet we are sure he never did, nor ever will do, any wrong to any of his creatures.

2. The royal city is to be demolished and deserted, v. 23. It shall be a possession for many frightful birds, particularly the bittern, joined with the cormorant and the owl, ch. xxxiv. 11. And thus the utter destruction of the New-Testament Babylon is illustrated, Rev. xviii. 2. *It has become a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.* Babylon lay low, so that when it was deserted, and no care taken to drain the land, it soon became pools of water, standing noisome puddles, as unwholesome as they were unpleasant: and thus God will sweep it with the besom of destruction. When a people have nothing among them but dirt and filth, and will not be made clean with the besom of reformation, what can they expect but to be swept off the face of the earth with the besom of destruction?

24 The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand: 25 That I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him under foot: then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulders. 26 *This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth: and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations.* 27 For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? And his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back? 28 In the year that king Sennacherib died was this burden. 29 Rejoice not thou, whole Palestina, because the rod of him that smote thee is broken: for out of the ser-

pent's root shall come forth a cockatrice, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent. 30 And the first-born of the poor shall feed, and the needy shall lie down in safety: and I will kill thy root with famine, and he shall slay thy remnant. 31 Howl, O gate; cry, O city; thou, whole Palestina, art dissolved: for there shall come from the north a smoke, and none shall be alone in his appointed times. 32 What shall one then answer the messengers of the nation? That the LORD hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust in it.

The destruction of Babylon and the Chaldean empire was a thing at a great distance; the empire had not risen to any considerable height when its fall was here foretold: it was almost 200 years from this prediction of Babylon's fall to the accomplishment of it. Now the people to whom Isaiah prophesied might ask, "What is this to us, or what shall we be the better for it, and what assurance shall we have of it?" To both questions he answers in these verses, by a prediction of the ruin both of the Assyrians and of the Philistines, the present enemies that infested them, which they should shortly be eye-witnesses of and have benefit by. These would be a present comfort to them, and a pledge of future deliverance, for the confirming of the faith of their posterity. God is to his people the same to day that he was yesterday and will be hereafter; and he will for ever be the same that he has been and is. Here is,

I. Assurance given of the destruction of the Assyrians (v. 25): *I will break the Assyrian in my land.* Sennacherib brought a very formidable army into the land of Judah, but there God broke it, broke all his regiments by the sword of a destroying angel. Note, Those who wrongfully invade God's land shall find that it is at their peril: and those who with unhallowed feet trample upon his holy mountains shall themselves there be trodden under foot. God undertakes to do this himself, his people having no might against the great company that came against them: "*I will break the Assyrian; let me alone to do it who have angels, hosts of angels, at command.*" Now the breaking of the power of the Assyrian would be the breaking of the yoke from off the neck of God's people: *His burden shall depart from off their shoulders*, the burden of quartering that vast army and paying contribution; therefore the Assyrian must be broken, that Judah and Jerusalem may be eased. Let those that make themselves a yoke and a burden to God's people see

what they are to expect. Now, 1. This prophecy is here ratified and confirmed by an oath (v. 24): *The Lord of hosts hath sworn*, that he might show the immutability of his counsel, and that his people may have strong consolation, Heb. vi. 17, 18. What is here said of this particular intention is true of all God's purposes: *As I have thought, so shall it come to pass; for he is in one mind, and who can turn him?* Nor is he ever put upon new counsels, or obliged to take new measures, as men often are when things occur which they did not foresee. Let those who are the called according to God's purpose comfort themselves with this, that, *as God has purposed, so shall it stand*, and on that their stability depends. 2. The breaking of the Assyrian power is made a specimen of what God would do with all the powers of the nations that were engaged against him and his church (v. 26): *This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth (the whole world, so the LXX.), all the inhabitants of the earth (so the Chaldee), not only upon the Assyrian empire (which was then reckoned to be in a manner all the world, as afterwards the Roman empire was (Luke ii. 1) and with it many nations fell that had dependence upon it), but upon all those states and potentates that should at any time attack his land, his mountains. The fate of the Assyrian shall be theirs; they shall soon find that they meddle to their own hurt. Jerusalem, as it was to the Assyrians, will be to all people a burdensome stone; all that burden themselves with it shall infallibly be cut to pieces by it, Zech. xii. 3, 6. The same hand of power and justice that is now to be stretched out against the Assyrian for invading the people of God shall be stretched out upon all the nations that do likewise. It is still true, and will ever be so, Cursed is he that curses God's Israel, Num. xxiv. 9. God will be an enemy to his people's enemies, Exod. xxiii. 22. 3. All the powers on earth are defied to change God's counsel (v. 27): "The Lord of hosts has purposed to break the Assyrian's yoke, and every rod of the wicked laid upon the lot of the righteous; and who shall disannul this purpose? Who can persuade him to recel it, or find out a plea to evade it? His hand is stretched out to execute this purpose; and who has power enough to turn it back or to stay the course of his judgments?"*

II. Assurance is likewise given of the destruction of the Philistines and their power. This burden, this prophecy, that lay as a load upon them, to sink their state, came in the year that king Ahaz died, which was the first year of Hezekiah's reign, v. 28. When a good king came in the room of a bad one then this acceptable message was sent among them. When we reform, then, and not till then, we may look for good news from heaven. Now here we have, 1. A rebuke to the Philistines for triumphing in the death of

king Uzziah. He had been as a serpent to them (v. 29), had litten them, had smitten them, had brought them very low, 2 Chron. xxvi. 6. He warred against the Philistines, broke down their walls, and built cities among them. But when Uzziah died, or rather abdicated, it was told with joy in Gath, published in the streets of Ashkelon. The Philistines were inhuman thus to rejoice in our neighbor's fall. But let them not be secure; for though when Uzziah was dead they made rep upon Ahaz, and took many of the cities of Judah (2 Chron. xxviii. 18), yet out of the root of Uzziah should come a cockatrice, more formidable enemy than Uzziah was, even Hezekiah, the fruit of whose government should be to them a fiery flying serpent, for he should fall upon them with increased swiftness and fury: we find he did so. Kings xviii. 8, *He smote the Philistines and the Canaanites, and brought them to Gaza.* Note, If God remove one of our instruments in the midst of his usefulness, he can, and will, raise up others to carry on and complete the same work that they were employed in and left unfinished. 2. A prophecy of the destruction of the Philistines by famine and war. (1.) By famine, v. 28. "When the people of God, whom the Philistines had wasted, and distressed, and impoverished, shall enjoy plenty again, the first-born of their poor shall feed the poorest among them shall have food convenient, then, as for the Philistines, God will kill their root with famine. That which was their strength, and with which they thought themselves established as the rock, is by the root, shall be starved and dried by degrees, as those die that die by famine, and thus he shall slay the remnant: those that escape from one destruction are but served for another; and, when there are a few left, those few shall at length be cut off, for God will make a full end. (2.) By war. When the needy of God's people shall lie down in safety, not terrified with alarms of war, but delighting in the season of peace, then every gate and every city of the Philistines shall be howling and crying (v. 31), and there shall be a total dissolution of their state; for from Judea, which was north of the Philistines, there shall come smoke (a vast army raising a great dust, smoke that shall be the indication of a pouring fire at hand), and none of all the army shall be alone in his appointed time, none shall straggle or be missing when they are to engage; but they shall all be vigorous and unanimous in attacking the common enemy, when the time appointed for the doing of it comes. None of them shall decline the public service, as, in Deborah's time, Reuben abode among the sheepfolds, and Asher on the sea-shore, Judg. v. 16. When God has work to do he will wonderfully endow and dispose men for it.

III. The good use that should be made of all these events for the encouragement

the people of God (v. 32): *What shall one answer the messengers of the nations?*

1. This implies, (1.) That the great things God does for his people are, and cannot but be, taken notice of by their neighbours; those among the heathen make remarks upon them, Ps. cxxvi. 2. (2.) That messengers will be sent to enquire concerning them: Jacob and Israel had long been a people distinguished from all others and dignified with uncommon favours; and therefore some for good-will, others for ill-will, and all for curiosity, are inquisitive concerning them. (3.) That it concerns us always to be ready to give a reason of the hope that we have of the providence of God, as well as in his grace, in answer to every one that asks it, *with meekness and fear*, 1 Pet. iii. 15. And we need go no further than the sacred oracles of God's word for a reason; for God, what he does, is fulfilling the scripture. (4.) The issue of God's dealings with his people shall be so clearly and manifestly glorious at any one, every one, shall be able to give an account of them to those that enquire concerning them. Now,

2. The answer which is to be given to the messengers of the nations is, (1.) That God and will be a faithful friend to his church and people, and will secure and advance their interests. Tell them that *the Lord has founded Zion*. This gives an account both of the work itself that is done and of the reason of it. What is God doing in the world, and what is he designing in all the revolutions of states and kingdoms, in the ruin of some nations and the rise of others? He is, in this, founding Zion; he is aiming at the advancement of his church's interests; and that he aims at he will accomplish. The messengers of the nations, when they sent to enquire concerning Hezekiah's successes against the Philistines, expected to learn by what politics, counsels, and arts of war he carried his point; but they are told that these successes were not owing to any thing of that nature, but to the care God took of his church and the interest he had in it. The Lord has founded Zion, and therefore the Philistines must fall. (2.) That his church as and will have a dependence upon him: *the poor of his people shall trust in it*, his poor people who have lately been brought very low, even the poorest of them; they more than others, for they have nothing else to trust to, Zeph. iii. 12, 13. *The poor receive the gospel*, Matt. xi. 5. They shall trust to this, to this great truth, that the Lord has founded Zion; on this they shall build their hopes, and not on an arm of flesh. This ought to give us abundant satisfaction in public affairs, that however it may go with particular persons, parties, and interests, the church, having God himself for its founder and Christ the rock for its foundation, cannot but stand firm. *The poor of his people shall betake themselves to it* (30

some read it), shall join themselves to his church and embark in its interests; they shall concur with God in his designs to establish his people, and shall wind up all on the same plan, and make all their little concerns and projects bend to that. Those that take God's people for their people must be willing to take their lot with them and cast in their lot among them. Let the messengers of the nations know that the poor Israelites, who trust in God, having, like Zion, their foundation in the holy mountains (Ps. lxxxvii. 1), are like Zion, which *cannot be removed, but abides for ever* (Ps. cxxv. 1.), and therefore they will not fear what man can do unto them.

CHAP. XV.

This chapter, and that which follows it, are the burden of Moab—a prophecy of some great desolation that was coming upon that country, which bordered upon this land of Israel, and had often been injurious and vexatious to it, though the Moabites were descended from Lot, Abraham's kinsman and companion, and though the Israelites, by the appointment of God, had spared them when they might both easily and justly have cut them off with their neighbours. In this chapter we have, I. Great lamentation made by the Moabites, and by the prophet himself for them, ver. 1–5. II. The great calamities which should occasion that lamentation and justify it, ver. 6–9.

THE burden of Moab. Because in the night Ar of Moab is laid waste, *and* brought to silence; because in the night Kir of Moab is laid waste, *and* brought to silence; 2 He is gone to Bajith, and to Dibon, the high places, to weep: Moab shall howl over Nebo, and over Medeba: on all their heads *shall* be baldness, *and* every beard cut off. 3 In their streets they shall gird themselves with sackcloth: on the tops of their houses, and in their streets, every one shall howl, weeping abundantly. 4 And Heshbon shall cry, and Elealeh: their voice shall be heard *even* unto Jahaz: therefore the armed soldiers of Moab shall cry out; his life shall be grievous unto him. 5 My heart shall cry out for Moab; his fugitives *shall* flee unto Zoar, an heifer of three years old: for by the mounting up of Luhith with weeping shall they go it up; for in the way of Horonaim they shall raise up a cry of destruction.

The country of Moab was of small extent, but very fruitful. It bordered upon the lot of Reuben on the other side Jordan and upon the Dead Sea. Naomi went to sojourn there when there was a famine in Canaan. This is the country which (it is here foretold) should be wasted and grievously harassed, not quite ruined, for we find another prophecy of its ruin (Jer. xlviii), which was accomplished by Nebuchadnezzar. This prophecy here was to be fulfilled *within*

three years (*ch* xvi. 14), and therefore was fulfilled in the devastations made of that country by the army of the Assyrians, which for many years ravaged those parts, enriching themselves with spoil and plunder. It was done either by the army of Shalmaneser, about the time of the taking of Samaria, in the fourth year of Hezekiah (as is most probable), or by the army of Sennacherib, which, ten years after, invaded Judah. We cannot suppose that the prophet went among the Moabites to preach to them this sermon; but he delivered it to his own people, 1. To show them that, though judgment begins at the house of God, it shall not end there,—that there is a providence which governs the world and all the nations of it,—and that to the God of Israel the worshippers of false gods were accountable, and liable to his judgments. 2. To give them a proof of God's care of them and jealousy for them, and to convince them that God was an enemy to their enemies, for such the Moabites had often been. 3. That the accomplishment of this prophecy now shortly (*within three years*) might be a confirmation of the prophet's mission and of the truth of all his other prophecies, and might encourage the faithful to depend upon them.

Now concerning Moab it is here foretold,

I. That their chief cities should be surprised and taken in a night by the enemy, probably because the inhabitants, as the men of Laish, indulged themselves in ease and luxury, and dwelt securely (*v*. 1): Therefore there shall be great grief, *because in the night Ar of Moab is laid waste and Kir of Moab*, the two principal cities of that kingdom. *In the night that they were taken, or sacked, Moab was cut off.* The seizing of them laid the whole country open, and made all the wealth of it an easy prey to the victorious army. Note, 1. Great changes and very dismal ones may be made in a very little time. Here are two cities lost in a night, though that is the time of quietness. Let us therefore lie down as those that know not what a night may bring forth. 2. As the country feeds the cities, so the cities protect the country, and neither can say to the other, *I have no need of thee.*

II. That the Moabites, being hereby put into the utmost consternation imaginable, should have recourse to their idols for relief, and pour out their tears before them (*v*. 2): *He* (that is, Moab, especially the king of Moab) *has gone up to Bajith* (or rather to the house or temple of Chemosh), *and Dibon*, the inhabitants of Dibon, *have gone up to the high places*, where they worshipped their idols, there to make their complaints. Note, It becomes a people in distress to seek to their God; and shall not we then thus *walk in the name of the Lord our God*, and call upon him in the time of trouble, before whom we shall not shed such useless profitless tears as they did before their gods?

III. That there should be the voice of universal grief all the country over. It is described here elegantly and very affecting. Moab shall be a vale of tears—a little more of this world, *v*. 2. The Moabites shall lament the loss of Nebo and Medeba, two considerable cities, which, it is likely, were plundered and burnt. They shall tear the hair for grief to such a degree that *on their heads shall be baldness, and they shall cut off their beards*, according to the customary expressions of mourning in those times and countries. When they go abroad they shall be so far from coveting to appear handsome that *in the streets they shall gird themselves with sackcloth* (*v*. 3), and perhaps be forced to use that poor clothing, the enemy having stripped them, and rifled their houses and left them no other clothing. When they come home, instead of applying themselves to their business, they shall go up to the tops of their houses which were flat-roofed, and there they shall *weep abundantly*, nay, they shall *howl*, in crying to their gods. *That they cry not to God with their hearts do but howl upon their beds*, Hos. vii. 14; Amos viii. 3. *They shall come down with weeping* (so the margin reads it); they shall come down from their high places and the tops of their houses weeping as much as they did when they went up. Prayer to the true God is heart's ease (1 Sam. i. 18), but prayers to false gods are not. Divers places are here named that should be full of lamentation (*v*. 4), and it is but a poor relief to have so many fellow-sufferers, fellow-mourners; to a public spirit it is rather an aggravation *socius habuisse doloris—to have associates in woe.*

IV. That the courage of their militia should fail them. Though they were brave soldiers, and were well armed, yet they shall *cry out and shriek for fear*, and every one of them shall have *his life become grievous to him*, though it is characteristic of a militia life to delight in danger, *v*. 4. See how easily God can dispirit the stoutest of men and deprive a nation of benefit by whom it most depended upon for strength and defence. The Moabites shall generally be so overwhelmed with grief that life itself shall be a burden to them. God can easily make weary of life those that are fondest of it.

V. That the outcry for these calamities should propagate grief to all the adjacent parts, *v*. 5. 1. The prophet himself has very sensible impressions made upon his spirit: the prediction of it: *"My heart shall cry out for Moab"*; though they are enemies to Israel they are our fellow-creatures, of the same rank with us, and therefore it should grieve us to see them in such distress, the rather because we know not how soon it may be our own turn to drink of the same cup of trembling." Note, It becomes God's ministers to be of a tender spirit, not to desire the woeful day, but to be like their master, who wept over Jerusalem even when he gave her

to ruin, like their God, who desires not the death of sinners. 2. All the neighbouring cities shall echo to the lamentations of Moab. The fugitives, who are making the rest of their way to shift for their own safety, shall carry the cry to Zoar, the city to which their ancestor Lot fled for shelter from Sodom's flames and which was spared for his sake. They shall make as great a noise with their cry as a heifer of three years old does when she goes lowing for her calf, as Sam. vi. 12. They shall go up the hill of *phith* (as David went up the ascent of Mount Olivet, many a weary step and all in tears, 2 Sam. xv. 30), and in the way of *Horo-aim* (a dual termination), the way that leads to the two Beth-horons, the upper and the lower, which we read of, Josh. xvi. 3, 5. Thither the cry shall be carried, there it shall be raised, even at that great distance: *A cry of destruction*; that shall be the cry, like, *Fire, fire!* we are all undone." Grief is catching, so is fear, and justly, for trouble is spreading and when it begins who knows where it will end?

6 For the waters of Nimrim shall be desolate: for the hay is withered away, the grass faileth, there is no green thing. 7 Therefore the abundance they have gotten, and that which they have laid up, shall they carry away to the brook of the wil-
lows. 8 For the cry is gone round about the borders of Moab; the howling thereof unto Eglaim, and the howling thereof unto Beer-elim. 9 For the waters of Dimon shall be full of blood: for I will bring more upon Dimon, lions upon him that escapeth of Moab, and upon the remnant of the land.

Here the prophet further describes the rueful and piteous lamentations that should be heard throughout all the country of Moab when it should become a prey to the Assyrian army. "By this time the cry has gone round about all the borders of Moab, v. 8. Every corner of the country has received the alarm, and is in the utmost confusion upon it. It has reached to *Eglaim*, a city at one end of the country, and to *Beer-elim*, a city far the other way. Where sin has been general, and all flesh have corrupted their way, what can be expected but a general dissolution? Two things are here spoken of as causes of this lamentation:—

I. The waters of Nimrim are desolate (v. 6), that is, the country is plundered and impoverished, and all the wealth and substance of it swept away by the victorious army. Famine is usually the sad effect of war. Look into the fields that were well watered, the fruitful meadows that yielded delightful

prospects and more delightful products, and there all is eaten up, or carried off by the enemy's foragers, and the remainder trodden to dirt by their horses. If an army encamp upon green fields, their greenness is soon gone. Look into the houses, and they are stripped too (v. 7): The abundance of wealth that they had gotten with a great deal of art and industry, and that which they had laid up with a great deal of care and confidence, shall they carry away to the brook of the willows. Either the owners shall carry it thither to hide it or the enemies shall carry it thither to pack it up and send it home, by water perhaps, to their own country. Note, 1. Those that are eager to get abundance of this world, and solicitous to lay up what they have gotten, little consider what may become of it and in how short a time it may be all taken from them. Great abundance, by tempting the robbers, exposes the owners; and those who depend upon it to protect them often find it does but betray them. 2. In times of distress great riches are often great burdens, and do but increase the owner's care or the enemies' strength. *Cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator*—The penniless traveller will exult, when accosted by a robber, in having nothing about him.

II. The waters of Dimon are turned into blood (v. 9), that is, the inhabitants of the country are slain in great numbers, so that the waters adjoining to the cities, whether rivers or pools, are discoloured with human gore, inhumanly shed like water. *Dimon* signifies bloody; the place shall answer to its name. Perhaps it was that place in the country of Moab where the waters seemed to the Moabites as blood (2 Kings iii. 22, 23), which occasioned their overthrow. But now, says God, I will bring more upon Dimon, more blood than was shed, or thought to be seen, at that time. I will bring additions upon Dimon (so the word is), additional plagues; I have yet more judgments in reserve for them. For all this, God's anger is not turned away. When he judges he will overcome; and to the roll of curses shall be added many like words, Jer. xxxvi. 32. See here what is the yet more evil to be brought upon Dimon, upon Moab, which is now to be made a land of blood. Some flee, and make their escape, others sit still, and are overlooked, and are as a remnant of the land; but upon both God will bring lions, beasts of prey (which are reckoned one of God's four judgments, Ezek. xiv. 21), and these shall glean up those that have escaped the sword of the enemy. Those that continue impenitent in sin, when they are preserved from one judgment, are but reserved for another.

CHAP. XVI.

This chapter continues and concludes the burden of Moab. In it, 1. The prophet gives good counsel to the Moabites, to reform what was amiss among them, and particularly to be kind to God's people, as the likeliest way to prevent the judgments before threatened, ver. 1—5. II. Fearing they would not take this counsel (they

were so proudly, he goes on to foretell the lamentable devastation of this country, and the confusion they should be brought to, and this within three years, ver. 6-14.

SEND ye the lamb to the ruler of the land from Sela to the wilderness, unto the mount of the daughter of Zion. 2 For it shall be, *that*, as a wandering bird cast out of the nest, so the daughters of Moab shall be at the fords of Arnon. 3 Take counsel, execute judgment; make thy shadow as the night in the midst of the noon-day; hide the outcasts; bewray not him that wandereth. 4 Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab; be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler: for the extortioner is at an end, the spoiler ceaseth, the oppressors are consumed out of the land. 5 And in mercy shall the throne be established: and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging, and seeking judgment, and hastening righteousness.

God has made it to appear that he delights not in the ruin of sinners by telling them what they may do to prevent the ruin; so he does here to Moab.

1. He advises them to be just to the house of David, and to pay the tribute they had formerly covenanted to pay to the kings of his line (v. 1): *Send you the lamb to the ruler of the land*. David made the Moabites tributaries to him, 2 Sam. viii. 2. *They became his servants, and brought gifts*. Afterwards they paid their tribute to the kings of Israel (2 Kings iii. 4), and paid it in lambs. Now the prophet requires them to pay it to Hezekiah. Let it be raised and levied from all parts of the country, *from Sela*, a frontier city of Moab on the one side, *to the wilderness*, a boundary of the kingdom on the other side: and let it be sent, where it should be sent, *to the mount of the daughter of Zion*, the city of David. Some take it as an advice to send a lamb for a sacrifice to God, *the ruler of the earth* (so it may be read), the Lord of the whole earth, ruler of all lands, the land of Moab as well as the land of Israel. "Send it to the temple built on Mount Zion." And some think it is in this sense spoken ironically, upbraiding the Moabites with their folly in delaying to repent and make their peace with God. "Now you would be glad to send a lamb to Mount Zion, to make the God of Israel your friend; but it is too late: the decree has gone forth, the consumption is determined, and the daughters of Moab shall be cast out as a wandering bird," v. 2. I rather take it as good advice seriously given, like that of Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar when he was reading him his

doom, Dan. iv. 27. *Break off thy sins righteousness, if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity*. And it is applicable to the gospel duty of submission to Christ, as the ruler of the land, and our ruler: "Send him the lamb, the best you have, yourselves living sacrifice. When you come to God the great ruler, come in the name of the Lamb, the Lamb of God. *For else it shall be*" (so we may read it) *"that, as a wandering bird cast out of the nest, so shall the daughters of Moab be*. If you will not pay your quit-rent, your just tribute to the king of Judah, you shall be turned out of your houses: *The daughters of Moab* (the count villages, or the women of your country) shall flutter about the fords of Arnon, attempting that way to make their escape to some other land, *like a wandering bird thrown out of the nest half-fledged*." Those that will not submit to Christ, nor be gathered under the shadow of his wings, shall be as a bird that wanders from her nest, that shall either be snatched up by the next bird of prey or shall wander endlessly in continual frights. Those that will not yield to the fear of God shall be made to yield to the fear of every thing else.

II. He advises them to be kind to the servants of Israel (v. 3): "Take counsel, call a convention, and consult among yourselves what is fit to be done in the present critical juncture; and you will find it your best way to execute judgment, to reverse all the righteous decrees you have made, by which you have put hardships upon the people of God, and, in token of your repentance to them, study now how to oblige them, and this shall be accepted of God more than a burnt-offering and sacrifice."

1. The prophet foresaw some storm coming upon the people of God, perhaps to the good people of the ten tribes, or of the tribe of Judah, and a half on the other side Jordan, who were country joined to that of Moab, and who, by the merciful providence of God, escaped the fury of the Assyrian army, had their lives given them for a prey, and were reserved for better times, but were put to the utmost extremity to shift for their own safety. The danger and trouble they were in were like the scorching heat at noon; the face of the spoiler was very fierce upon them and the oppressor and extortioner were ready to swallow them up after stripping them of what they had.

2. He bespeaks a shelter for them in the land of Moab, when their own land was made too hot for them. This judgment they must execute; thus wisely must they do for themselves, and thus kindly must they deal with the people of God. If they would themselves continue in their habitations, let them not open their doors to the distressed dispersed members of God's church, and be to them like a cool shade to those that bear the burden and heat of the day. Let them not despise those that absconded among them, nor

liver them up to the pursuers that made search for them. "*Betray not him that wandereth, nor deliver him up*" (as the Edomites did, Obad. 13, 14), "*but hide the outcasts.*" This was that good work by which Rahab's faith was justified, and proved to be sincere, Heb. xi. 31. "Nay, do not only hide them for a time, but, if there be occasion, let them be naturalized: *Let my outcasts dwell with thee, Moab* (v. 4); find a lodging for them and *be thou a covert to them.* Let them be taken under the protection of the government, though they are but poor, and likely to be a charge to thee." Note, (1.) It is often the lot even of those who are Israelites indeed to be outcasts, driven out of house and harbour by persecution or war, Heb. xi. 37. - (2.) God owns them when men reject and disown them. They are *outcasts*, but they are *my outcasts*. The Lord knows those that are his wherever he finds them, even where no one else knows them. (3.) God will find a rest and shelter for his outcasts; for, though they are persecuted, they are not forsaken. He will himself be their dwelling-place if they have no other, and in him they shall be at home. (4.) God can, when he pleases, raise up friends for his people even among Moabites, when they can find none in all the land of Israel that can and dare shelter them. The earth often helps the woman, Rev. xii. 16. (5.) Those that expect to find favour when they are in trouble themselves must show favour to those that are in trouble; and what service is done to God's outcasts shall no doubt be recompensed one way or other.

3. He assures them of the mercy God had in store for his people. (1.) That they should not long need their kindness, or be troublesome to them: *For the extortioner is almost at an end already, and the spoiler ceases.* God's people shall not be long outcasts; they shall have tribulation ten days (Rev. ii. 10), and that is all. The spoiler would never cease spoiling if he might have his will; but God has him in a chain. *Hitherto he shall go, but no further.* (2.) That they should be, ere long, be in a capacity to return their kindness (v. 5): "Though the throne of the ten tribes be sunk and overturned, yet the throne of David shall be established in mercy, by the mercy they receive from God and the mercy they show to others; and by the same methods may your throne be established if you please." It would engage great men to be kind to the people of God if they would but observe, as they easily might, how often such conduct brings the blessing of God upon kingdoms and families. "Make Hezekiah your friend, for you will find it your interest to do so upon the account both of the grace of God in him and the presence of God with him. He shall sit upon the throne in truth, and then he does indeed sit in honour and sit firmly. Then he shall sit

judging, and will then be a protector to those that have been a shelter to the people of God." And see in him the character of a good magistrate. [1.] He shall seek judgment; that is, he shall seek occasions of doing right to those that are wronged, and shall punish the injurious even before they are complained of: or he shall diligently search into every cause brought before him, that he may find where the right lies. [2.] He shall hasten righteousness, and not delay to do justice, nor keep those long waiting that make application to him for the redress of their grievances. Though he seeks judgment, and deliberates upon it, yet he does not, under pretence of deliberation, stay the progress of the streams of justice. Let the Moabites take example by this, and then assure themselves that their state shall be established.

6 We have heard of the pride of Moab; he is very proud: even of his haughtiness, and his pride, and his wrath: but his lies shall not be so. 7 Therefore shall Moab howl for Moab, every one shall howl: for the foundations of Kir-hareseth shall ye mourn; surely they are stricken. 8 For the fields of Heshbon languish, and the vine of Sibmah: the lords of the heathen have broken down the principal plants thereof, they are come even unto Jazer, they wandered through the wilderness: her branches are stretched out, they are gone over the sea. 9 Therefore I will bewail with the weeping of Jazer the vine of Sibmah: I will water thee with my tears, O Heshbon, and Elealeh: for the shouting for thy summer fruits and for thy harvest is fallen. 10 And gladness is taken away, and joy out of the plentiful field; and in the vineyards there shall be no singing, neither shall there be shouting: the treaders shall tread out no wine in their presses; I have made their vintage shouting to cease. 11 Wherefore my bowels shall sound like a harp for Moab, and mine inward parts for Kir-hareseth. 12 And it shall come to pass, when it is seen that Moab is weary on the high place, that he shall come to his sanctuary to pray; but he shall not prevail. 13 This is the word that the LORD hath spoken concerning Moab since that time. 14 But now the LORD

hath spoken, saying, Within three years, as the years of a hireling, and the glory of Moab shall be condemned, with all that great multitude; and the remnant *shall be* very small and feeble.

Here we have, I. The sins with which Moab is charged, *v.* 6. The prophet seems to check himself for going about to give good counsel to the Moabites, concluding they would not take the advice he gave them. He told them their duty (whether they would hear or whether they would forbear), but despairs of working any good upon them; he would have healed them, but they would not be healed. Those that will not be counselled cannot be helped. Their sins were, 1. Pride. This is most insisted upon; for perhaps there are more precious souls ruined by pride than by any one lust whatsoever. The Moabites were notorious for this: "*We have heard in both ears of the pride of Moab*"; it is what all their neighbours cry out shame upon them for. *He is very proud*; the body of the nation is so, forgetting the baseness of their origin and the brand of infamy fastened upon them by that law of God which forbade a Moabite to enter into the congregation of the Lord for ever, Deut. xxiii. 3. We have heard of his *haughtiness and his pride*. It is not the rash and rigid censure of one or two concerning them, but it is the character which all that know them will give of them. They are a proud people, and therefore they will not take good counsel when it is given them. They think themselves too wise to be advised; therefore they will not take example by Hezekiah to do justly and love mercy. They scorn to make him their pattern, for they think themselves able to teach him. They are proud, and therefore will not be subject to God himself nor regard the warnings he gives them. *The wicked, in the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God*. They are proud, and therefore will not entertain and protect God's outcasts; they scorn to have any thing to do with them." But this is not all:—2. "We have heard of his *wrath* too (for those that are very proud are commonly very passionate), particularly his wrath against the people of God, whom therefore he will rather persecute than protect. 3. It is with his *lies* that he gains the gratifications of his pride and his passion; *but his lies shall not be so*; he shall not compass his proud and angry projects as he hoped he should." Some read it, *His haughtiness, his pride, and his wrath, are greater than his strength*. "We know that, if we lay at his mercy, we should find no mercy with him, but he has not power equal to his malice. His pride draws down ruin upon him; for it is the preface to destruction, and he has not strength to ward it off."

II. The sorrows with which Moab threatened (*v.* 7): *Therefore shall Moab howl for Moab*. All the inhabitants shall bitterly lament the ruin of their country. They shall complain one to another: *Each one shall howl* in despair, and not one shall either see any cause or have any heart to encourage his friend. Observe,

1. The causes of this sorrow. (1.) The destruction of their cities: *For the foundations of Kir-hareseth shall you mourn*. This great and strong city, which had held out against a mighty force (2 Kings iii. 22) should now be levelled with the ground, either burnt or broken down, and its foundations stricken, bruised and broken (so the word signifies); they shall howl when they see their splendid cities turned into ruined heaps. (2.) The desolation of their country. Moab was famous for its fields and vineyards; but those shall all be laid waste by an invading army, *v.* 8, 10. See, [1.] What a fruitful pleasant country they had, as the garden of the Lord, Gen. xiii. 10. It was planted with choice and noble vines, *its principal plants*, which reached even to Jazer, a city in the tribe of Gad. The luxuriant branches of their vines wandered, and wound themselves along the ranges on which they were spread, even through the wilderness of Moab. There were vineyards there. Now they were stretched out, and went even to the sea, the Dead Sea: the best grapes grew in their hedge-rows. [2.] How merry a pleasant they had been in it. Many a time they had shouted for their summer fruit, and for their harvest, as the country people sometimes do with us when they have reaped down all their corn. They had had joy and gladness in their fields and vineyards, singing and shouting at the treading of their grapes. Nothing is said of their praising God for their abundance, and giving him the glory of it. If they had made it the matter of their thanksgiving, they might still have had it the matter of their rejoicing; but they made it the food and fuel of their luxury: see therefore, [3.] How they should be stripped of all. "The fields shall languish, all the fruits of them being carried away and trodden down; they cannot now enrich the owners as they have done, and therefore they languish. The soldiers, called here the lords of the heathen, shall break down the plants, though they were principal plants, the choicest that could be got. Now that shouting for the enjoyment of the summer fruits has fallen, and is turned into howling for the loss of them. The joy of harvest has ceased; there is no more singing, no more shouting, for the treading out of wine. They have not what they have had to rejoice in, nor have they a disposition to rejoice; the ruin of their country has marred their mirth." Note, First, God can easily change the note of those that are most addicted to mirth and pleasure, can soon turn the

laughter into mourning and their joy into heaviness. Secondly, Joy in God is, upon his account, far better than the joy of harvest, that it is what we cannot be robbed of, Ps. iv. 6, 7. Destroy the vines and the fig-trees, and you make all the mirth of a carnal heart to cease, Hos. ii. 11, 12. But a gracious soul can rejoice in the Lord as the God of its salvation even when the fig-tree does not blossom and there is no fruit in the vine, Hab. iii. 17, 18. In God therefore let us always rejoice with a holy triumph, and in other things let us always rejoice with a holy trembling, rejoice as though we rejoiced not.

2. The concurrence of the prophet with them in this sorrow: "*I will with weeping bewail Jazer, and the vine of Sibmah, and look with a compassionate concern upon the desolations of such a pleasant country. I will water thee with my tears, O Heshbon! and mingle them with thy tears;*" say (v. 1), it appears to be an inward grief: *My bowels shall sound like a harp for Moab;* it should make such an impression upon him that he should feel an inward trembling, like that of the strings of a harp when it is played upon. It well becomes God's prophets to acquaint themselves with grief; the great prophet did so. The afflictions of the world, as well as those of the church, should be afflictions to us. See *ch. xv. 5.*

III. In the close of the chapter we have, The insufficiency of the gods of Moab, the false gods, to help them, v. 12. "Moab shall be soon weary of the high place. He shall spend his spirits and strength in vain in praying to his idols; they cannot help him, and he shall be convinced that they cannot." It is seen that it is to no purpose to expect any relief from the high places on earth; it must come from above the hills. Men are generally so stupid that they will not believe, till they are made to see, the vanity of idols and of all creature-conferences, nor will come off from them till they are made weary of them. But, when he is weary of his high places, he will not go, as he should, to God's sanctuary, but to his sanctuary, to the temple of Chemosh, the principal idol of Moab (so it is generally understood); and he shall pray there to as little purpose, and as little to his own ease and satisfaction, as he did in his high places; for, whatever honours idolaters give to their idols, they do not thereby make them at all the better able to help them. Whether they are the *dii majorum*—gods of the higher order, or *minorum*—of the lower order, they are alike the creatures of men's fancy and the work of men's hands. Perhaps it may be meant of their coming to God's sanctuary. When they found they could have no succours from their own high places some of them would come to the temple of God at Jerusalem, to pray there, but in vain; he will justly send

them back to the gods whom they have served, Judg. x. 14. 2. The sufficiency of the God of Israel, the only true God, to make good what he had spoken against them. (1.) The thing itself was long since determined (v. 13): *This is the word, this is the thing, that the Lord has spoken concerning Moab, since the time that he began to be so proud, and insolent, and abusive to God's people.* The country was long ago doomed to ruin; this was enough to give an assurance of it that *it is the word which the Lord has spoken;* and, as he will never unsay what he has spoken, so all the power of hell and earth cannot gainsay it, or obstruct the execution of it. (2.) Now it was made known when it should be done. The time was before fixed in the counsel of God, but now it was revealed: *The Lord has spoken that it shall be within three years, v. 14. It is not for us to know, or covet to know, the times and the seasons, any further than God has thought fit to make them known, and so far we may and must take notice of them.* See how God makes known his mind by degrees; the light of divine revelation shone more and more, and so does the light of divine grace in the heart. Observe, [1.] The sentence passed upon Moab: *The glory of Moab shall be contemned,* that is, it shall be contemptible, when all those things they have gloried in shall come to nothing. Such is the glory of this world, so fading and uncertain, admired awhile, but soon slighted. Let that therefore which will soon be contemptible in the eyes of others be always contemptible in our eyes in comparison with the *far more exceeding weight of glory.* It was the glory of Moab that their country was very populous and their forces were courageous; but where is her glory when all that great multitude is in a manner swept away, some by one judgment and some by another, and the little remnant that is left shall be *very small and feeble*, not able to bear up under their own griefs, much less to make head against their enemies' insults? Let not therefore the strong glory in their strength nor the many in their numbers. [2.] The time fixed for the execution of this sentence: *Within three years, as the years of a hireling,* that is, at the three years' end exactly, for a servant that is hired for a certain term keeps account to a day. Let Moab know that her ruin is very near, and prepare accordingly. Fair warning is given, and with it space to repent, which if they had improved, as Nineveh did, we have reason to think the judgments threatened would have been prevented.

CHAP. XVII.

Syria and Ephraim were confederate against Judah (*ch. vii. 1, 2*, and, they being so closely linked together in their counsels, this chapter, though it be entitled "the burden of Damascus" (which was the head city of Syria), reads the doom of Israel too. I. The destruction of the strong cities both of Syria and Israel is here foretold, ver. 1—5 and again ver. 9—11. II. In the midst of judgment mercy is remembered to Israel, and a gracious promise made that a remnant should be preserved from the calamities and should

get good by them, ver. 6-8. III. The overthrow of the Assyrian army before Jerusalem is pointed at ver. 12-14. In order of time this chapter should be placed next after ch. ix., for the destruction of Damascus, here foretold, happened in the reign of Ahas, 2 Kings xvi. 9.

THE burden of Damascus. Behold, Damascus is taken away from being a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap. 2 The cities of Aroer are forsaken: they shall be for flocks, which shall lie down, and none shall make them afraid. 3 The fortress also shall cease from Ephraim, and the kingdom from Damascus, and the remnant of Syria: they shall be as the glory of the children of Israel, saith the LORD of hosts. 4 And in that day it shall come to pass, that the glory of Jacob shall be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean. 5 And it shall be as when the harvestman gathereth the corn, and reapeth the ears with his arm; and it shall be as he that gathereth ears in the valley of Rephaim.

We have here the burden of Damascus; the Chaldee paraphrase reads it, *The burden of the cup of the curse to drink to Damascus in*; and, the ten tribes being in alliance, they must expect to pledge Damascus in this cup of trembling that is to go round.

1. Damascus itself, the head city of Syria, must be destroyed; the houses, it is likely, will be burnt, at least the walls, and gates, and fortifications demolished, and the inhabitants carried away captive, so that for the present it is *taken away from being a city*, and is reduced not only to a village, but to a *ruinous heap*, v. 1. Such desolating work as this does sin make with cities.

2. The country towns are abandoned by their inhabitants, frightened or forced away by the invaders: *The cities of Aroer* (a province of Syria so called) *are forsaken* (v. 2); the conquered dare not dwell in them, and the conquerors have no occasion for them, nor did they seize them for want, but wantonness; so that the places which should be for men to live in are for *flocks to lie down in*, which they may do, and none will disturb nor dislodge them. Stately houses are converted into sheep-cotes. It is strange that great conquerors should pride themselves in being common enemies to mankind. But, how unrighteous soever they are, God is righteous in causing those cities to spue out their inhabitants, who by their wickedness had made themselves vile; it is better that *flocks should lie down there* than that they should harbour such as are in open rebellion against God and virtue. 3. The strongholds of Israel, the kingdom of the ten tribes, will be brought to ruin:

The fortress shall cease from Ephraim (v. 3) that in Samaria, and all the rest. They had joined with Syria in invading Judah very unnaturally; and now those that have been partakers in sin should be made partakers in ruin, and justly. When *the fortress shall cease from Ephraim*, by which Israel will be weakened, the kingdom will cease from Damascus, by which Syria will be ruined. The Syrians were the ring-leader in that confederacy against Judah, and therefore they are punished first and sorest; and because they boasted of their alliance with Israel, now that Israel is weakened they are upbraided with those boasts: "*The remnant of Syria shall be as the glory of the children of Israel*; those few that remain of the Syria shall be in as mean and despicable a condition as the children of Israel are, and the glory of Israel shall be no relief or reputation to them." Sinful confederacies will have no strength, no stay, to the confederates when God's judgments come upon them. See here what the glory of Jacob is which God contends with him, and what little reason Syria will have to be proud of assembling the glory of Jacob. (1.) It was wasted like a man in a consumption, *v. 4*. *The glory of Jacob* was their numbers, but they were as the sand of the sea for multitude; but this *glory shall be made thin* when many are cut off, and few left. *The fatness of their flesh*, which was their pride and security, *shall wax lean*, and the body of the people shall become a perfect skeleton, nothing but skin and bones. Israel died of a lingering disease; the kingdom of the ten tribes wasted gradually. God was to them as a *moth*, Hos. v. Such is all the glory of this world: it so withers, and is made thin; but there is far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory designed for the spiritual seed of Jacob, which is not subject to any such decay—fatness of God's house, which was not *wax lean*. (2.) It is all gathered and carried away by the Assyrian army, as corn is carried out of the field by the husbandmen, v. 5. The corn is the glory of the fields (Ps. lxx. 13); but, when it is reaped and gone, where is the glory? The people had by their sins made themselves ripe for ruin, and their glory was as quick as easily, as justly, and as irresistibly, cut down and taken away, as the corn is out of the field by the husbandman. God's judgments are compared to the *thrusting in the sickle when the harvest is ripe*, Rev. xiv. 15. And the victorious army, like careful husbandmen in the valley of Rephaim where the corn was extraordinary, would not, if they could help it, leave any behind, would lose nothing that they could lay their hands on.

6 Yet gleanings shall be left in it, as the shaking of an olive

ee, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five the outmost fruitful branches thereof; saith the Lord God of Israel. 7 At that day shall a man look to his maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel. 8 And he shall not look to the altars, the work of his hands, neither shall he respect *that which his fingers have made*, either the groves, or the images.

Mercy is here reserved, in a parenthesis, in the midst of judgment, for a remnant that could escape the common ruin of the kingdom of the ten tribes. Though the Assyrians took all the care they could that none could slip out of their net, yet the meek of the earth were hidden in the day of the Lord's anger, and had their lives given them for a prey and made comfortable to them by their retirement to the land of Judah, where they had the liberty of God's covenants. 1. They shall be but a small remnant, a very few, who shall be marked for preservation (v. 6): *Gleaning grapes shall be left in it*. The body of the people were carried into captivity, but here and there one was left behind, perhaps one of two in a land when the other was taken, Luke xvii.

The most desolating judgments in this world are short of the last judgment, which shall be universal and which none shall escape. In times of the greatest calamity some are kept safe, as in times of the greatest degeneracy some are kept pure. But the wisdom of those that escape supposes the captivity of the far greatest part; those that are left are but like the poor remains of an olive tree when it has been carefully shaken by the owner; if there be *two or three berries the top of the uppermost bough* (out of the reach of those that shook it), that is all which is the remnant according to the election of grace, very few in comparison with the multitudes that walk on in the broad way.

They shall be a sanctified remnant, v. 8. These few that are preserved are such as, in the prospect of the judgment approaching, had repented of their sins and reformed their lives, and therefore were detached thus as brands out of the burning, such as having escaped, and becoming fugitives in strange countries, were awakened, partly by a sense of the distinguishing mercy of their deliverance, and partly by the distresses they were still in, to return to God. (1.) They shall look up to their creator, shall enquire, *Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night*, in such a night of affliction as this? Job xxxv. 11. They shall acknowledge his hand in all the events concerning them, merciful and afflictive, and shall submit to his hand. They shall give him the glory due to his

name, and be suitably affected with his providences. They shall expect relief and succour from him and depend upon him to help them. *Their eyes shall have respect to him, as the eyes of a servant to the hand of his master*, Ps. cxxiii. 2. Observe, It is our duty at all times to have respect to God, to have our eyes ever towards him, both as our Maker (the author of our being and the God of nature) and as the Holy One of Israel, a God in covenant with us and the God of grace; particularly, when we are in affliction, our eyes must be towards the Lord, to *pluck our feet out of the net* (Ps. xxv. 15); to bring us to this is the design of his providence as he is our Maker and the work of his grace as he is the Holy One of Israel. (2.) They shall look off from their idols, the creatures of their own fancy, shall no longer worship them, and seek to them, and expect relief from them. For God will be alone regarded, or he does not look upon himself as at all regarded. He that looks to his Maker must not look to the altars, the work of his hands, but disown them and cast them off, must not retain the least respect for *that which his fingers have made*, but break it to pieces, though it be his own workmanship—the groves and the images; the word signifies images made in honour of the sun and by which he was worshipped, the most ancient and most plausible idolatry, Deut. iv. 19; Job xxxi. 26. We have reason to account those happy afflictions which part between us and our sins, and by sensible convictions of the vanity of the world, that great idol, cool our affections to it and lower our expectations from it.

9 In that day shall his strong cities be as a forsaken bough, and an uppermost branch, which they left because of the children of Israel: and there shall be desolation. 10 Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the rock of thy strength, therefore shalt thou plant pleasant plants, and shalt set it with strange slips: 11 In the day shalt thou make thy plant to grow, and in the morning shalt thou make thy seed to flourish: *but the harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow*.

Here the prophet returns to foretell the woeful desolations that should be made in the land of Israel by the army of the Assyrians. 1. That the cities should be deserted. Even the strong cities, which should have protected the country, shall not be able to protect themselves: *They shall be as a forsaken bough and an uppermost branch of an old tree, which has gone to decay, is forsaken of its leaves, and appears on the top*

of the tree, bare, and dry, and dead; so shall their strong cities look when the inhabitants have deserted them and the victorious army of the enemy pillaged and defaced them, *v. 9.* They shall be as the cities (so it may be supplied) which the Canaanites left, the old inhabitants of the land, because of the children of Israel, when God brought them in with a high hand, to take possession of that good land, cities which they built not. As the Canaanites then fled before Israel, so Israel should now flee before the Assyrians. And herein the word of God was fulfilled, that, if they committed the same abominations, *the land should spue them out, as it spued out the nations that were before them* (Lev. xviii. 28), and that as, while they had God on their side, *one of them chased a thousand*, so, when they had made him their enemy, *a thousand of them should flee at the rebuke of one*; so that in the cities should be desolation, according to the threatenings in the law, Lev. xxvi. 31; Deut. xxviii. 52. 2. That the country should be laid waste, *v. 10, 11.* Observe here, (1.) The sin that had provoked God to bring so great a destruction upon that pleasant land. It was *for the iniquity of those that dwelt therein*. "It is because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation and all the great salvations he has wrought for thee, hast forgotten thy dependence upon him and obligations to him, and hast not been mindful of the rock of thy strength, not only who is himself a strong rock, but who has been thy strength many a time, or thou wouldest have been sunk and broken long since." Note, The God of our salvation is the rock of our strength; and our forgetfulness and unmindfulness of him are at the bottom of all sin: *Therefore have we perverted our way, because we have forgotten the Lord our God, and so we undo ourselves.* (2.) The destruction itself, aggravated by the great care they took to improve their land and to make it yet more pleasant. [1.] Look upon it at the time of the seedness, and it was all like a garden and a vineyard; that pleasant land was replenished with pleasant plants, the choicest of its own growth; nay, so nice and curious were the inhabitants that, not content with them, they sent to all the neighbouring countries for strange slips, the more valuable for being strange, uncommon, far-fetched, and dear-bought, though perhaps they had of their own not inferior to them. This was an instance of their pride and vanity, and (that ruining error) their affection to be like the nations. *Wheat, and honey, and oil* were their staple commodities (Ezek. xxvii. 17); but, not content with these, they must have flowers and greens with strange names imported from other nations, and a great deal of care and pains must be taken by hot-beds to make these plants to grow; the soil must be forced, and they must be covered with glasses to

shelter them, and early in the morning the gardeners must be up to make the seeds flourish, that it may excel those of the neighbours. The ornaments of nature are not to be altogether slighted, but it is a folly to be over-fond of them, and to bestow more time, and cost, and pains about them than they deserve, as many do. But here this instance seems to be put in general for the great industry in cultivating their grounds and their expectations from it accordingly; they doubt not but their plants will grow and flourish. But, [2.] Look upon the same ground at the time of harvest, and it is all like a wilderness, a dismal melancholy place, even to the spectators, much more to the owners; *for the harvest shall be a heap all in confusion, in the day of grief and desperate sorrow.* The harvest used to be time of joy, of singing and shouting (Gen. xvi. 10); but this harvest the hungry came up (Job v. 5), which makes it a day of grief and the more because the plants were pleasant and costly (*v. 10*) and their expectations proportionably raised. The harvest has sometimes been a day of grief, if the crop was thin and the weather unseasonable; and yet in that case there was hope that the next would be better. But this shall be desperate sorrow, for they shall see not only this year's products carried off, but the property of the ground altered and their conquerors lords of it. The margin reads it, *The harvest shall be removed* (into the enemy's country, camp, Deut. xxviii. 33) *in the day of inheritance* (when thou thoughtest to inherit it) *and there shall be deadly sorrow.* This is a good reason why we should not lay up our treasure in those things which we may quickly be despoiled of, but in that good place which shall never be taken away from us.

12 Woe to the multitude of many people, *which* make a noise like the rushing of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, *that* make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters! The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but God shall rebuke them, and they shall flee off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind. 14 And behold at evening tide trouble; and before the morning he is not. This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us.

These verses read the doom of those that spoil and rob the people of God. If the Assyrians and Israelites invade and plunder Judah, if the Assyrian army take God's people captive and lay their country waste, let them know that ruin will be their lot and

portion They are here brought in, 1. triumphing over the people of God. They relied upon their numbers. The Assyrian army was made up out of divers nations: it was *as the multitude of many people* (v. 12), by which weight they hoped to carry the cause. They were very noisy, like the roaring of the seas; they talked big, hectoring, and threatened, to frighten God's people from resisting them, and all their allies from sending in to their aid. Sennacherib and Rabshakeh, in their speeches and letters, made a mighty noise to strike a terror upon Hezekiah and his people; the nations that followed them made *a rushing like the rushing of many waters*, and those mighty ones, that threatened to bear down all before them and carry away every thing that stands in their way. *The floods have lifted up their voice, have lifted up their waves*; such is the tumult of the people, and the heathen, when they rage, Ps. ii. 1; ciii. 3. 2. Triumphed over by the judgments of God. They thought to carry their point by dint of noise; but woe to them (v. 2), for he *shall rebuke them*, that is, God shall, one whom they little think of, have regard to, stand in no awe of; he shall give them a check with an invisible hand, and then *they shall flee afar off*. Sennacherib, and Rabshakeh, and the remains of their forces, shall run away in a fright, and shall be chased by their own terrors, *as the staff of the mountains which stand bleak before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind*, like thistle-down (so the margin); they make themselves *as chaff before the wind* (Ps. xxxv. 5) and then the *angel of the Lord* (as it follows there), the same angel that slew many of them, shall raise the rest. God will make *them like a heel*, or rolling thing, and then persecute them with his tempest and make them afraid with his storm, Ps. lxxxiii. 13, 15. Note, God can dispirit the enemies of his church when they are most courageous and confident, and dissipate them when they seem most closely consolidated. This shall be done suddenly (v. 14): *At evening-tide they are very troublesome, and threaten trouble to the people of God; but before the morning they are not*. At sleeping time they are cast into a deep sleep, Ps. lxxvi. 5, 6. It was in the night that the angel routed the Assyrian army. God can in a moment break the power of his church's enemies, even when it appears most formidable; and this is written for the encouragement of the people of God in all ages, when they find themselves an unequal match for their enemies; for this is the portion of those that *boil us*, they shall themselves be spoiled. God will plead his church's cause, and those that meddle do it to their own hurt.

CHAP. XVIII.

the better country it is that is meant here by "the land shadowing with wings;" here is a woe denounced against it, for God has, upon his people's account, a quarrel with it. 1. They threaten God's people, ver. 1, 2. 2. II. All the neighbours are hereupon called to

take notice what will be the issue, ver. 3. III. Though God seems unconcerned in the distress of his people for a time, he will at length appear against their enemies and will remarkably cut them off, ver. 4-6. IV. This shall redound very much to the glory of God, ver. 7.

WOE to the land shadowing with wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia: 2 That sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of bulrushes upon the waters, *saying*, Go, ye swift messengers, to a nation scattered and peeled, to a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden down, whose land the rivers have spoiled! 3 All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, see ye, when he lifteth up an ensign on the mountains; and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye. 4 For so the LORD said unto me, I will take my rest, and I will consider in my dwelling place like a clear heat upon herbs, and like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest. 5 For afore the harvest, when the bud is perfect, and the sour grape is ripening in the flower, he shall both cut off the sprigs with pruning-hooks, and take away and cut down the branches. 6 They shall be left together unto the fowls of the mountains, and to the beasts of the earth: and the fowls shall summer upon them, and all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them. 7 In that time shall the present be brought unto the LORD of hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the place of the name of the LORD of hosts, the mount Zion.

Interpreters are very much at a loss where to find this land that lies beyond the rivers of Cush. Some take it to be Egypt, a maritime country, and full of rivers, and which courted Israel to depend upon them, but proved broken reeds; but against this it is strongly objected that the next chapter is distinguished from this by the title of the *burden of Egypt*. Others take it to be Ethiopia, and read it, *which lies near, or about, the rivers of Ethiopia*, not that in Africa, which lay south of Egypt, but that which we call Arabia, which lay east of Canaan, which Tighakah was now king of. He thought to protect the Jews, as it were, under the shadow of his wings, by giving a

powerful diversion to the king of Assyria, when he made a descent upon his country, at the time that he was attacking Jerusalem, 2 Kings xix. 9. But though by his ambassadors he bade defiance to the king of Assyria, and encouraged the Jews to depend upon him, God by the prophet slights him, and will not go forth with him; he may take his own course, but God will take another course to protect Jerusalem, while he suffers the attempt of Tirhakah to miscarry and his Arabian army to be ruined; for the Assyrian army shall become a present or sacrifice to the Lord of hosts, and to the place of his name, by the hand of an angel, not by the hand of Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, v. 7. This is a very probable exposition of this chapter. But from a hint of Dr. Lightfoot's, in his *Harmony of the Old Testament*, I incline to understand this chapter as a prophecy against Assyria, and so a continuation of the prophecy in the last three verses of the foregoing chapter, with which therefore this should be joined. That was against the army of the Assyrians which rushed in upon Judah; this is against the land of Assyria itself, which lay beyond the rivers of Arabia, that is, the rivers Euphrates and Tigris, which bordered on *Arabia Deserta*. And in calling it *the land shadowing with wings* he seems to refer to what he himself had said of it (*ch. viii. 8*), that *the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel!* The prophet might perhaps describe the Assyrians by such dark expressions, not naming them, for the same reason that St. Paul, in his prophecy, speaks of the Roman empire by a periphrasis: *He who now letteth*, 2 Thess. ii. 7. Here is,

I. The attempt made by this land (whatever it is) upon a nation scattered and peeled, v. 2. Swift messengers are sent by water to proclaim war against them, as a nation marked by Providence, and meted out, to be trodden under foot. Whether this refer to the Ethiopians waging war with the Assyrians, or the Assyrians with Judah, it teaches us, 1. That a people which have been terrible from their beginning, have made a figure and borne a mighty sway, may yet become scattered and peeled, and may be spoiled even by their own rivers, that should enrich both the husbandman and the merchant. Nations which have been formidable, and have kept all in awe about them, may by a concurrence of accidents become despicable and an easy prey to their insulting neighbours. 2. Princes and states that are ambitious of enlarging their territories will always have some pretence or other to quarrel with those whose countries they have a mind to. "It is a nation that has been terrible, and therefore we must be revenged on it; it is now a nation scattered and peeled, meted out and trodden down, and therefore it will be an easy prey

for us." Perhaps it was not brought so low as they represented it. God's people trampled on as a nation scattered and peeled; but whoever think to swallow them up may find them still as terrible as they have been from their beginning; they are cast down, but not deserted, not destroyed.

II. The alarm sounded to the nation about, by which they are summoned to take notice of what God is about to do, v. 3. The Ethiopians and Assyrians take notice of their counsels and designs, which they have laid deep, and promise themselves much from, and, in prosecution of the send their ambassadors and messengers from place to place; but let us now enquire what the great God says to all this. 1. *He lifts up an ensign upon the mountains, and blows a trumpet*, by which he proclaims war against the enemies of his church, and calls in all her friends and well-wishers into her service, v. 3. He gives notice that he is about to do some great work, as *Levi of hosts*. 2. All the world is bidden to take notice of it; all the dwellers on earth may see the ensign and hear the trumpet, may observe the motions of the divine providence and attend the directions of the divine will. Let all enlist under God's banner, and be on his side, and hearken to the trumpet of his word, which gives not uncertain sound.

III. The assurance God gives to his prophet, by him to be given to his people, though he might seem for a time to sit as an unconcerned spectator, yet he would certainly and seasonably appear for the comfort of his people and the confusion of their enemies (v. 4): *So the Lord saith unto me*. Men will have their saying, but God also will have his; and, as we may be sure his word shall stand, so he often appears in the ears of his servants the prophets. When he says, *I will take my rest*, it is not as if he were weary of governing the world, or as if he either needed or desired to retire from it and repose himself; but it intimates that the great God has perfect, undisturbed, enjoyment of himself in the midst of all the agitations and changes of this world (the Lord sits even upon the floods unshaken; the Eternal Mind is always easy), and, though he may sometimes seem to his people as if he took not wonten notice of what is done in this lower world (they are tempted to think he is *as one asleep*, or *as one astonished*, Ps. xlv. 2; Jer. xiv. 9), yet even then he knows very well what men are doing and what he himself will do.

1. He will take care of his people, and a shelter to them. He will regard their *dwelling-place*; his eye and his heart are there, and shall be, upon it for good continual rest. Zion is his rest for ever, where he will dwell; and he will *look after it* (so soon as he read it); he will lift up the light of

aintenance upon it, will consider over it that is to be done, and will be sure to do it for the best. He will adapt the comforts and refreshments he provides for his people to the exigencies of their case; and they will therefore be acceptable, because seasonable. (1.) Like a clear heat after rain (so the argin), which is very reviving and pleasant, and makes the herbs to flourish. (2.) Like a dew and a cloud in the heat of harvest, which are very welcome, the dew to the ground and the cloud to the labourers. Note, There is that in God which is a shelter and refreshment to his people in all weathers and arms them against the inconveniences of every change. Is the weather cool? There is that in his favour which will warm them. Is it hot? There is that in his favour which will cool them. Great men have their winter-house and their summer-house (Amos iii. 15); but those that are at home with God have both in him.

2. He will reckon with his and their enemies, v. 5, 6. When the Assyrian army promises itself a plentiful harvest in the king of Jerusalem and the plundering of that rich city, when the bud of that project perfect, before the harvest is gathered in, like the sour grape of their enmity to Ezekiah and his people is ripening in the over and the design is just ready to be put in execution, God shall destroy that army as easily as the husbandman cuts off the sprigs of the vine with pruning hooks, or because the grape is sour and good for nothing, and will not be cured, *takes away and cuts down the branches*. This seems to point at the overthrow of the Assyrian army by a destroying angel, when the dead bodies of the soldiers were scattered like the branches of a wild vine, which the husbandman has cut to pieces. *And they shall left to the fowls of the mountains, and the beasts of the earth, to prey upon, both winter and summer*; for as God's people are protected all seasons of the year, both cold and heat (v. 4), so their enemies are all seasons exposed; birds and beasts of prey shall both summer and winter upon them, till they are quite ruined.

IV. The tribute of praise which should be brought to God from all this (v. 7): *In that time, when this shall be accomplished, all the present be brought unto the Lord of hosts*. 1. Some understand this of the conversion of the Ethiopians to the faith of Christ in the latter days, of which we have the specimen and beginning in Philip's baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch, Acts viii. 27, 28. Those that were a *people scattered and peeled, meted out, and trodden down* (v. 2), shall be a present to the Lord: and, though they seem useless and worthless, they shall be an acceptable present to him who judges men by the sincerity of their faith and love, not by the pomp and prosperity of their outward condition. Therefore the

gospel was ministered to the Gentiles that *the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable*, Rom. xv. 16. It is prophesied (Ps. lxxviii. 31) that *Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God*. 2. Others understand it of the spoil of Sennacherib's army, out of which, as usual, presents were brought to the Lord of hosts, Num. xxxi. 50. It was the present of a people scattered and peeled. (1.) It was won from the Assyrians, who were now themselves reduced to such a condition as they scornfully described Judah to be in, v. 2. Those that unjustly trample upon others shall themselves be justly trampled upon. (2.) It was offered by the people of God, who were, in disdain, called a *people scattered and peeled*. God will put honour upon his people, though men put contempt upon them. *Lastly*, Observe, The present that is brought to the Lord of hosts must be brought to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts; what is offered to God must be offered in the way that he has appointed; we must be sure to attend him, and expect him to meet us, where he records his name.

CHAP. XIX.

As Assyria was a breaking rod to Judah, with which it was smitten, so Egypt was a broken reed, with which it was cheated; and therefore God had a quarrel with them both. We have before read the doom of the Assyrians; now here we have the burden of Egypt, a prophecy concerning that nation, 1. That it should be greatly weakened and brought low, and should be as contemptible among the nations as now it was considerable, rendered so by a complication of judgments which God would bring upon them, ver. 1-17. 2. That at length God's holy religion should be brought into Egypt, and set up there, in part by the Jews that should flee thither for refuge, but more fully by the preachers of the gospel of Christ, through whose ministry churches should be planted in Egypt in the days of the Messiah (ver. 18-25), which would abundantly balance all the calamities here threatened.

THE burden of Egypt. Behold, the LORD rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it. 2 And I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians: and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbour; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom. 3 And the spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst thereof; and I will destroy the counsel thereof: and they shall seek to the idols, and to the charmers, and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards. 4 And the Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel lord; and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the LORD, the LORD of hosts. 5 And the waters shall fail from the sea, and the river shall

be wasted and dried up. 6 And they shall turn the rivers far away; and the brooks of defence shall be emptied and dried up: the reeds and flags shall wither. 7 The paper reeds by the brooks, by the mouth of the brooks, and every thing sown by the brooks, shall wither, be driven away, and be no more. 8 The fishers also shall mourn, and all they that cast angle into the brooks shall lament, and they that spread nets upon the waters shall languish. 9 Moreover they that work in fine flax, and they that weave networks, shall be confounded. 10 And they shall be broken in the purposes thereof, all that make sluices and ponds for fish. 11 Surely the princes of Zoan are fools, the counsel of the wise counsellors of Pharaoh is become brutish: how say ye unto Pharaoh, I am the son of the wise, the son of ancient kings? 12 Where are they? Where are thy wise men? And let them tell thee now, and let them know what the LORD of hosts hath purposed upon Egypt. 13 The princes of Zoan are become fools, the princes of Noph are deceived; they have also seduced Egypt, even they that are the stay of the tribes thereof. 14 The LORD hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst thereof: and they have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof, as a drunken man staggereth in his vomit. 15 Neither shall there be any work for Egypt, which the head or tail, branch or rush, may do. 16 In that day shall Egypt be like unto women: and it shall be afraid and fear because of the shaking of the hand of the LORD of hosts, which he shaketh over it. 17 And the land of Judah shall be a terror unto Egypt, every one that maketh mention thereof shall be afraid in himself, because of the counsel of the LORD of hosts, which he hath determined against it.

Though the land of Egypt had of old been a house of bondage to the people of God, where they had been ruled with rigour, yet among the unbelieving Jews there still remained much of the humour of their fathers, who said, *Let us make us a captain*

and return into Egypt. Upon all occasion they trusted to Egypt for help (*ch. xxx. 2*) and thither they fled, in disobedience to God's express command, when things were brought to the last extremity in their own country, *Jer. xliii. 7.* Rabshakeh upbraided Hezekiah with this, *ch. xxxvi. 6.* While they kept up an alliance with Egypt, and was a powerful ally, they stood not in awe of the judgments of God; for against them they depended upon Egypt to protect them. Nor did they depend upon the power of God when at any time they were in distress, but Egypt was their confidence. To prevent all this mischief, Egypt must be mortified, and many ways God here tells them he will take to mortify them.

I. The gods of Egypt shall appear to them to be what they always really were, utterly unable to help them, *v. 1.* "*The Lord ride upon a cloud, a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt.*" As a judge goes in state to the bench to try and condemn the malefactor, or as a general takes the field with his troops to crush the rebels, so shall God come into Egypt with his judgments; and when he comes he will certainly overcome. In all this burden of Egypt here is no mention of any foreign enemy invading them, but God himself will come against them, and raise up the causes of their destruction from among themselves. He comes upon a cloud above the reach of opposition or resistance. He comes apace upon a swift cloud; for the judgment lingers not when the time has come. He rides upon the wings of the wind, with majesty far excelling the greatest pomp and splendour of earthly princes. He makes the clouds his chariots, *Psa. xviii. 9*; *civ. 3.* When he comes the idols of Egypt shall be removed, shall be removed at his presence, and perhaps be made to fall as Dagon did before the ark. Isis, Osiris, and Apis, those celebrated idols of Egypt, being found unable to relieve their worshippers, shall be disowned and rejected by them. Idolatry had got deeper rooting in Egypt than in any land besides, even the most absurd idolatries; and yet now the idols shall be moved and they shall be ashamed of them. When the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt he executed judgment upon the gods of the Egyptians (*Num. xxxii. 4*); no marvel then if, when he comes, they begin to tremble. The Egyptians shall see to the idols, when they are at their wits' end, and consult the charmers and wizards (*v. 3*), but all in vain; they see their ruin hastening on them notwithstanding.

II. The militia of Egypt, that had been famed for their valour, shall be quite dispirited and disheartened. No kingdom in the world was ever in a better method of keeping up a standing army than the Egyptians were, but now their heroes, that used to be celebrated for courage, shall be posted for cowards: *The heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it*, like wax before the fire (*v. 4*).

); *the spirit of Egypt shall fail*, v. 3. They shall have no inclination, no resolution, to stand up in defence of their country, their liberty, and property; but shall tamely and ingloriously yield all to the invader and oppressor. *The Egyptians shall be like women* (v. 16); they shall be frightened and put into confusion by the least alarm; even those that dwell in the heart of the country, in the midst of it, and therefore furthest from danger, will be as full of frights as those that are situate on the frontiers. Let not the bold and brave be proud or secure, for God can easily cut off the spirit of princes (Ps. lxxvi. 12) and take away their hearts, (Job xii. 24).

III. The Egyptians shall be embroiled in endless dissensions and quarrels among themselves. There shall be no occasion to bring a foreign force upon them to destroy them; they shall destroy one another (v. 2): *I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians*. As these divisions and animosities are their sin, God is not the author of them, they come from men's lusts; but God, as a Judge, permits them for their punishment, and by their destroying differences corrects them for their sinful agreements. Instead of helping one another, and acting each in his place for the common good, *they shall fight every one against his brother and neighbour*, whom he ought to love as himself—*city against city, and kingdom against kingdom*. Egypt was then divided into twelve provinces, or dynasties; but Psammetichus, the governor of one of them, by setting them at variance with one another, at length made himself master of them all. A kingdom thus divided against itself would soon be brought to desolation. *En quo discordia civis perducat miseris!—Oh the wretchedness brought upon a people by their disagreements among themselves!* It is brought to this by a *perverse spirit*, a spirit of contradiction, which the Lord would mingle, as an intoxicating draught made up of several ingredients, for the Egyptians, v. 14. One party shall be for a thing for no other reason than because the other is against it; that is a perverse spirit, which, if it mingle with the public counsels, tends directly to the ruin of the public interests.

IV. Their politics shall be all blasted, and turned into foolishness. When God will destroy the nation he will destroy the counsel thereof (v. 3), by taking away wisdom from the statesmen (Job xii. 20), or setting them one against another (as Hushai and Ahithophel), or by his providence breaking their measures even when they seemed well laid; so that the *princes of Zoan are fools*: they make fools of one another, every one betrays his own folly, and divine Providence makes fools of them all, v. 11. Pharaoh had his wise counsellors. Egypt was famous for such. But their counsel has all become foolish; they have lost all their forecast;

one would think they had become idiots, and were bereaved of common sense. Let no man glory then in his own wisdom, nor depend upon that, nor upon the wisdom of those about him; for he that gives understanding can when he please take it away. And from those it is most likely to be taken away that boast of their policy, as Pharaoh's counsellors here did, and, to recommend themselves to places of public trust, boast of their great understanding (*"I am the son of the wise, of the God of wisdom, of wisdom itself,"* says one; "my father was an eminent privy-counsellor of note in his day for wisdom"), or of the antiquity and dignity of their families: "I am," says another, *"the son of ancient kings."* The nobles of Egypt boasted much of their antiquity, producing fabulous records of their succession for above 10,000 years. This humour prevailed much among them about this time, as appears by Herodotus, their common boast being that Egypt was some thousands of years more ancient than any other nation. "But where are thy wise men?" v. 12. Let them now show their wisdom by foreseeing what ruin is coming upon their nation, and preventing it, if they can. Let them with all their skill know what the Lord of hosts has purposed upon Egypt, and arm themselves accordingly. Nay, so far are they from doing this that they themselves are, in effect, contriving the ruin of Egypt, and hastening it on, v. 13. *The princes of Noph* are not only deceived themselves, but they have seduced Egypt, by putting their kings upon arbitrary proceedings" (by which both themselves and their people were soon undone); "the governors of Egypt, that are the stay and cornerstones of the tribes thereof, are themselves undermining it." It is sad with a people when those that undertake for their safety are helping forward their destruction, and the physicians of the state are her worst disease, when the things that belong to the public peace are so far hidden from the eyes of those that are entrusted with the public counsels that in every thing they blunder and take wrong measures; so here (v. 14) *They have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof*. Every step they took was a false step. They always mistook either the end or the means, and their counsels were all unsteady and uncertain, like the staggerings and stammerings of a drunken man in his vomit, who knows not what he says nor where he goes. See what reason we have to pray for our privy-counsellors and ministers of state, who are the great supports and blessings of the state if God give them a spirit of wisdom, but quite the contrary if he hide their heart from understanding.

V. The rod of government shall be turned into the serpent of tyranny and oppression (v. 4): *"The Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel lord, not a foreigner, but*

one of their own, one that shall rule over them by an hereditary right, but shall be a fierce king and rule them with rigour," either the twelve tyrants that succeeded Sethon, or rather Psammetichus that recovered the monarchy again; for he speaks of one cruel lord. Now the barbarous usage which the Egyptian task-masters gave to God's Israel long ago was remembered against them and they were paid in their own coin by another Pharaoh. It is sad with a people when the powers that should be for edification are for destruction, and they are ruined by those by whom they should be ruled, when such as this is the manner of the king, as it is described (*in terrorem—in order to impress alarm*) 1 Sam. viii. 11.

VI. Egypt was famous for its river Nile, which was its wealth, and strength, and beauty, and was idolized by them. Now it is here threatened that *the waters shall fail from the sea and the river shall be wasted and dried up*, v. 5. Nature shall not herein favour them as she has done. Egypt was never watered with the rain of heaven (Zech. xiv. 18), and therefore the fruitfulness of their country depended wholly upon the overflowing of their river; if that therefore be dried up, their fruitful land will soon be turned into barrenness and their harvests cease: *Every thing sown by the brooks will wither of course, will be driven away, and be no more*, v. 7. If the paper-reeds by the brooks, at the very mouth of them, wither, much more the corn, which lies at a greater distance, but derives its moisture from them. Yet this is not all; the drying up of their rivers is, the destruction, 1. Of their fortifications, for they are *brooks of defence* (v. 6), making the country difficult of access to an enemy. Deep rivers are the strongest lines, and most hardly forced. Pharaoh is said to be a *great dragon lying in the midst of his rivers*, and guarded by them, bidding defiance to all about him, Ezek. xxix. 3. But these shall be emptied and dried up, not by an enemy, as Sennacherib with the sole of his foot dried up mighty rivers (ch. xxxvii. 25), and as Cyrus, who took Babylon by drawing Euphrates into many streams, but by the providence of God, which sometimes turns water-springs into dry ground, Ps. cvii. 33. 2. It is the destruction of their fish, which in Egypt was much of their food, witness that base reflection which the children of Israel made (Num. xi. 5): *We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely*. The drying up of the rivers will kill the fish (Ps. cv. 29), and will thereby ruin those who make it their business, (1.) To catch fish, whether by angling or nets (v. 8); they shall lament and languish, for their trade is at an end. There is nothing which the children of this world do more heartily lament than the loss of that which they used to get money by. *Ploratur lacrymis amissa pecunia veris—Those are genuine tears which*

are shed over lost money. (2.) To keep fish, that it may be ready when it is called for. There were those that made sluices and ponds for fish (v. 10), but they shall be broken in the purposes thereof; their business will fail, either for want of water to fill their ponds or for want of fish to replenish their waters. God can find ways to deprive a country even of that which is its staple commodity. The Egyptians may themselves remember the fish they have formerly eaten freely, but now cannot have for money. And that which aggravates the loss of these advantages by the river is that it is their own doing (v. 6): *They shall turn the rivers far away*. Their kings and great men, to gratify their own fancy, will drain water from the main river to their own houses and grounds at a distance, preferring their private convenience before the public good, and so by degrees the force of the river is sensibly weakened. Thus many do themselves a greater prejudice at last than they think of. [1.] Who pretend to be wiser than nature, and to do better for themselves than nature has done. [2.] Who consult their own particular interest more than the common good. Such may gratify themselves, but surely they can never satisfy themselves, who to serve a turn contribute to a public calamity, which they themselves, in the long run, cannot avoid sharing in. Herodotus tells us that Pharaoh-Necho (who reigned not long after this), projecting to cut a free passage by water from Nilus into the Red Sea, employed a vast number of men to make a ditch or channel for that purpose, in which attempt he impaired the river, lost 120,000 of his people, and yet left the work unaccomplished.

VII. Egypt was famous for the linen manufacture; but that trade shall be ruined. Solomon's merchants traded with Egypt for linen-yarn, 1 Kings x. 28. Their country produced the best flax and the best hands to work it; but those that work in fine flax shall be confounded (v. 9), either for want of flax to work on or for want of a demand for that which they have worked or opportunity to export it. The decay of trade weakens and wastes a nation and by degrees brings it to ruin. The trade of Egypt must needs sink, for (v. 15) *there shall not be any work for Egypt to be employed in; and where there is nothing to be done there is nothing to be got*. There shall be a universal stop put to business, no work which either head or tail, branch or rush, may do; nothing for high or low, weak or strong, to do; no hire, Zech. viii. 10. Note, The flourishing of a kingdom depends much upon the industry of the people; and then things are likely to do well when all hands are at work, when the head and top-branch do not disdain to labour, and the labour of the tail and rush is not disdained. But when the learned professions are unemployed, the principal merchants

have no stocks, and the handicraft tradesmen nothing to do, poverty comes upon a people *as one that travaileth and as an armed man.*

VIII. A general consternation shall seize the Egyptians; *they shall be afraid and fear* (v. 16), which will be both an evidence of a universal decay and a means and presage of utter ruin. Two things will put them into this fright:—1. What they hear from *the end of Judah*; that *shall be a terror to Egypt*, v. 17. When they hear of the desolations made in Judah by the army of Sennacherib, considering both the near neighbourhood and the strict alliance that was between them and Judah, they will conclude it must be their turn next to become a prey to that victorious army. When their neighbour's house was on fire they could not but see their own in danger; and therefore every one of the Egyptians that makes mention of Judah shall be afraid of himself, expecting the bitter cup shortly to be put into his hands. 2. What they see in their own land. They shall *fear* (v. 16) *because of the shaking of the hand of the Lord of hosts*, and (v. 17) *because of the counsel of the Lord of hosts*, which from the shaking of his hand they shall conclude *he has determined against Egypt as well as Judah*. For, if judgment begin at the house of God, where will it end? *If this be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?* See here, (1.) How easily God can make those a terror to themselves that have been, not only secure, but a terror to all about them. It is but shaking his hand over them, or laying it upon some of their neighbours, and the stoutest hearts tremble immediately. (2.) How well it becomes us to fear before God when he does but shake his hand over us, and to humble ourselves under his mighty hand when it does but threaten us, especially when we see his counsel determined against us; for who can change his counsel?

18 In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the LORD of hosts; one shall be called, The city of destruction. 19 In that day shall there be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the LORD. 20 And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the LORD because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a saviour, and a great one, and he shall deliver them. 21 And the LORD shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the LORD in that day, and shall do sacrifice and

oblation; yea, they shall vow a vow unto the LORD and perform it. 22 And the LORD shall smite Egypt: he shall smite and heal it: and they shall return *even* to the LORD, and he shall be entreated of them, and shall heal them. 23 In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. 24 In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt, and with Assyria, *even* a blessing in the midst of the land: 25 Whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed *be* Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.

Out of the thick and threatening clouds of the foregoing prophecy the sun of comfort here breaks forth, and it is the sun of righteousness. Still God has mercy in store for Egypt, and he will show it, not so much by reviving their trade and replenishing their river again as by bringing the true religion among them, calling them to, and accepting them in, the worship of the one only living and true God; and these blessings of grace were much more valuable than all the blessings of nature wherewith Egypt was enriched. We know not of any event in which this prophecy can be thought to have its full accomplishment short of the conversion of Egypt to the faith of Christ, by the preaching (as is supposed) of Mark the Evangelist, and the founding of many Christian churches there, which flourished for many ages. Many prophecies of this book point to the days of the Messiah; and why not this? It is no unusual thing to speak of gospel graces and ordinances in the language of the Old-Testament institutions. And, in these prophecies, those words, *in that day*, perhaps have not always a reference to what goes immediately before, but have a peculiar significance pointing at that day which had been so long fixed, and so often spoken of, when the day-spring from on high should visit this dark world. Yet it is not improbable (which some conjecture) that this prophecy was in part fulfilled when those Jews who fled from their own country to take shelter in Egypt, when Sennacherib invaded their land, brought their religion along with them, and, being awakened to great seriousness by the troubles they were in, made an open and zealous profession of it there, and were instrumental to bring many of the Egyptians to embrace it, which was an earnest and specimen of the more plentiful harvest of souls that should be gathered in

to God by the preaching of the gospel of Christ. Josephus indeed tells us that Onias the son of Onias the high priest, living an outlaw at Alexandria in Egypt, obtained leave of Ptolemy Philometer, then king, and Cleopatra his queen, to build a temple to the God of Israel, like that at Jerusalem, at Bubastis in Egypt, and pretended a warrant for doing it from this prophecy in Isaiah, that there shall be an altar to the Lord in the land of Egypt; and the service of God, Josephus affirms, continued in it about 333 years, when it was shut up by Paulinus soon after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans; see *Joseph. Antiq. l. 13. c. 6*, and *de Bell. Judaic. l. 7. c. 30*. But that temple was all along looked upon by the pious Jews as so great an irregularity, and an affront to the temple at Jerusalem, that we cannot suppose this prophecy to be fulfilled in it.

Observe how the conversion of Egypt is here described.

I. They shall speak the language of Canaan, the holy language, the scripture-language; they shall not only understand it, but use it (*v. 18*); they shall introduce that language among them, and converse freely with the people of God, and not, as they used to do, by an interpreter, *Gen. xlii. 23*. Note, Converting grace, by changing the heart, changes the language; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. Five cities in Egypt shall speak this language; so many Jews shall come to reside in Egypt, and they shall so multiply there, that they shall soon replenish five cities, one of which shall be the city of Heres, or of the sun, Heliopolis, where the sun was worshipped, the most infamous of all the cities of Egypt for idolatry; even there shall be a wonderful reformation, they shall speak the language of Canaan. Or it may be taken thus, as we render it—That for every five cities that shall embrace religion there shall be one (a sixth part of the cities of Egypt) that shall reject it, and that shall be called a city of destruction, because it refuses the methods of salvation.

II. They shall swear to the Lord of hosts, not only swear by him, giving him the honour of appealing to him, as all nations did to the gods they worshipped; but they shall by a solemn oath and vow devote themselves to his honour and bind themselves to his service. They shall swear to cleave to him with purpose of heart, and shall worship him, not occasionally, but constantly. They shall swear allegiance to him as their King, to Christ, to whom all judgment is committed.

III. They shall set up the public worship of God in their land (*v. 19*): *There shall be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt*, an altar on which they shall do sacrifice and oblation (*v. 21*); therefore it must be understood spiritually. Christ, the great altar, who sanctifies every gift, shall be owned there, and the gospel sacrifices of

prayer and praise shall be offered up; for by the law of Moses there was to be no altar sacrifice but that at Jerusalem. In Christ Jesus all distinction of nations is taken away, and a spiritual altar, a gospel church, in the midst of the land of Egypt, is as acceptable to God as one in the midst of the land of Israel; and spiritual sacrifices of faith and love, and a contrite heart, *please the Lord better than an ox or bullock*.

IV. There shall be a face of religion upon the nation, and an open profession made of it, discernible to all who come among them. Not only in the heart of the country, but even in the borders of it, *there shall be a pillar*, or pillars, inscribed, *To Jehovah*, to his honour, as before there had been such pillars set up in honour of false gods. As soon as a stranger entered upon the borders of Egypt he might perceive what God they worshipped. Those that serve God must not be ashamed to own him, but be forward to do any thing that may be for a sign and for witness to the Lord of hosts. Even in the land of Egypt he had some faithful worshippers, who boasted of their relation to him, and made his name their strong tower, or bulwark, on their borders, with which their coasts were fortified against all assailants.

V. Being in distress, they shall seek to God, and he shall be found of them; and there shall be a sign and a witness for the Lord of hosts that he is a God hearing prayer to all flesh that come to him, *v. 20*. See *Ps. lxxv*. When they cry to God by reason of their oppressors, the cruel lords that shall rule over them (*v. 4*), he shall be entreated of them (*v. 22*); whereas he had told his people Israel who had made it their own choice to have such a king, that they should cry to him by reason of their king, and he would not hear them, *1 Sam. viii. 18*.

VI. They shall have an interest in the great Redeemer. When they were under the oppression of cruel lords perhaps God sometimes raised them up mighty deliverers as he did for Israel in the days of the judges; and by them, though he had smitten the land, he healed it again; and, upon their return to God in a way of duty, he returned to them in a way of mercy, and repaired the breaches of their tottering state. For repenting Egyptians shall find the same favour with God that repenting Ninevites did. But all these deliverances wrought for them, as those for Israel, were but figures of gospel salvation. Doubtless Jesus Christ is the Saviour and the great one here spoken of, whom God will send the glad tidings of to the Egyptians, and by whom he will deliver them out of the hands of their enemies, that they may serve him without fear, *Luke i. 74*. Jesus Christ delivered the Gentile nations from the service of dumb idols, and did himself both purchase and preach liberty to the captives.

VII. The knowledge of God shall prevail

among them, *v. 21.* 1. They shall have the means of knowledge. For many ages in *Judah only was God known*, for there only were the lively oracles found; but now *the Lord*, and his name and will, *shall be known to Egypt*. Perhaps this may in part refer to the translation of the Old Testament out of Hebrew into Greek by the *LXX.*, which was done at Alexandria in Egypt, by the command of Ptolemy king of Egypt; and it was the first time that the scriptures were translated into any other language. By the help of this (the Grecian monarchy having introduced their language into that country) *the Lord was known to Egypt*, and a happy omen and means it was of his being further known. 2. They shall have grace to improve those means. It is promised not only that the Lord shall be known to Egypt, but that *the Egyptians shall know the Lord*; they shall receive and entertain the light granted to them, and shall submit themselves to the power of it. The Lord is known to our nation, and yet I fear there are many of our nation that do not know the Lord. But the promise of the new covenant is that *all shall know the Lord, from the least even to the greatest*, which promise is sure to all the seed. The effect of this knowledge of God is that *they shall vow a vow to the Lord and perform it*. For those do not know God aright who either are not willing to come under binding obligations to the Lord or do not make good those obligations.

VIII. They shall come into the communion of saints. Being joined to the Lord, they shall be added to the church, and be incorporated with all the saints. 1. All enmities shall be slain. Mortal feuds there had been between Egypt and Assyria; they often made war upon one another; but now *there shall be a highway between Egypt and Assyria* (*v. 23*), a happy correspondence settled between the two nations; they shall trade with one another, and every thing that passes between them shall be friendly. *The Egyptians shall serve* (shall worship the true God) *with the Assyrians*; and therefore the Assyrians shall come into Egypt and the Egyptians into Assyria. Note, It becomes those who have communion with the same God, through the same Mediator, to keep up an amicable correspondence with one another. The consideration of our meeting at the same throne of grace, and our serving with each other in the same business of religion, should put an end to all heats and animosities, and knit our hearts to each other in holy love. The Gentile nations shall not only unite with each other in the gospel fold under Christ the great shepherd, but they shall all be united with the Jews. When Egypt and Assyria become partners in serving God, Israel shall *make a third with them* (*v. 24*); they shall become a *three-fold cord, not easily broken*. The ceremonial law, which had long been the partition-wall between Jews

and Gentiles, shall be taken down, and then they shall become *one sheep-fold under one shepherd*. Thus united, they shall be *a blessing in the midst of the land, whom the Lord of hosts shall bless*, *v. 24, 25.* (1.) Israel shall be a blessing to them all, because of them, *as concerning the flesh, Christ came*, and they were the natural branches of the good olive, to whom did originally pertain *its root and fatness*, and the Gentiles were but *grafted in among them*, Rom. xi. 17. Israel lay between Egypt and Assyria, and was a blessing to them both by bringing them to meet in that word of the Lord which went forth from Jerusalem, and that church which was first set up in the land of Israel. *Qui conveniunt in aliquo tertio inter se conveniunt* — *Those who meet in a third meet in each other*. Israel is that third in whom Egypt and Assyria agree, and is therefore a blessing; for those are real and great blessings to their generation who are instrumental to unite those that have been at variance. (2.) They shall all be a blessing to the world; so the Christian church is, made up of Jews and Gentiles; it is the beauty, riches, and support of the world. (3.) They shall all be blessed of the Lord. [1.] They shall all be owned by him as his. Though Egypt was formerly a house of bondage to the people of God, and Assyria an unjust invader of them, all this shall now be forgiven and forgotten, and they shall be as welcome to God as Israel. They are all alike his people whom he takes under his protection. They are formed by him, for they are the *work of his hands*; not only as a people, but as his people. They are formed for him; for they are his inheritance, precious in his eyes, and dear to him, and from whom he has his rent of honour out of this lower world. [2.] They shall be owned together by him as jointly his, his in concert; they shall all share in one and the same blessing. Note, Those that are united in the love and blessing of God ought, for that reason, to be united to each other in charity.

CHAP. XX.

This chapter is a prediction of the carrying away of multitudes both of the Egyptians and the Ethiopians into captivity by the king of Assyria. Here is, I. the sign by which this was foretold, which was the prophet's going for some time barefoot and almost naked, like a poor captive, ver. 1-2. II. The explication of that sign, with application to Egypt and Ethiopia, ver. 3-5. III. The good use which the people of God should make of this, which is never to trust in an arm of flesh, because thus it will deceive them, ver. 6.

IN the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod (when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him), and fought against Ashdod, and took it; 2 At the same time spake the LORD by Isaiah the son of Amos, saying, Go and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put off thy shoe from thy foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot. 3 And the LORD said,

Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years *for* a sign and wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia; 4 So shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians prisoners, and the Ethiopians captives, young and old, naked and barefoot, even with *their* buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt. 5 And they shall be afraid and ashamed of Ethiopia their expectation, and of Egypt their glory. 6 And the inhabitant of this isle shall say in that day, Behold, such *is* our expectation, whither we flee for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria: and how shall we escape?

God here, as King of nations, brings a sore calamity upon Egypt and Ethiopia, but, as King of saints, brings good to his people out of it. Observe,

I. The date of this prophecy. It was in the year that Ashdod, a strong city of the Philistines (but which some think was lately recovered from them by Hezekiah, when he smote the Philistines even unto Gaza, 2 Kings xviii. 8), was besieged and taken by an army of the Assyrians. It is uncertain what year of Hezekiah that was, but the event was so remarkable that those who lived then could by that token fix the time to a year. He that was now king of Assyria is called *Sargon*, which some take to be the same with Sennacherib; others think he was his immediate predecessor, and succeeded Shalmaneser. Tartan, who was general, or commander-in-chief, in this expedition, was one of Sennacherib's officers, sent by him to bid defiance to Hezekiah, in concurrence with Rabshakeh, 2 Kings xviii. 17.

II. The making of Isaiah a sign, by his unusual dress when he walked abroad. He had been a sign to his own people of the melancholy times that had come and were coming upon them, by the sackcloth which for some time he had worn, of which he had a gown made, which he girt about him. Some think he put himself into that habit of a mourner upon occasion of the captivity of the ten tribes. Others think sackcloth was what he commonly wore as a prophet, to show himself mortified to the world, and that he might learn to endure hardness; soft clothing better becomes those that attend in king's palaces (Matt. xi. 8) than those that go on God's errands. Elijah wore hair-cloth (2 Kings i. 8), and John Baptist (Matt. iii. 4) and those that pretended to be prophets supported their pretension by wearing rough garments (Zech. xiii. 4); but Isaiah has orders given him to *loose his sackcloth from his loins*, not to exchange it for better clothing, but for none

at all—no upper garment, no mantle, cloak or coat, but only that which was next him, we may suppose his shirt, waistcoat and drawers; and he must *put off his shoes* and go barefoot; so that compared with the dress of others, and what he himself usually wore, he might be said to go *naked*. This was a great hardship upon the prophet; was a blemish to his reputation, and would expose him to contempt and ridicule; boys in the streets would hoot at him, and those who sought occasion against him would say, *The prophet is indeed a fool, and the spiritual man is mad*, Hosea ix. 7. It might likewise be a prejudice to his health; he was in danger of catching a cold, which might throw him into a fever, and cost him his life; but God bade him do it, that he might give a proof of his obedience to God in most difficult command, and so shame the disobedience of his people to the most easy and reasonable precepts. When we are in the way of our duty we may trust God both with our credit and with our safety. The hearts of that people were strangely stupid and would not be affected with what they only heard, but must be taught by signs, and therefore Isaiah must do this for their edification. If the dress was scandalous, yet the design was glorious, and what a prophet the Lord needed not to be ashamed of.

III. The exposition of this sign, v. 3. It was intended to signify that the Egyptians and the Ethiopians should be led away captive by the king of Assyria, thus stripped, or in rags, and very shabby clothing as Isaiah was. God calls him his *servant Isaiah*, because in this matter particularly he had approved himself God's willing, faithful, obedient servant; and for the very thing, which perhaps others laughed at him for, God gloried in him. To obey better than sacrifice; it pleases God and praises him more, and shall be more praised by him. Isaiah is said to have *walked naked and barefoot three years*, whenever in that time he appeared as a prophet. But some refer the three years, not to the sign, but to the thing signified: *He has walked naked and barefoot*; there is a stop in the original provided he did so once that was enough to give occasion to all about him to enquire what was the meaning of his doing so; or, as some think, he did it three days, a day for a year; and this for a three years' sign, and wonder, for a sign of that which should be done three years afterwards or which should be three years in the doing. Three campaigns successively shall the Assyrian army make, in spoiling the Egyptians and the Ethiopians, and carrying them away captive in this barbarous manner, not only the soldiers taken in the field of battle, but the inhabitants, young and old; and it being a very piteous sight, and such as must needs move compassion in those that had the least degree of tenderness left them to see the

who had gone all their days well dressed and stripped, and scarcely having rags to cover their nakedness, that circumstance of their captivity is particularly taken notice of, and foretold, the more to affect those to whom this prophecy was delivered. It is particularly said to be to the shame of Egypt (v. 4), because the Egyptians were a proud people, and therefore when they did fall into disgrace it was the more shameful to them; and the higher they had lifted up themselves the lower was their fall, both in their own eyes and in the eyes of others.

IV. The use and application of this, (v. 5, 6). 1. All that had any dependence upon, or correspondence with, Egypt and Ethiopia, should now be ashamed of them, and afraid of having any thing to do with them. Those countries that were in danger of being overrun by the Assyrians expected that Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia, with his numerous forces, would put a stop to the progress of their victorious arms, and be a barrier to his neighbours; and with yet more assurance they gloried that Egypt, a kingdom so famous for policy and prowess, would do their business, would oblige them to raise the siege of Ashdod and retire with precipitation. But, instead of this, they attempting to oppose the king of Assyria they did but expose themselves and make their country a prey to him. Hereupon all about them were ashamed that ever they promised themselves any advantage from two such weak and cowardly nations, and were more afraid now than ever they were of the growing greatness of the king of Assyria, before whom Egypt and Ethiopia proved but as briars and thorns put to stop a consuming fire, which not but make it burn the more strongly. Note, Those who make any creature their expectation and glory, and so put it in the place of God, will sooner or later be ashamed of it, and their disappointment in it will but increase their fear. See Ezek. xxix. 6.

2. The Jews in particular should be convinced of their folly in resting upon such broken reeds, and should despair of any relief from them (v. 6): *The inhabitants of this isle* (the land of Judah, situated upon the sea, though not surrounded by it), of this country (so the margin); every one shall now have his eyes opened, and shall say, "Behold, such is our expectation, so vain, so foolish, and this is that which it will come to. We have fled for help to the Egyptians and Ethiopians, and have hoped in them to be delivered from the king of Assyria; but, now that they are broken thus, how shall we escape, that are not able to bring such armies into the field as they did?" Note, (1.) Those that confide in creatures will be disappointed, and will be made ashamed of their confidence; for *vain is the help of man, and in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills or the height and*

multitude of the mountains. (2.) Disappointment in creature confidences, instead of driving us to despair, as here (*how shall we escape?*), should drive us to God; for, if we flee to him for help, our expectation shall not be frustrated.

CHAP. XXI.

In this chapter we have a prophecy of sad times coming, and heavy burdens, I. Upon Babylon, here called "the desert of the sea," that it should be destroyed by the Medes and Persians with a terrible destruction, which yet God's people should have advantage by, ver. 1-10. II. Upon Dumas, or Idumea, ver. 11, 12. III. Upon Arabia, or Kedar, the desolation of which country was very near, ver. 13-17. These and other nations which the princes and people of Israel had so much to do with the prophets of Israel could not but have something to say to. Foreign affairs must be taken notice of as well as domestic ones, and news from abroad enquired after as well as news at home.

THE burden of the desert of the sea. As whirlwinds in the south pass through; so it cometh from the desert, from a terrible land. 2 A grievous vision is declared unto me; the treacherous dealer dealeth treacherously, and the spoiler spoileth. Go up, O Elam: besiege, O Media; all the sighing thereof have I made to cease. 3 Therefore are my loins filled with pain: pangs have taken hold upon me, as the pangs of a woman that travaileth: I was bowed down at the hearing of it; I was dismayed at the seeing of it. 4 My heart panted, fearfulness affrighted me: the night of my pleasure hath he turned into fear unto me. 5 Prepare the table, watch in the watch-tower, eat, drink: arise, ye princes, and anoint the shield. 6 For thus hath the LORD said unto me, Go, set a watchman, let him declare what he seeth. 7 And he saw a chariot with a couple of horsemen, a chariot of asses, and a chariot of camels; and he hearkened diligently with much heed: 8 And he cried, A lion: My lord, I stand continually upon the watch-tower in the daytime, and I am set in my ward whole nights: 9 And, behold, here cometh a chariot of men, with a couple of horsemen. And he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground. 10 O my threshing, and the corn of my floor: that which I have heard of the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, have I declared unto you.

We had one burden of Babylon before (ch. xiii.); here we have another prediction

of its fall. God saw fit thus to possess his people with the belief of this event by line upon line, because Babylon sometimes pretended to be a friend to them (as *ch.* xxxix. 1), and God would hereby warn them not to trust to that friendship, and sometimes was really an enemy to them, and God would hereby warn them not to be afraid of that enmity. Babylon is marked for ruin; and all that believe God's prophets can, through that glass, see it tottering, see it tumbling, even when with an eye of sense they see it flourishing and sitting as a queen. Babylon is here called the *desert* or *plain of the sea*; for it was a flat country, and full of lakes, or loughs (as they call them in Ireland), like little seas, and was abundantly watered with the many streams of the river Euphrates. Babylon did but lately begin to be famous, Nineveh having outshone it while the monarchy was in the Assyrian hands; but in a little time it became the lady of kingdoms; and, before it arrived at that pitch of eminency which it was at in Nebuchadnezzar's time, God by this prophet plainly foretold its fall, again and again, that his people might not be terrified at its rise, nor despair of relief in due time when they were its prisoners, Job v. 3; Ps. xxxvii. 35, 36. Some think it is here called a *desert* because, though it was now a populous city, it should in time be made a desert. And therefore the destruction of Babylon is so often prophesied of by this evangelical prophet, because it was typical of the destruction of the man of sin, the great enemy of the New-Testament church, which is foretold in the *Revelation* in many expressions borrowed from these prophecies, which therefore must be consulted and collated by those who would understand the prophecy of that book. Here is,

I. The powerful irruption and descent which the Medes and Persians should make upon Babylon (*v.* 1, 2): They will come *from the desert, from a terrible land*. The northern parts of Media and Persia, where their soldiers were mostly bred, was waste and mountainous, terrible to strangers that were to pass through it and producing soldiers that were very formidable. *Elam* (that is, Persia) is summoned to go up against Babylon, and, in conjunction with the forces of Media, to besiege it. When God has work of this kind to do he will find, though it be in a desert, in a terrible land, proper instruments to be employed in it. These forces come *as whirlwinds from the south*, so suddenly, so strongly, so terribly, such a mighty noise shall they make, and throw down every thing that stands in their way. As is usual in such a case, some deserters will go over to them: *The treacherous dealers will deal treacherously*. Historians tell us of Gadatas and Gobryas, two great officers of the king of Babylon, that went over to Cyrus, and,

being well acquainted with all the avenues of the city, led a party directly to the place, where Belshazzar was slain. They with the help of the *treacherous dealers* *spoilers spoiled*. Some read it thus: *The shall be a deceiver of that deceiver, Babylon and a spoiler of that spoiler, or, which come all to one, The treacherous dealer has found one that deals treacherously, and the spoiler one that spoils, as it is expounded, ch. xx. 1*. The Persians shall pay the Babylonians in their own coin; those that by fraud and violence, cheating and plundering, unrighteous wars and deceitful treaties, have made a prey of their neighbours, shall meet with their match, and by the same method shall themselves be made a prey of.

II. The different impressions made hereby upon those concerned in Babylon. To the poor oppressed captives it would be welcome news; for they had been told long ago that Babylon's destroyer would be the deliverer, and therefore, "when they hear that Elam and Media are coming up to besiege Babylon, *all their sighing will be made to cease*; they shall no longer mingle their tears with Euphrates' streams, but resume their harps, and smile when they remember Zion, which, before, they wept at the thought of." For the sighing of the needy the God of pity will arise in due time (*Ex. xii. 5*); he will break the yoke from their neck, will remove the rod of the wicked from off their lot, and so make their sighing to cease. 2. To the proud oppressors it would be a grievous vision (*v.* 2), particularly to the king of Babylon for the time being, and it should seem that he it is who is here brought in sadly lamenting his inevitable fate (*v.* 3, 4): *Therefore are his loins filled with pain; pangs have taken hold upon me, &c.*, which was literally fulfilled in Belshazzar, for that very night in which his city was taken, and himself slain, upon the sight of a hand writing mystic characters upon the wall his countenance was changed and his thoughts troubled him, *that the joints of his loins were loosed and his knees smote one against another*, Dan. v. And yet that was but the beginning of his sorrows. Daniel's deciphering the writing could not but increase his terror, and the alarm which immediately followed of the executioners at the door would be the completing of it. And those words, *The night of my pleasure has he turned into fear to me*, plainly refer to that aggravating circumstance of Belshazzar's fall that he was slain that night when he was in the height of his mirth and jollity, with his cups and concubines about him and a thousand of his lords revelling with him; that night of his pleasure, when he promised himself an undisturbed unallayed enjoyment of the most exquisite gratifications of sense, with a particular defiance of God and religion in the profanation of the temple vessels, was the

night that was turned into all this fear. Let this give an effectual check to vain mirth and sensual pleasures, and forbid us ever to lay the reins on the neck of them—that we know not what heaviness the mirth may end in, nor how soon laughter may be turned into mourning; but this we know that for all these things God shall bring us into judgment; let us therefore mix trembling always with our joys.

III. A representation of the posture in which Babylon should be found when the enemy should surprise it—all in festival gaiety (v. 5): “Prepare the table with all manner of dainties. Set the guards; let them watch in the watch-tower while we eat and drink securely and make merry; and, if any alarm should be given, the princes shall arise and anoint the shield, and be in readiness to give the enemy a warm reception.” Thus secure are they, and thus do they gird on the harness with as much joy as if they were putting it off.

IV. A description of the alarm which should be given to Babylon upon its being forced by Cyrus and Darius. The Lord, in vision, showed the prophet the watchman set in his watch-tower, near the palace, as is usual in times of danger; the king ordered those about him to post a sentinel in the most advantageous place for discovery, and, according to the duty of a watchman, let him declare what he sees, v. 6. We read of watchmen thus set to receive intelligence in the story of David (2 Sam. xviii. 24), and in the story of Jehu, 2 Kings ix. 17. This watchman here discovered a chariot with a couple of horsemen attending it, in which we may suppose the commander-in-chief to ride. He then saw another chariot drawn by asses or mules, which were much in use among the Persians, and a chariot drawn by camels, which were likewise much in use among the Medes; so that (as Grotius thinks) these two chariots signify the two nations combined against Babylon, or rather these chariots come to bring tidings to the palace; compare Jer. li. 31, 32. *One post shall run to meet another, to show the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end while he is revelling at the other end and knows nothing of the matter. This watchman, seeing these chariots at some distance, hearkened diligently with much heed, to receive the first tidings. And (v. 8) he cried, A lion; this word, coming out of a watchman's mouth, no doubt gave them a certain sound, and every body knew the meaning of it, though we do not know it now. It is likely that it was intended to raise attention: he that has an ear to hear, let him hear, as when a lion roars. Or he cried as a lion, very loud and in good earnest, the occasion being very urgent. And what has he to say? 1. He professes his constancy to the post assigned him: “I stand, my lord, con-*

*tinually upon the watch-tower, and have never discovered any thing material till just now; all seemed safe and quiet.” Some make it to be a complaint of the people of God that they had long expected the downfall of Babylon, according to the prophecy, and it had not yet come; but withal a resolution to continue waiting; as Hab. ii. 1, *I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, to see what will be the issue of the present providences.* 2. He gives notice of the discoveries he had made (v. 9): *Here comes a chariot of men with a couple of horsemen, a vision representing the enemy's entry into the city with all their force or the tidings brought to the royal palace of it.**

V. A certain account is at length given of the overthrow of Babylon. He in the chariot answered and said (when he heard the watchman speak), *Babylon has fallen, has fallen; or God answered thus to the prophet enquiring concerning the issue of these affairs: “It has now come to this, Babylon has surely and irrecoverably fallen. Babylon's business is done now. All the graven images of her gods he has broken unto the ground.”* Babylon was the mother of harlots (that is, of idolatry), which was one of the grounds of God's quarrel with her; but her idols should now be so far from protecting her that some of them should be broken down to the ground, and others of them, that were worth carrying away, should go into captivity, and be a burden to the beasts that carried them, ch. xlv. 1, 2.

VI. Notice is given to the people of God, who were then captives in Babylon, that this prophecy of the downfall of Babylon was particularly intended for their comfort and encouragement, and they might depend upon it that it should be accomplished in due season, v. 10. Observe,

1. The title the prophet gives them in God's name: *O my threshing, and the corn of my floor!* The prophet calls them *his*, because they were his countrymen, and such as he had a particular interest in and concern for; but he speaks it as from God, and directs his speech to those that were Israelites indeed, the faithful in the land. Note, (1.) The church is God's floor, in which the most valuable fruits and products of this earth are, as it were, gathered together and laid up. (2.) True believers are the corn of God's floor. Hypocrites are but as the chaff and straw, which take up a great deal of room, but are of small value, with which the wheat is now mixed, but from which it shall be shortly and for ever separated. (3.) The corn of God's floor must expect to be threshed by afflictions and persecutions. God's Israel of old was afflicted from her youth, often under the plougher's plough (Ps. cxxix. 3) and the thresher's flail. (4.) Even then God owns it for his threshing; it is his still; nay, the

threshing of it is by his appointment, and under his restraint and direction. The threshers could have no power against it but what was given them from above.

2. The assurance he gives them of the truth of what he had delivered to them, which therefore they might build their hopes upon: *That which I have heard of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel*—that, and nothing else, that, and no fiction or fancy of my own—*have I declared unto you.* Note, In all events concerning the church, past, present, and to come, we must have an eye to God both as the Lord of hosts and as the God of Israel, who has power enough to do any thing for his church and grace enough to do every thing that is for her good, and to the words of his prophets, as words received from the Lord. As they dare not smother any thing which he has entrusted them to declare, so they dare not declare any thing as from him which he has not made known to them, 1 Cor. xi. 23.

11 The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? 12 The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come.

This prophecy concerning Dumah is very short, and wittal dark and hard to be understood. Some think that Dumah is a part of Arabia, and that the inhabitants descended from Dumah the sixth son of Ishmael, as those of Kedar (v. 16, 17) from Ishmael's second son, Gen. xxv. 13, 14. Others, because Mount Seir is here mentioned, by Dumah understand Idumea, the country of the Edomites. Some of Israel's neighbours are certainly meant, and their distress is foretold, not only for warning to them to prepare them for it, but for warning to Israel not to depend upon them, or any of the nations about them, for relief in a time of danger, but upon God only. We must see all creature confidences failing us, and feel them breaking under us, that we may not lay more weight upon them than they will bear. But though the explication of this prophecy be difficult, because we have no history in which we find the accomplishment of it, yet the application will be easy. We have here,

1. A question put by an Edomite to the watchman. Some one or other called out of Seir, somebody that was more concerned for the public safety and welfare than the rest, who were generally careless and secure. As the man of Macedonia, in a vision, desired Paul to come over and help them (Acts xvi. 9), so this man of Mount Seir, in a vision, desired the prophet to inform and instruct them. He calls not many; it

is well there are any, that all are not alike unconcerned about the things that belong to the public peace. Some out of Seir ask advice of God's prophets, and are willing to be taught, when many of God's Israel heed nothing. The question is serious: *What of the night?* It is put to a proper person, the watchman, whose office it is to answer such enquiries. He repeats the question, as one in care, as one in earnest, and desirous to have an answer. Note, (1.) God's prophets and ministers are appointed to be watchmen, and we are to look upon them as such. They are as watchmen in the city in a time of peace, to see that all be safe, to knock at every door by personal enquiries ("Is it locked? Is the fire safe?"), to direct those that are at a loss, and check those that are disorderly, Cant. iii. 3; v. 7. They are as watchmen in the camp in time of war, Ezek. xxxiii. 7. They are to take notice of the motions of the enemy and to give notice of them, to make discoveries and then give warning; and in this they must deny themselves. (2.) It is our duty to enquire of the watchmen, especially to ask again and again, *What of the night?* for watchmen wake when others sleep. [1.] What time of the night? After a long sleep in sin and security, is it not time to rise, high time to awake out of sleep? Rom. xiii. 11. We have a great deal of work to do, a long journey to go; is it not time to be stirring? "Watchman, what o'clock is it? After long dark night is there any hope of the day dawning?" [2.] What tidings of the night? *What from the night?* (so some); "what vision has the prophet had to-night? We are ready to receive it." Or, rather, "What occurs to night? What weather is it? What news?" We must expect an alarm, and never be secure. *The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night*; we must prepare to receive the alarm, and resolve to keep our ground, and then take the first hint of danger, and to our arms presently, to our spiritual weapons.

2. The watchman's answer to this question. The watchman was neither asleep nor dumb; though it was a man of Mount Seir that called to him, he was ready to give him an answer: *The morning comes.* He answers, (1.) By way of prediction: "There comes first a morning of light, and peace, and opportunity; you will enjoy one day of comfort more; but afterwards comes a night of trouble and calamity." Note, In the course of God's providence it is usual that morning and night are counterchanged and succeed each other. Is it night? Yet the morning comes, and the day-spring knows his place, Ps. xxx. 5. Is it day? Yet the night comes also. If there be a morning of youth and health, there will come a night of sickness and old age; if a morning of prosperity in the family, in the public, yet we must look for changes. But God usually gives a morn-

ing of opportunity before he sends a night of calamity, that his own people may be prepared for the storm and others left inexcusable. (2.) By way of excitement: *If you will enquire, enquire.* Note, It is our wisdom to improve the present morning in preparation for the night that is coming after it. "*Enquire, return, come.* Be inquisitive, be penitent, be willing and obedient." The manner of expression is very observable, for we are put to our choice what we will do: "*If you will enquire, enquire;* if not, it is at your peril; you cannot say but you have a fair offer made you." We are also urged to be at a point: "If you will, say so, and do not stand pausing; what you will do do quickly, for it is no time to trifle." Those that return and come to God will find they have a great deal of work to do and but a little time to do it in, and therefore they have need to be busy.

13 The burden upon Arabia. In the forest in Arabia shall ye lodge, O ye travelling companies of Dedanim. 14 The inhabitants of the land of Tema brought water to him that was thirsty, they prevented with their bread him that fled. 15 For they fled from the swords, from the drawn sword, and from the bent bow, and from the grievousness of war. 16 For thus hath the LORD said unto me, Within a year, according to the years of a hireling, and all the glory of Kedar shall fail: 17 And the residue of the number of archers, the mighty men of the children of Kedar, shall be diminished: for the LORD God of Israel hath spoken it.

Arabia was a large country, that lay eastward and southward of the land of Canaan. Much of it was possessed by the posterity of Abraham. The *Dedanim*, here mentioned (v. 13), descended from Dedan, Abraham's son by Keturah; the inhabitants of Tema and Kedar descended from Ishmael, Gen. xxv. 3, 13, 15. The Arabians generally lived in tents, and kept cattle, were a hardy people, inured to labour; probably the Jews depended upon them as a sort of a wall between them and the more warlike eastern nations; and therefore, to alarm them, they shall hear the *burden of Arabia*, and see it sinking under its own burden.

I. A destroying army shall be brought upon them, with a sword, with a *drawn sword*, with a *bow ready bent*, and with all the *grievousness of war*, v. 15. It is probable that the king of Assyria, in some of the marches of his formidable and victorious

army, took Arabia in his way, and, meeting with little resistance, made an easy prey of them. The consideration of the grievousness of war should make us thankful for the blessings of peace.

II. The poor country people will hereby be forced to flee for shelter wherever they can find a place; so that *the travelling companies of Dedanim*, which used to keep the high roads with their caravans, shall be obliged to quit them and *lodge in the forest in Arabia* (v. 13), and shall not have the wonted convenience of their own tents, poor and weather-beaten as they are.

III. They shall stand in need of refreshment, being ready to perish for want of it, in their flight from the invading army: "*O you inhabitants of the land of Tema!*" (who probably were next neighbours to the companies of Dedanim) "*bring you water*" (so the margin reads it) "*to him that is thirsty, and prevent with your bread those that flee*, for they are objects of your compassion; they do not wander for wandering sake, nor are they reduced to straits by any extravagance of their own, but *they flee from the sword*." Tema was a country where water was sometimes a scarce commodity (as we find, Job vi. 19), and we may conclude it would be in a particular manner acceptable to these poor distressed refugees. Let us learn hence, 1. To look for distress ourselves. We know not what straits we may be brought into before we die. Those that live in cities may be forced to lodge in forests; and those may know the want of necessary food who now eat bread to the full. Our mountain stands not so strong but that it may be moved, rises not so high but that it may be scaled. These Arabians would the better bear these calamities because in their way of living they had used themselves to hardships. 2. To look with compassion upon those that are in distress, and with all cheerfulness to relieve them, not knowing how soon their case may be ours: "*Bring water to those that are thirsty*, and not only give bread to those that need and ask it, but prevent those with it that have need; give it to them unasked." Those that do so shall find it remembered to their praise, as (according to our reading) it is here remembered to the praise of the land of Tema that they did bring water to the thirsty and relieved even those that were on the falling side.

IV. All that which is the glory of Kedar shall vanish away and fail. Did they glory in their numerous herds and flocks? They shall all be driven away by the enemy. It seems they were famous above other nations for the use of the bow in battle; but their archers, instead of foiling the enemy, shall fall themselves; and *the residue of their number*, when they are reduced to a small number, *shall be diminished* (v. 17); their mighty able-bodied men, and men of spirit

too, shall become very few; for they, being most forward in the defence of their country, were most exposed, and fell first, either by the enemies' sword or into the enemies' hand. Note, Neither the skill of archers (though they be ever so good marksmen) nor the courage of mighty men can protect a people from the judgments of God, when they come with commission; they rather expose the undertakers. That is poor glory which will thus quickly come to nothing.

V. All this shall be done in a little time: *'Within one year according to the years of a hireling* (within one year precisely reckoned) this judgment shall come upon Kedar." If this fixing of the time be of no great use to us now (because we find not either when the prophecy was delivered or when it was accomplished), yet it might be of great use to the Arabians then, to awaken them to repentance, that, like the men of Nineveh, they might prevent the judgment when they were thus told it was just at the door. Or, when it begins to be fulfilled, the business shall be done, be begun and ended in one year's time. God, when he please, can do a great work in a little time.

VI. It is all ratified by the truth of God (v. 16): *"Thus hath the Lord said to me; you may take my word for it that it is his word;"* and we may be sure no word of his shall fall to the ground. And again (v. 17): *The Lord God of Israel hath spoken it*, as the God of Israel, in pursuance of his gracious designs concerning them; and we may be sure *the strength of Israel will not lie*.

CHAP. XXII.

We have now come nearer home, for this chapter is "the burden of the valley of vision," Jerusalem; other places had their burden for the sake of their being concerned in some way or other with Jerusalem, and were reckoned with either as spiteful enemies or deceitful friends to the people of God; but now let Jerusalem hear her own doom. This chapter concerns, I. The city of Jerusalem itself and the neighbourhood depending upon it. Here is, 1. A prophecy of the grievous distress they should shortly be brought into by Sennacherib's invasion of the country and laying siege to the city, ver. 1-7. 2. A reproof given them for their misconduct in that distress, in two things:—(1.) Not having an eye to God in the use of the means of their preservation, ver. 3-11. (2.) Not humbling themselves under his mighty hand, ver. 12-14. II. The court of Hezekiah, and the officers of that court. 1. The displacing of Shebna, a bad man, and turning him out of the treasury, ver. 15-19, 25. 2. The preferring of Eliakim, who should do his country better service, to his place, ver. 20-24.

THE burden of the valley of vision.

What aileth thee now, that thou art wholly gone up to the house-tops? 2 Thou that art full of stirs, a tumultuous city, a joyous city: thy slain men are not slain with the sword, nor dead in battle. 3 All thy rulers are fled together, they are bound by the archers: all that are found in thee are bound together, *which* have fled from far. 4 Therefore said I, Look away from me; I will weep bitterly, labour not to comfort me,

because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people. 5 For *it is* a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity by the Lord God of hosts in the valley of vision, breaking down the walls, and of crying to the mountains. 6 And Elam bare the quiver with chariots of men *and* horsemen, and Kir uncovered the shield. 7 And it shall come to pass, *that* thy choicest valleys shall be full of chariots, and the horsemen shall set themselves in array at the gate.

The title of this prophecy is very observable. It is *the burden of the valley of vision* of Judah and Jerusalem; so all agree. Fitly enough is Jerusalem called a valley, for the mountains were round about it, and the land of Judah abounded with fruitful valleys, and by the judgments of God, though they had been as a towering mountain, they should be brought low, sunk and depressed and become dark and dirty, as a valley. But most emphatically is it called *a valley of vision* because there God was known and his name was great, there the prophets were made acquainted with his mind by visions, and there the people saw the goings of their God and King in his sanctuary. Babylon being a stranger to God, though rich and great, was called *the desert of the sea*; but Jerusalem, being entrusted with his oracles, is *a valley of vision*. *Blessed are their eyes, for they see*, and they have seers by office among them. Where Bibles and ministers are there is a valley of vision, from which is expected fruit accordingly; but here is *a burden of the valley of vision*, and a heavy burden it is. Note, Church privileges, if they be not improved, will not secure men from the judgments of God. *You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish you*. The valley of vision has a particular burden. *Thou Capernaum*, Matt. xi. 23. The higher any are lifted up in means and mercies the heavier will their doom be if they abuse them.

Now the *burden of the valley of vision* here is that which will not quite ruin it, but only frighten it; for it refers not to the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, but to the attempt made upon it by Sennacherib, which we had the prophecy of, *ch. x.*, and shall meet with the history of, *ch. xxxvi.* It is here again prophesied of, because the desolations of many of the neighbouring countries, which were foretold in the foregoing chapters, were to be brought to pass by the Assyrian army. Now let Jerusalem know that when the cup is going round it will be put into her hand; and, although it will not be to her a fatal cup, yet it will be a cup of trembling. Here is foretold,

I. The consternation that the city should be

upon the approach of Sennacherib's army. It used to be full of stir, a city of great trade, people hurrying to and fro about their business, a tumultuous city, populous and noisy. Where there is great trade there is great tumult. It used to be a joyous revealing city. What with the busy part and what with the merry part of mankind, places of concourse are places of noise. "But what ails thee now, that the shops are quitted, and there is no more walking in the streets and exchange, *but thou hast wholly gone up to the house-tops* (v. 1), to bemoan thyself in silence and solitude, or to secure thyself from the enemy, or to look abroad and see if any succours come to thy relief, or which way the enemies' motions are." Let both men of business and sportsmen *rejoice as though they rejoiced not*, for something may happen quickly, which they little think of, that will be a damp to their mirth and a stop to their business, and send them to *watch as a sparrow alone upon the house-top*, Ps. cii. 7. But why is Jerusalem in such a fright? *Her slain men are not slain with the sword* (v. 2), but, 1. Slain with famine (so some); for Sennacherib's army having laid the country waste, and destroyed the fruits of the earth, provisions must needs be very scarce and dear in the city, which would be the death of many of the poorer sort of people, who could be constrained to feed on that which was unwholesome. 2. Slain with fear. They were put into this fright though they had not a man killed, but so disheartened themselves that they seemed as effectually stabbed with fear as if they had been run through with a sword.

II. The inglorious flight of the rulers of Judah, who fled from far, from all parts of the country, to Jerusalem (v. 3), fled together, as it were by consent, and were found in Jerusalem, having left their respective cities, which they should have taken care of, to be prey to the Assyrian army, which, meeting with no opposition, when it *came up against all the defenced cities of Judah easily took them*, ch. xxxvi. 1. These rulers *were bound from the bow* (so the word is); they not only quitted their own cities like cowards, but, when they came to Jerusalem, were of no service there, but were as if their hands were tied from the use of the bow, by the extreme distraction and confusion they were in; they trembled, so that they could not draw a bow. See how easily God can dispirit men, and how certainly fear will dispirit them, when the tyranny of it is yielded to.

III. The great grief which this should occasion to all serious sensible people among them, which is represented by the prophet's saying the thing to heart himself; he lived to see it, and was resolved to share with the children of his people in their sorrows, v. 4. He is not willing to proclaim his sorrow, and therefore bids those about him to look away from him; he will abandon himself to

grief, and indulge himself in it, will weep secretly, but weep bitterly, and will have none go about to comfort him, for his grief is obstinate and he is pleased with his pain. But what is the occasion of his grief? A poor prophet had little to lose, and had been inured to hardship, when he walked naked and barefoot; but it is for *the spoiling of the daughter of his people*. Note, Public grievances should be our griefs. It is a *day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity*. Our enemies trouble us and tread us down, and our friends are perplexed and know not what course to take to do us a kindness. The Lord God of hosts is now contending with the valley of vision; the enemies with their battering rams are breaking down the walls, and we are in vain crying to the mountains (to keep off the enemy, or to fall on us and cover us) or looking for help to come to us over the mountains, or appealing, as God does, to the mountains, to hear our controversy (Mic. vi. 1) and to judge between us and our injurious neighbours.

IV. The great numbers and strength of the enemy, that should invade their country and besiege their city, v. 6, 7. Elam (that is, the Persians) come with their quiver full of arrows, and with chariots of fighting men, and horsemen. Kir (that is, the Medes) muster up their arms, unsheath the sword, and uncover the shield, and get every thing ready for battle, every thing ready for the besieging of Jerusalem. Then the choice valleys about Jerusalem, that used to be clothed with flocks and covered over with corn, shall be full of chariots of war, and at the gate of the city *the horsemen shall set themselves in array*, to cut off all provisions from going in, and to force their way in. What a condition must the city be in that was beset on all sides with such an army!

8 And he discovered the covering of Judah, and thou didst look in that day to the armour of the house of the forest. 9 Ye have seen also the breaches of the city of David, that they are many: and ye gathered together the waters of the lower pool. 10 And ye have numbered the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses have ye broken down to fortify the wall. 11 Ye made also a ditch between the two walls for the water of the old pool: but ye have not looked unto the maker thereof, neither had respect unto him that fashioned it long ago. 12 And in that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: 13 And behold joy and gladness, slay-

ing oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we shall die. 14 And it was revealed in mine ears by the LORD of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord God of hosts.

What is meant by *the covering of Judah*, which in the beginning of this paragraph is said to be *discovered*, is not agreed. The fenced cities of Judah were a covering to the country; but these, being taken by the army of the Assyrians, ceased to be a shelter, so that the whole country lay exposed to be plundered. The weakness of Judah, its nakedness, and inability to keep itself, now appeared more than ever; and thus the covering of Judah was discovered. Its magazines and stores, which had been locked up, were now laid open for the public use. Dr. Lightfoot gives another sense of it, that by this distress into which Judah should be brought God would discover their covering (that is, uncloak their hypocrisy), would show all that was in their heart, as is said of Hezekiah upon another occasion, 2 Chron. xxxii. 31. Now they discovered both their carnal confidence (v. 9) and their carnal security, v. 13. Thus, by one means or other, *the iniquity of Ephraim will be discovered and the sin of Samaria*, Hos. vii. 1.

They were now in a great fright, and in this fright they manifested two things much amiss:—

I. A great contempt of God's goodness, and his power to help them. They made use of all the means they could think of for their own preservation; and it is not for doing this that they are blamed, but, in doing this, they did not acknowledge God. Observe,

1. How careful they were to improve all advantages that might contribute to their safety. When Sennacherib had made himself master of all the defenced cities of Judah, and Jerusalem was left as a cottage in a vineyard, they thought it was time to look about them. A council was immediately called, a council of war; and it was resolved to stand upon their defence, and not tamely to surrender. Pursuant to this resolve, they took all the prudent measures they could for their own security. We tempt God if, in times of danger, we do not the best we can for ourselves. (1.) They inspected the magazines and stores, to see if they were well stocked with arms and ammunition: *They looked to the armour of the house of the forest*, which Solomon built in Jerusalem for an armoury (1 Kings x. 17), and thence they delivered out what they had occasion for. It is the wisdom of princes, in time of peace, to provide for war, that they may not have arms to seek when they should use them, and per-

haps upon a sudden emergency. (2.) They viewed the fortifications, the *breaches of the city of David*; they walked round the walls, and observed where they had gone to decay for want of seasonable repairs, or were broken by some former attempts made upon them. These breaches were many; the more shame for the house of David that they suffered the city of David to lie neglected. They had probably often seen those breaches; but now they saw them to consider what course to take about them. This good we should get by public distresses, we should be awakened by them to *repair our breaches*, and amend what is amiss. (3.) They made sure of water for the city, and did what they could to deprive the besiegers of it: *You gathered together the water of the lower pool*, of which there was probably no great store, and of which therefore they were the more concerned to be good husbands. See what a mercy it is that, as nothing is more necessary to the support of human life than water, so nothing is more cheap and common; but it is bad indeed when that, as here, is a scarce commodity. (4.) *They numbered the houses of Jerusalem*, that every house might send in its quota of men for the public service, or contribute in money to it, which they raised by a poll, so much a head or so much a house. (5.) Because private property ought to give way to the public safety, those houses that stood in their way, when the wall was to be fortified, were broken down, which, in such a case of necessity, is no more an injury to the owner than blowing up houses in case of fire. (6.) They made a ditch between the outer and inner wall, for the greater security of the city; and they contrived to draw the water of the old pool to it, that they might have plenty of water themselves and might deprive the besiegers of it; for it seems that was the project, lest the Assyrian army should *come and find much water* (2 Chron. xxxii. 4), and so should be the better able to prolong the siege. If it be lawful to destroy the forage of a country, much more to divert the streams of its waters, for the straitening and starving of an enemy.

2. How regardless they were of God in all these preparations: *But you have not looked unto the Maker thereof* (that is, of Jerusalem the city you are so solicitous for the defence of) and of all the advantages which nature has furnished it with for its defence—the *mountains round about it* (Ps. cxxv. 2) and the rivers, which were such as the inhabitants might turn which way soever they pleased for their convenience. Note, (1.) It is God that made his Jerusalem, and fashioned it long ago, in his counsels. The Jewish writers, upon this place, say, There were seven things which God made before the world (meaning which he had in his eye when he made the world): *the garden of Eden, the law, the just ones, Israel, the throne of glory, Jerusalem, and Messiah the Prince*

The gospel church has God for its Maker. (2.) Whatever service we do, or endeavour to do, at any time, to God's Jerusalem, must be done with an eye to him as the Maker of it; and he takes it ill if it be done otherwise. It is here charged upon them that they did not look to God. [1.] They did not design his glory in what they did. They fortified Jerusalem because it was a rich city and their own houses were in it, not because it was the holy city and God's house was in it. In all our cares for the defence of the church we must look more at God's interest in it than at our own. [2.] They did not depend upon him for a blessing upon their endeavours, saw no need of it, and therefore sought not to him for it, but thought their own powers and policies sufficient for them. Of Hezekiah himself it is said that *he trusted in God* (2 Kings xviii. 5), and particularly upon this occasion (2 Chron. xxxii. 8); but there were those about him, it seems, who were great statesmen and soldiers, but had little religion in them. [3.] They did not give him thanks for the advantages they had, in fortifying their city, from the *waters of the old pool*, which were fashioned long ago, as Kishon is called *an ancient river*, Judg. v. 21. Whatever in nature is at any time serviceable to us, we must therein acknowledge the goodness of the God of nature, who, when he fashioned it long ago, fitted it to be so, and according to whose ordinance it continues to this day. Every creature is that to us which God makes it to be; and therefore, whatever use it is of to us, we must look at him that fashioned it, bless him for it, and use it for him.

II. A great contempt of God's wrath and justice in contending with them, v. 12—14. Here observe,

1. What was God's design in bringing this calamity upon them: it was to humble them, bring them to repentance, and make them serious. In that day of trouble, and reading down, and perplexity, the Lord did hereby call to weeping and mourning, and all the expressions of sorrow, even to baldness and girding with sackcloth; and all this to amend their sins (by which they had brought those judgments upon their land), to enforce their prayers (by which they might hope to avert the judgments that were breaking in), and to dispose themselves to a reformation of their lives by a holy seriousness and a tenderness of heart under the word of God. To his God called them by his prophets' explaining his providences, and by his providences awakening them to regard what his prophets said. Note, When God threatens us with his judgments he expects and requires that we humble ourselves under his mighty hand, that we tremble when the lions roar, and in a day of adversity consider.

2. How contrary they walked to this design of God (v. 13): *Behold, joy and gladness, mirth and feasting, all the gaiety and*

all the jollity imaginable. They were as secure and cheerful as they used to be, as if they had had no enemy in their borders or were in no danger of falling into his hands. When they had taken the necessary precautions for their security, then they set all deaths and dangers at defiance, and resolved to be merry, let come on them what would. Those that should have been among the mourners were among the *wine-bibbers, the riotous eaters of flesh*; and observe what they said, *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die*. This may refer either to the particular danger they were now in, and the fair warning which the prophet gave them of it, or to the general shortness and uncertainty of human life, and the nearness of death at all times. This was the language of the profane scoffers who *mocked the messengers of the Lord and misused his prophets*. (1.) They made a jest of dying. "The prophet tells us we must die shortly, perhaps to-morrow, and therefore we should mourn and repent to-day; no, rather *let us eat and drink*, that we may be fattened for the slaughter, and may be in good heart to meet our doom; if we must have a short life, let it be a merry one." (2.) They ridiculed the doctrine of a future state on the other side death; for, if there were no such state, the apostle grants there would be something of reason in what they said, 1 Cor. xv. 32. If, when we die, there were an end of us, it were good to make ourselves as easy and merry as we could while we live; but, if for all these things God shall bring us into judgment, it is at our peril if we walk in the way of our heart and the sight of our eyes, Eccl. xi. 9. Note, A practical disbelief of another life after this is at the bottom of the carnal security and brutish sensuality which are the sin, and shame, and ruin of so great a part of mankind, as of the old world, who were *eating and drinking till the flood came*.

3. How much God was displeased at it. He signified his resentment of it to the prophet, revealed it in his ears, to be by him proclaimed upon the house-top: *Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till you die*, v. 14. It shall never be expiated with sacrifice and offering, any more than the iniquity of the house of Eli, 1 Sam. iii. 14. It is a sin against the remedy, a baffling of the utmost means of conviction and rendering them ineffectual; and therefore it is not likely they should ever repent of it or have it pardoned. The Chaldee reads it, *It shall not be forgiven you till you die the second death*. Those that walk contrary to God shall find that he will walk contrary to them; with the froward he will show himself froward.

15 Thus saith the Lord God of hosts, Go, get thee unto this treasurer, even unto Shebna, which is over the house, and say, 16 What hast thou

here? and whom hast thou here, that thou hast hewed thee out a sepulchre here, *as* he that heweth him out a sepulchre on high, *and* that graveth a habitation for himself in a rock? 17 Behold, the LORD will carry thee away with a mighty captivity, and will surely cover thee. 18 He will surely violently turn and toss thee *like* a ball into a large country: there shalt thou die, and there the chariots of thy glory *shall be* the shame of thy lord's house. 19 And I will drive thee from thy station, and from thy state shall he pull thee down. 20 And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah: 21 And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. 22 And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. 23 And I will fasten him *as* a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house. 24 And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons. 25 In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall the nail that is fastened in the sure place be removed, and be cut down, and fall; and the burden that *was* upon it shall be cut off: for the LORD hath spoken *it*.

We have here a prophecy concerning the displacing of Shebna, a great officer at court, and the preferring of Eliakim to the post of honour and trust that he was in. Such changes are common in the courts of princes; it is therefore strange that so much notice should be taken of it by the prophet here; but by the accomplishment of what was foretold concerning these particular persons God designed to confirm his word in the mouth of Isaiah concerning other and greater events; and it is likewise to show that, as God has burdens in store for those nations and kingdoms abroad that are open enemies to his church and people, so he has for those par-

ticular persons at home that are false friends to them and betray them. It is likewise confirmation in general of the hand of divine Providence in all events of this kind, which to us seem contingent and to depend upon the wills and fancies of princes. *Promotion comes not from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south; but God is the Judge,* P. lxxv. 6, 7. It is probable that this prophecy was delivered at the same time with that in the former part of the chapter, and began to be fulfilled before Sennacherib's invasion; for not Shebna was *over the house*, but then Eliakim was (*ch. xxxvi. 3*); and Shebna, coming down gradually, was only scribe. Here is

1. The prophecy of Shebna's disgrace. He is called *this treasurer*, being entrusted with the management of the revenue; and he is likewise said to be *over the house*, for such was his boundless ambition and covetousness that less than two places, and those two of the greatest importance at court, would not satisfy him. It is common for self-seeking men thus to grasp at more than they can manage, and so the business of their place is neglected, while the pomp and profit of them wholly engage the mind. It does not appear what were the particular instances of Shebna's mal-administration, for which Isaiah is here sent to prophesy against him; but the Jews say, "He kept up a traitorous correspondence with the king of Assyria, and was in treaty with him to deliver the city into his hands." However this was, it should seem that he was a foreigner (for we never read of the name of his father) and that he was an enemy to the true interests of Judah and Jerusalem: it is probable that he was first preferred by Ahaz. Hezekiah was himself an excellent prince; but the better masters cannot always be sure of good servants. We have need to pray for princes that they may be wise and happy in the choice of those they trust. These were times of reformation, yet Shebna, a bad man, complied so far as to keep his places at court, and it is probable that many others did so, for which reason Sennacherib is said to have been *sent against a hypocritical nation* *ch. x. 6*. In this message to Shebna we have,

1. A reproof of his pride, vanity, and security (*v. 16*): "*What hast thou here, and whom hast thou here? What a mighty noise and bustle dost thou make! What estate hast thou here, that thou wast born to? Whom hast thou here, what relations, that thou art allied to? Art thou not of me, and obscure original, filius populi—a mere plebeian, that comest we know not whence? What is the meaning of this then, that thou hast built thyself a fine house, hast thou built thyself a habitation?*" So very nice and curious was it that it seemed rather to be the work of an engraver than of a mason or carpenter; and it seemed engraven in a rock so firmly was it founded and so impregnable.

s it. "Nay, thou hast hewed thee out a *sepulchre*," as if he designed that his pomp should survive his funeral. Though Jerusalem was not the *place of his fathers' sepulchres* (as Nehemiah called it with a great deal of tenderness, Neh. ii. 3), he designed it should be the place of his own, and therefore set up a monument for himself in his lifetime, set it up on high. Those that make sepulchres for their pride forget that, how beautiful soever they appear outwardly, *within they are full of dead men's bones*. It is a pity that the grave-stone should get the grave.

2. A prophecy of his fall and the sully of his glory. (1.) That he should now quickly be displaced and degraded (v. 19): *I will drive thee from thy station*. High places are slippery places; and those are justly deprived of their honour that are proud of it and puffed up with it, and deprived of their power that do hurt with it. God will do it, who shows himself to be God by looking on proud men and abasing them, Job xl. 11. To this v. 25 refers. "The nail that is now fastened in the sure place (that is, Shebna, who thinks himself immovably fixed in his office) shall be removed, and cut down, and fall. Those are mistaken who think any place in this world a sure place, or themselves as nails fastened in it; for there is nothing here but uncertainty. When the nail falls the burden that was upon it is cut off; when Shebna was disgraced all that had dependence upon him fell into contempt. Those that are in high places will have nothing hanging upon them as favourites whom they are proud of and trust to; but they are burdens upon them, and perhaps with their weight break the nail, and both fall together, and by deceiving ruin one another—the common fate of great men and their flatterers, who expect more from each other than either performs. (2.) That after a while he should not only be driven from his station, but driven from his country: *The Lord will carry thee away with the captivity of a mighty nation*, v. 17, 18. Some think the Assyrians seized him, and took him away, because he had promised to assist them and did not, but appeared against them: or perhaps Hezekiah, finding out his treachery, banished him, and forbade him ever to return; or he himself, finding that he had become obnoxious to the people, withdrew into some other country, and there spent the rest of his days in meanness and obscurity. Grotius thinks he was stricken with a leprosy, which was a disease commonly supposed to come from the immediate hand of God's displeasure, particularly for the punishment of the proud, as in the case of Miriam and Uzziah; and by reason of this disease he was *tossed like a ball out of Jerusalem*. Those who, when they are in power, turn and toss others, will be justly turned and tossed themselves when their day shall come to fall. Many

who have thought themselves fastened like a nail may come to be tossed like a ball; for here have we *no continuing city*. Shebna thought his place too strait for him, he had no room to thrive; God will therefore send him *into a large country*, where he shall have room to wander, but never find the way back again; for *there he shall die*, and lay his bones there, and not in the sepulchre he had hewn out for himself. And *there the chariots* which had been the chariots of his glory, in which he had rattled about the streets of Jerusalem, and which he took into banishment with him, should but serve to upbraid him with his former grandeur, *to the shame of his lord's house*, of the court of Ahaz, who had advanced him.

II. The prophecy of Eliakim's advancement, v. 20, &c. He is God's servant, has approved himself faithfully so in other employments, and therefore God will call him to this high station. Those that are diligent in doing the duty of a low sphere stand fairest for preferment in God's books. Eliakim does not undermine Shebna, nor make an interest against him, nor does he intrude into his office; but God calls him to it: and what God calls us to we may expect he will own us in. It is here foretold, 1. That Eliakim should be put into Shebna's place of lord-chamberlain of the household, lord-treasurer, and prime-minister of state. The prophet must tell Shebna this, v. 21. "He shall have *thy robe*, the badge of honour, and *thy girdle*, the badge of power; for he shall have *thy government*." To hear of it would be a great mortification to Shebna, much more to see it. Great men, especially if proud men, cannot endure their successors. God undertakes the doing of it, not only because he would put it into the heart of Hezekiah to do it, and his hand must be acknowledged guiding the hearts of princes in placing and displacing men (Prov. xxi. 1), but because the powers that are, subordinate as well as supreme, are ordained of God. It is God that clothes princes with their robes, and therefore we must submit ourselves to them for the Lord's sake and with an eye to him, 1 Pet. ii. 13. And, since it is he that *commits the government into their hand*, they must administer it according to his will, for his glory; they must judge for him by whom they judge and *decree justice*, Prov. viii. 15. And they may depend upon him to furnish them for what he calls them to, according to this promise: *I will clothe him*; and then it follows, *I will strengthen him*. Those that are called to places of trust and power should seek unto God for grace to enable them to do the duty of their places; for that ought to be their chief care. Eliakim's advancement is further described by the laying of the *key of the house of David upon his shoulders*, v. 22. Probably he carried a golden key upon his shoulder as a badge of his office, or had one embroidered upon his cloak or

robe, to which this alludes. Being over the house, and having the key delivered to him, as the seals are to the lord-keeper, *he shall open and none shall shut, shut and none shall open.* He had access to the house of the precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices; and to the house of the armour and the treasures (ch. xxxix. 2), and disposed of the stores there as he thought fit for the public service. He put whom he pleased into the inferior offices and turned out whom he pleased. Our Lord Jesus describes his own power as Mediator by an allusion to this (Rev. iii. 7), that *he has the key of David*, wherewith he opens and no man shuts, he shuts and no man opens. His power in the kingdom of heaven, and in the ordering of all the affairs of that kingdom, is absolute, irresistible, and uncontrollable. 2. That he should be fixed and confirmed in that office. He shall have it for life, and not *durante bene placito—during pleasure* (v. 23): *I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place*, not to be removed or cut down. Thus lasting shall the honour be that comes from God to all those who use it for him. Our Lord Jesus is *as a nail in a sure place*: his kingdom cannot be shaken, and he himself is still the same. 3. That he should be a great blessing in his office; and it is this that crowns the favours here conferred upon him: *God makes his name great*, for he shall be a blessing, Gen. xii. 2. (1.) He shall be a blessing to his country (v. 21): *He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.* He shall take care not only of the affairs of the king's household, but of all the public interests in Jerusalem and Judah. Note, Rulers should be fathers to those that are under their government, to teach them with wisdom, rule them with love, and correct what is amiss with tenderness, to protect them and provide for them, and be solicitous about them as a man is for his own children and family. It is happy with a people when the court, the city, and the country, have no separate interests, but all centre in the same, so that the courtiers are true patriots, and whom the court blesses the country has reason to bless too; and when those who are fathers to Jerusalem, the royal city, are no less so to the house of Judah. (2.) He shall be a blessing to his family (v. 23, 24): *He shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house.* The consummate wisdom and virtue which recommended him to this great trust made him the honour of his family, which probably was very considerable before, but now became much more so. Children should aim to be a credit to their parents and relations. The honour men reflect upon their families by their piety and usefulness is more to be valued than that which they derive from their families by their names and titles. Eliakim being preferred, *all the glory of his father's house* was hung upon him; they all made their court to him, and his brethren's sheaves

bowed to him. Observe, The glory of the world gives a man no intrinsic worth or cency; it is but hung upon him as an pertenance, and it will soon drop from him. Eliakim was compared to a nail in a place, in pursuance of which comparison the relations of his family (which, it is ly, were numerous, and that was the g of it) are said to have a dependence upon him, as in a house the vessels that handles to them are hung up upon nails pins. It intimates likewise that he shall nerously take care of them all, and bear weight of that care: *All the vessels, only the flagons, but the cups, the vessels small quantity*, the meanest that belong his family, shall be provided for by him. See what a burden those bring upon themselves that undertake great trusts; they think how many and how much will lie upon them if they resolve to be faithful in the discharge of their trust. Our Lord Jesus, having the key of the house of David is as a nail in a sure place, and all the glory of his father's house hangs upon him; it is derived from him, and depends upon him; the meanest that belong to his church are welcome to him, and he is able to bear the stress of them all. That soul cannot perceive nor that concern fall to the ground, that is ever so weighty, that is by faith hung upon Christ.

CHAP. XXIII.

This chapter is concerning Tyre, an ancient wealthy city situated upon the sea, and for many ages one of the most celebrated cities for trade and merchandise in those parts of the world. It was the lot of the tribe of Asher bordered upon it. See Joshua xix. 29. It is called "the strong city Tyre." We seldom find it a danger to Israel, but sometimes their faithful ally, as in the time of David and Solomon; for trading cities maintain their greatness not by the conquest of their neighbours, but by commerce with them. In this chapter is foretold, I. The lamentable destruction of Tyre, which was performed by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian army, about the time that they destroyed Jerusalem. II. The hard task they had of it, as appears Ezek. xxix. 18, who are said to have "served a hard service against Tyre," as if they had no wages, ver. 1-14. III. The restoration of Tyre seventy years, and the return of the Tyrians out of their captivity to their trade again, ver. 15-18.

THE burden of Tyre. Howl ye for the ships of Tarshish; for it is waste, so that there is no house, nor entering in: from the land of Chanaan it is revealed to them. 2 Be still ye inhabitants of the isle; thou wast the merchants of Zidon, that thou over the sea, have replenished. And by great waters the seed of Sion shall reap the harvest of the river, is her venue; and she is a mart of nations. 4 Be thou ashamed, O Zidon: the sea hath spoken, even the strength of the sea, saying, I travail not, nor bring forth children, neither do I nourish up young men, nor bring up virgins. 5 As at the report concerning Egypt, so shall they be sorely pained.

the report of Tyre. 6 Pass ye over to Tarshish; howl, ye inhabitants of the isle. 7 *Is this your glorious city, whose antiquity is of ancient days?* Her own feet shall carry her afar off to sojourn. 8 Who hath taken this counsel against Tyre, the crowning city, whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honourable of the earth? 9 The LORD of hosts hath purposed it, to bring the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth. 10 Pass through thy land as a river, O daughter of Tarshish: *there is no more strength.* 11 He stretched out his hand over the sea, he shook the kingdoms: the LORD hath given a commandment against the merchant city, to destroy the strong holds thereof. 12 And he said, Thou shalt no more rejoice, O thou oppressed virgin, daughter of Zidon: arise, pass over to Chittim; here also shalt thou have no rest. 13 Behold the land of the Chaldeans; this people was not, *till* the Assyrian founded it for them that dwell in the wilderness: they set up the towers thereof, they raised up the palaces thereof; and he brought it to ruin. 14 Howl, ye ships of Tarshish: for our strength is laid waste.

Tyre being a sea-port town, this prophecy of its overthrow fitly begins and ends with, *Howl, you ships of Tarshish*; for all its business, wealth, and honour, depended upon shipping; if that be ruined, they will be undone. Observe,

I. Tyre flourishing. This is taken notice that her fall may appear the more dismal. *The merchants of Zidon*, who traded at Tyre, had at first replenished her, v. 2. Zidon was the more ancient city, situated upon the same sea-coast, a few leagues more to the north, and Tyre was at first only a colony of that; but the daughter had outgrown the mother, and become much more considerable. It may be a mortification to great cities to think how they were at first replenished. 2. Egypt had helped very much to raise her, v. 3. Sihor was the river of Egypt: by that river, and the ocean into which it ran, the Egyptians traded with Tyre; and the harvest of that river was her revenue. The riches of the sea, and the gains by goods exported and imported, were as much the harvest to trading towns as that of bay and corn is to the country; and sometimes the harvest of the river proves a

better revenue than the harvest of the land. Or it may be meant of all the products of the Egyptian soil, which the men of Tyre traded in, and which were the harvest of the river Nile, owing themselves to the overflowing of that river. 3. She had become the mart of the nations, the great emporium of that part of the world. Some of every known nation might be found there, especially at certain times of the year, when there was a general rendezvous of merchants. This is enlarged upon by another prophet, Ezek. xxvii. 2, 3, &c. See how the hand of the diligent, by the blessing of God upon it, makes rich. Tyre became rich and great by industry, though she had no other ploughs going than those that plough the waters. 4. She was a *joyous city*, noted for mirth and jollity, v. 7. Those that were so disposed might find there all manner of sports and diversions, all the delights of the sons and daughters of men, balls, and plays, and operas, and every thing of that kind that a man had a fancy to. This made them secure and proud, and they despised the country people, who neither knew nor relished any joys of that nature. This also made them very loth to believe and consider what warnings God gave them by his servants; they were too merry to mind them. Her antiquity likewise was of ancient days, and she was proud of that, and that helped to make her secure; as if because she had been a city time out of mind, and her antiquity had been of ancient days, therefore she must continue a city time without end, and her continuance must be to the days of eternity. 5. She was a *crowning city* (v. 8), that crowned herself. Such were the power and pomp of her magistrates that they crowned those who had dependence on her and dealings with her. It is explained in the following words: *Her merchants are princes*, and live like princes for the ease and state they take; and *her traffickers*, whatever country they go to, are the honourable of the earth, who are respected by all. How slightly soever some now speak of tradesmen, it seems formerly, and among the wisest nations, there were merchants, and traders, and men of business, that were the honourable of the earth.

II. Here is Tyre falling. It does not appear that she brought trouble upon herself by provoking her neighbours with her quarrels, but rather by tempting them with her wealth; but, if it was this that induced Nebuchadnezzar to fall upon Tyre, he was disappointed; for after it had stood out a siege of thirteen years, and could hold out no longer, the inhabitants got away by sea, with their families and goods, to other places where they had an interest, and left Nebuchadnezzar nothing but the bare city. See a history of Tyre in Sir Walter Raleigh's History of the World, lib. ii. cap. 7. sect. 3, 43. pag. 283, which will give much light

to this prophecy and that in Ezekiel concerning Tyre.

1. See how the destruction of Tyre is here foretold. (1.) The haven shall be spoiled, or at least neglected. There shall be no convenient harbour for the reception of the ships of Tarshish, but all *laid waste* (v. 1), so that there shall be no house, no dock for the ships to ride in, no inns, or public houses for the seamen, no entering into the port. Perhaps it was choked with sand or blocked up by the enemy. Or, Tyre being destroyed and laid waste, the ships that used to come from Tarshish and Chittim into that port shall now no more enter in; for it is *revealed* or made known to them, they have received the dismal news, that Tyre is destroyed and laid waste; so that there is now no more business for them there. See how it is in this world; those that are spoiled by their enemies are commonly slighted by their old friends. (2.) The inhabitants are struck with astonishment. Tyre was an island. The inhabitants of it, who had made a mighty noise and bustle in the world, and revelled with loud huzzas, shall now be still and silent (v. 2); they shall sit down as mourners, so overwhelmed with grief that they shall not be able to express it. Their proud boasts of themselves, and defiance of their neighbours, shall be silenced. God can soon quiet those, and strike them dumb, that are the noisy busy people of the world. Be still; for God will do his work (Ps. xlv. 10; Zech. ii. 13), and you cannot resist him. (3.) The neighbours are amazed, blush, and are in pain for them: *Zidon is ashamed* (v. 4), by whom Tyre was at first replenished; for the rolling waves of the sea brought to Zidon this news from Tyre; and there *the strength of the sea*, a high spring-tide, proclaimed saying, "*I travail not, nor bring forth children now, as I have done. I do not now, as I used to do, bring ship-loads of young people to Tyre, to be bred up there in trade and business,*" which was the thing that had made Tyre so rich and populous. Or the sea, that used to be loaded with fleets of ships about Tyre, shall now be as desolate as a sorrowful widow that is bereaved of all her children, and has none about her to nourish and bring up. Egypt indeed was a much larger and more considerable kingdom than Tyre was; and yet Tyre had so large a correspondence, upon the account of trade, that all the nations about shall be as much in pain, upon the report of the ruin of that one city, as they would have been, and not long after were, upon the report of the ruin of all Egypt, v. 5. Or, as some read it, *When the report shall reach to the Egyptians they shall be sorely pained to hear it of Tyre*, both because of the loss of their trade with that city and because it was a threatening step towards their own ruin; when their neighbour's house was on fire their own was in danger.

(4.) The merchants, as many as could should transmit their effects to other places and abandon Tyre, where they had raised their estates, and thought they had made them sure (v. 6): "*You that have long been inhabitants of this isle*" (for it lay off in the sea about half a mile from the continent) "*it is time to howl now, for you must pass over to Tarshish. The best course you take is to make the best of your way to Tarshish, to the sea*" (to Tartessus, a city of Spain; so some), "*or to some other of your plantations.*" Those that think the mountain stands strong, and cannot be moved, will find that here they have no continuing city. *The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed.* (5.) Those that could not make their escape must expect no other than to be carried into captivity; for it was the way of conquerors, in those times to take those they conquered to be bondmen in their own country, and send of their own to be freemen in theirs (v. 7): *Her own feet shall carry her afar off to sojourn*; they shall be hurried away on foot into captivity, and many a weary step they shall take towards their own misery. Those that have lived in the greatest pomp and splendour know not what hardships they may be reduced to before they die. (6.) Many of those that attempt to escape should be pursued and fall into the hands of the enemy. Tyre shall *pass through her land as a river* (v. 10), running down one company after another, into the ocean or abyss of misery. Or, though they haste away as a river, with the greatest swiftness hoping to outrun the danger, yet *there no more strength*; they are quickly tired and cannot get forward, but fall an easy prey into the hands of the enemy. And, Tyre has no more strength, so her sister Zidon has no more comfort (v. 12): "*Thou shalt no more rejoice, O oppressed virgin daughter of Zidon, that art now ready to be overpowered by the victorious Chaldeans. Thy turn is next; therefore arise; pass over to Chittim; flee to Greece, to Italy, where to shift for thy own safety; yet thou also shalt thou have no rest; thy enemies shall disturb thee, and thy own fears shall disquiet thee, where thou hopedst to find some repose.*" Note, We deceive ourselves if we promise ourselves rest any where in this world. Those that are uneasy in one place will be so in another; and, when God's judgment pursue sinners, they will overtake them.

2. But whence shall all this trouble come? (1.) God will be the author of it; it is *destruction from the Almighty*. It will be asked (v. 8), "*Who has taken this counsel against Tyre? Who has contrived it? Who has resolved it? Who can find in his heart to lay such a stately lovely city in ruins? And how is it possible that its ruin should be effected?*" To this it will be answered [1.] God has designed it, who is infinitely wise and just, and never did, nor ever will

o, any wrong to any of his creatures (v. 9). The Lord of hosts, that has all things at his disposal and gives not account of any of his matters, he *has purposed it*. It shall be done according to the counsel of his will; and that which he aims at herein is to *stain the pride of all glory*, to pollute it, profane it, and throw it to be trodden upon; and to *bring into contempt* and make despicable *all the honourable ones of the earth*, that they may not admire themselves and be admired by others as usual. God did not bring those calamities upon Tyre in a way of sovereignty, to show an arbitrary and irresistible power; but he did it to punish the Tyrians for their pride. Many other sins, no doubt, reigned among them—idolatry, sensuality, and oppression; but the sin of pride was fastened upon as that which was the particular ground of God's controversy with Tyre; for he resists the proud. All the world observing and being surprised at the desolation of Tyre, we have here an exposition of it. God tells the world what he meant by it. *First*, He designed to convince men of the vanity and uncertainty of all earthly glory, to show them what a withering, fading, perishing thing it is even when it seems most substantial. It were well if men would be thoroughly taught this lesson, though it were at the expense of so great a destruction. Are men's learning and wealth, their pomp and power, their interest in, and influence upon, all about them, their glory? Are their stately houses, rich furniture, and splendid appearances, their glory? Look upon the ruins of Tyre, and see all this glory stained, and sullied, and buried in the dust. The honourable ones of heaven will be for ever such; but see the grandees of Tyre, some fled into banishment, others forced into captivity, and all impoverished, and you will conclude that the honourable of the earth, even the most honourable, know not how soon they may be brought into contempt. *Secondly*, He designed hereby to prevent their being proud of that glory, their being puffed up, and confident of the continuance of it. Let the ruin of Tyre be a warning to all places and persons to take heed of pride; for it proclaims to all the world that he who exalts himself shall be abased. [2.] God will do it, who has all power in his hand and can do it effectually (v. 11): *He stretched out his hand over the sea*. He has done so many a time, witness the dividing of the Red Sea and the drowning of Pharaoh in it. He has often shaken the kingdoms that were most secure; and he has now given commandment concerning this merchant-city, to destroy the strongholds thereof. As its beauty shall not intercede for it, but that shall be stained, so its strength shall not protect it, but that shall be broken. If any think it strange that a city so well fortified, and that has so many powerful allies, should be so totally

ruined, let them know that it is the Lord of hosts that has given a commandment to destroy the strongholds thereof: and who can gainsay his orders or hinder the execution of them?

(2.) The Chaldeans shall be the instruments of it (v. 13): *Behold the land of the Chaldeans*; how easily they and their land were destroyed by the Assyrians. Though their own hands founded it, set up the towers of Babylon, and raised up its palaces, yet the Assyrians brought it to ruin, whence the Tyrians might infer that as easily as the old Chaldeans were subdued by the Assyrians so easily shall Tyre be vanquished by those new Chaldeans. Babel was built by the Assyrians for those that dwell in the wilderness. It may be rendered for the ships (the Assyrians founded it for ships and shipmen that traffic upon those vast rivers Tigris and Euphrates to the Persian and Indian seas), for men of the desert, for Babylon is called the desert of the sea, ch. xxi. 1. Thus Tyrus was built upon the sea for the like purpose. But the Assyrians (says Dr. Lightfoot) brought that to ruin, now lately, in Hezekiah's time, and so shall Tyre hereafter be brought to ruin by Nebuchadnezzar. If we looked more upon the falling and withering of others, we should not be so confident as we commonly are of the continuance of our own flourishing and standing.

15 And it shall come to pass in that day, that Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years, according to the days of one king: after the end of seventy years shall Tyre sing as a harlot. 16 Take a harp, go about the city, thou harlot that hast been forgotten; make sweet melody, sing many songs, that thou mayest be remembered. 17 And it shall come to pass after the end of seventy years, that the LORD will visit Tyre, and she shall turn to her hire, and shall commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world upon the face of the earth. 18 And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the LORD: it shall not be treasured nor laid up; for her merchandise shall be for them that dwell before the LORD, to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing.

Here is, I. The time fixed for the continuance of the desolations of Tyre, which were not to be perpetual desolations: *Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years*, v. 15. So long it shall lie neglected and buried in obscurity. It was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar much about the time that Jerusalem was, and lay as long as it did in its ruins. See the folly of that proud ambitious conqueror.

What the richer, what the stronger, was he for making himself master of Tyre, when all the inhabitants were driven out of it and he had none of his own subjects to spare for the replenishing and fortifying of it? It is surprising to see what pleasure men could take in destroying cities and making *their memorial perish with them*, Ps. ix. 6. He trampled on the pride of Tyre, and therein served God's purpose; but with greater pride, for which God soon after humbled him.

II. A prophecy of the restoration of Tyre to its glory again: *After the end of seventy years, according to the years of one king, or one dynasty or family of kings, that of Nebuchadnezzar; when that expired, the desolations of Tyre came to an end. And we may presume that Cyrus at the same time when he released the Jews, and encouraged them to rebuild Jerusalem, released the Tyrians also, and encouraged them to rebuild Tyre.* Thus the prosperity and adversity of places, as well as persons, are *set the one over against the other*, that the most glorious cities may not be secure nor the most ruinous despair. It is foretold, 1. That God's providence shall again smile upon this ruined city (v. 17): *The Lord will visit Tyre in mercy*; for, though he contend, he will not contend for ever. It is not said, Her old acquaintance shall visit her, the colonies she has planted, and the trading cities she has had correspondence with (they have forgotten her); but, The Lord shall visit her by some unthought-of turn; he shall cause his indignation towards her to cease, and then things will run of course in their former channel. 2. That she shall use her best endeavours to recover her trade again. She shall sing as a harlot, that has been some time under correction for her lewdness; but, when she is set at liberty (so violent is the bent of corruption), she will use her old arts of temptation. The Tyrians having returned from their captivity, and those that remained recovering new spirits thereupon, they shall contrive how to force a trade, shall procure the best choice of goods, under-sell their neighbours, and be obliging to all customers; as a harlot that has been forgotten, when she comes to be spoken of again, recommends herself to company by singing and playing, *takes a harp, goes about the city, perhaps in the night, serenading, makes sweet melody, and sings many songs.* These are innocent and allowable diversions, if soberly, and moderately, and modestly used; but those that value themselves upon their virtue should not be over-fond of them, nor ambitious to excel in them, because, whatever they are now, anciently they were some of the baits with which harlots used to entice fools. Tyre shall now by degrees come to be the mart of nations again; she shall *return to her hire, to her traffic, and shall commit fornication* (that is, she shall have dealings in trade, for the prophet carries on the similitude of a harlot)

with all the kingdoms of the world that she had formerly traded with in her prosperity. The love of worldly wealth is a spiritual whoredom, and therefore covetous people are called *adulterers and adulteresses* (James iv. 4), and covetousness is spiritual idolatry. 3. That, having recovered her trade again, she shall make a better use of it than she had done formerly; and this good she should get by her calamities (v. 18): *Her merchandise, and her hire, shall be holiness to the Lord.* The trade of Tyre, and all the gains of her trade, shall be devoted to God and to his honour and employed in his service. It shall not be treasured and hoarded up, as formerly, to be the matter of their pride and the support of their carnal confidence; but it shall be laid out in acts of piety and charity. What they can spare from the maintenance of themselves and their families *shall be for those that dwell before the Lord*, for the priests, the Lord's ministers, that attend in his temple at Jerusalem; not to maintain them in pomp and grandeur, but that they and theirs may *eat sufficiently*, may have food convenient for them, with as little as may be of that care which would divert them from their ministration, and that they may have, not rich and fine clothing, but *durable clothing*, that which is strong and lasting, *clothing for old men* (so some read it), as if the priests, though they were young, must wear such plain grave clothing as old men used to wear. Now, (1.) This supposes that religion should be set up in New Tyre, that they should come to the knowledge of the true God and into communion with the Israel of God. Perhaps their being fellow-captives with the Jews in Babylon (who had prophets with them there) disposed them to join with them in their worship there, and turned them from idols, as it cured the Jews of their idolatry and when they were released with them, and as they had reason to believe for their sakes, when they were settled again in Tyre, they would send gifts and offerings to the temple, and presents to the priests. We find men of Tyre then dwelling in the land of Judah, Neh. xiii. 16. Tyre and Sidon were better disposed to religion in Christ's time than the cities of Israel; for, if Christ had gone among them, *they would have repented*, Matt. xi. 21. And we meet with Christians at Tyre (Acts xxi. 3, 4), and, many years after, did Christianity flourish there. Some of the rabbins refer this prophecy of the conversion of Tyre to the days of the Messiah. (2.) It directs those that have estates to make use of them in the service of God and religion, and to reckon that best laid up which is so laid out. Both the merchandise of the tradesmen and the hire of the day-labourers shall be devoted to God. Both the merchandise (the employment we follow) and the hire (the gain of our employments) *must be holiness to the Lord*, alluding to the motto engraven on the frontlet of the

high priest (Exod. xxxix. 30), and to the separation of the tithe under the law, Lev. xxvii. 30. See a promise like this referring to gospel times, Zech. xiv. 20, 21. We must first give up ourselves to be holiness to the Lord before what we do, or have, or get, can be so. When we abide with God in our particular callings, and do common actions after a godly sort—when we abound in works of piety and charity, are liberal in relieving the poor, and supporting the ministry, and encouraging the gospel—then our merchandise and our hire are holiness to the Lord, if we sincerely look at his glory in them. And our wealth need not be treasured and laid up on earth; for it is treasured and laid up in heaven, in *bags that wax not old*, Luke xii. 33.

CHAP. XXIV.

It is agreed that here begins a new sermon, which is continued to the end of chap. xxvii. And in it the prophet, according to the directions he had received, does, in many precious promises, "say to the righteous, it shall be well with them;" and, in many dreadful threatenings, he says, "Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with them" (ch. iii. 10, 11); and these are interwoven, that they may illustrate each other. This chapter is mostly threatening; and, as the judgments threatened are very sore and grievous ones, so the people threatened with those judgments are very many. It is not the burden of any particular city or kingdom, as those before, but the burden of the whole earth. The word indeed signifies only the land, because our own land is commonly to us as all the earth. But it is here explained by another word that is not so confined; it is the world (ver. 4); so that it must at least take in a whole neighbourhood of nations. I. Some think (and very probably) that it is a prophecy of the great havoc that Sennacherib and his Assyrian army should now shortly make of many of the nations in that part of the world. 2. Others make it to point at the like devastations which, about 100 years afterwards, Nebuchadnezzar and his armies should make in the same countries, going from one kingdom to another, not only to conquer them, but to ruin them and lay them waste; for that was the method which those eastern nations took in their wars. The promises that are mixed with the threatenings are intended for the support and comfort of the people of God in those very calamitous times. And, since here are no particular nations named either by whom or on whom those desolations should be brought, I see not but it may refer to both those events. Nay, the scripture has many fulfillings, and we ought to give it its full latitude; and therefore I incline to think that the prophet, from those and the like instances which he had a particular eye to, designs here to represent in general the calamitous state of mankind, and the many miseries which human life is liable to, especially those that attend the wars of the nations. Surely the prophets were sent, not only to foretell particular events, but to form the minds of men to virtue and piety, and for that end their prophecies were written and preserved even for our learning, and therefore ought not to be looked upon as of private interpretation. Now since a thorough conviction of the vanity of the world, and its insufficiency to make us happy, will go far towards bringing us to God, and drawing out our affections towards another world, the prophet here shows what vexation of spirit we must expect to meet with in these things, that we may never take up our rest in them, nor promise ourselves satisfaction any where short of the enjoyment of God. In this chapter we have, I. A threatening of desolating judgments for sin (ver. 1–12), to which is added an assurance that in the midst of them good people should be comforted, ver. 13–15. II. A further threatening of the like desolations (ver. 16–22), to which is added an assurance that in the midst of all God should be glorified.

BEHOLD, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. 2 And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so

with the giver of usury to him. 3 The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled; for the LORD hath spoken this word. 4 The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish. 5 The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. 6 Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left. 7 The new wine mourneth, the vine languisheth, all the merry-hearted do sigh. 8 The mirth of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth, the joy of the harp ceaseth. 9 They shall not drink wine with a song; strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it. 10 The city of confusion is broken down: every house is shut up, that no man may come in. 11 *There is a crying* for wine in the streets; all joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone. 12 In the city is left desolation, and the gate is smitten with destruction.

It is a very dark and melancholy scene that this prophecy presents to our view; turn our eyes which way we will, every thing looks dismal. The threatened desolations are here described in a great variety of expressions to the same purport, and all aggravating.

I. The earth is stripped of all its ornaments and looks as if it were taken off its basis; it is made *empty and waste* (v. 1), as if it were reduced to its first chaos, *Tohu and Bohu*, nothing but confusion and emptiness again (Gen. i. 2), *without form and void*. It is true earth sometimes signifies the *land*, and so the same word *eretz* is here translated (v. 3): *The land shall be utterly emptied and utterly spoiled*; but I see not why it should not there, as well as v. 1, be translated *the earth*; for most commonly, if not always, where it signifies some one particular land it has something joined to it, or at least not far from it, which does so appropriate it; as the land (or earth) of Egypt, or Canaan, or this land, or ours, or yours, or the like. It might indeed refer to some particular country, and an ambiguous word might be used to warrant such an application; for it is good to apply to ourselves, and our own lands what

the scripture says in general of the vanity and vexation of spirit that attend all things here below; but it should seem designed to speak what often happens to many countries, and will do while the world stands, and what may, we know not how soon, happen to our own, and what is the general character of all earthly things: they are empty of all solid comfort and satisfaction; a little thing makes them waste. We often see numerous families, and plentiful estates, utterly emptied and utterly spoiled, by one judgment or other, or perhaps only by a gradual and insensible decay. Sin has turned the earth upside down; the earth has become quite a different thing to man from what it was when God made it to be his habitation. Sin has also scattered abroad the inhabitants thereof. The rebellion at Babel was the occasion of the dispersion there. How many ways are there in which the inhabitants both of towns and of private houses are scattered abroad, so that near relations and old neighbours know nothing of one another! To the same purport is *v. 4*: *The earth mourns, and fades away*; it disappoints those that placed their happiness in it and raised their expectations high from it, and proves not what they promised themselves it would be. *The whole world languishes and fades away*, as hastening towards a dissolution. It is, at the best, like a flower, which withers in the hands of those that please themselves too much with it, and lay it in their bosoms. And, as the earth itself grows old, so those that dwell therein are desolate; men carry crazy sickly bodies along with them, are often solitary, and confined by affliction, *v. 6*. When the earth languishes, and is not so fruitful as it used to be, then those that dwell therein, that make it their home, and rest, and portion, are desolate; whereas those that by faith dwell in God can rejoice in him even when the fig-tree does not blossom. If we look abroad, and see in how many places pestilences and burning fevers rage, and what multitudes are swept away by them in a little time, so that sometimes the living scarcely suffice to bury the dead, perhaps we shall understand what the prophet means when he says, *The inhabitants of the earth are burned, or consumed, some by one disease, others by another, and there are but few men left*, in comparison. Note, The world we live in is a world of disappointment, a vale of tears, and a dying world; and the children of men in it are but of few days, and full of trouble.

II. It is God that brings all these calamities upon the earth. *The Lord* that made the earth, and made it fruitful and beautiful, for the service and comfort of man, now makes it empty and waste (*v. 1*), for its Creator is and will be its Judge; he has an incontestible right to pass sentence upon it and an irresistible power to execute that sentence. It is the Lord that has spoken this

word, and he will do the work (*v. 3*); it is his curse that has devoured the earth (*v. 6*); the general curse which sin brought upon the ground for man's sake (*Gen. iii. 17*), and all the particular curses which families and countries bring upon themselves by their enormous wickedness. See the power of God's curse, how it makes all empty and lays all waste; those whom he curses are cursed indeed.

III. Persons of all ranks and conditions shall share in these calamities (*v. 2*): *It shall be as with the people, so with the priest, &c.* This is true of many of the common calamities of human life; all are subject to the same diseases of body, sorrows of mind, afflictions in relations, and the like. There is one event to those of very different stations; time and chance happen to them all. It is in a special manner true of the destroying judgments which God sometimes brings upon sinful nations; when he pleases he can make them universal, so that none shall escape them or be exempt from them, whether men have little or much, they shall lose it all. Those of the meaner rank smart first by famine; but those of the higher rank go first into captivity, while the poor of the land are left. It shall be all alike.

1. With high and low: *As with the people, so with the priest, or prince*. The dignity of magistrates and ministers, and the respect and reverence due to both, shall not secure them. *The faces of elders are not honoured* (*Lam. v. 12*). The priests had been as corrupt and wicked as the people; and, if their character served not to restrain them from sin, how can they expect it should serve to secure them from judgments? In both it shall be, *like people, like priest*, *Hosea iv. 8, 9*: *With bond and free: As with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress*. They have all corrupted their way, and therefore will all be made miserable when the earth is made waste. 3. With rich and poor. Those that have money before hand, that are purchasing, and letting out money to interest, will fare no better than those that are so impoverished that they are forced to sell their estates and take up money at interest. There are judgments short of the great day of judgment in which rich and poor meet together. Let not those that are advanced in the world set their inferiors at too great a distance, because they know not how soon they may be set upon a level with them. *The rich man's wealth is his strong city in his own conceit*; but it does not always prove so.

IV. It is sin that brings these calamities upon the earth. The earth is made empty and fades away, because it is defiled under the inhabitants thereof (*v. 5*); it is polluted by the sins of men, and therefore it is made desolate by the judgments of God. Such is the filthy nature of sin that it defiles the earth itself under the sinful inhabitants

thereof, and it is rendered unpleasant in the eyes of God and good men. See Lev. xviii. 25, 27, 28. Blood, in particular, defiles the land, Num. xxxv. 33. The earth never spues out its inhabitants till they have first defiled it by their sins. Why, what have they done? 1. They have transgressed the laws of their creation, not answered the ends of it. The bonds of the law of nature have been broken by them, and they have cast from them the cords of their obligations to the God of nature. 2. *They have changed the ordinances* of revealed religion, those of them that have had the benefit of that. *They have neglected the ordinances* (so some read it), and have made no conscience of observing them. They have passed over the laws, in the commission of sin, and have passed by the ordinance, in the omission of duty. 3. Herein they have *broken the everlasting covenant*, which is a perpetual bond and will be to those that keep it a perpetual blessing. It is God's wonderful condescension that he is pleased to deal with men in a covenant-way, to do them good, and thereby oblige them to do him service. Even those that had no benefit by God's covenant with Abraham had benefit by his covenant with Noah and his sons, which is called *an everlasting covenant*, his covenant with day and night; but they observe not the precepts of the sons of Noah, they acknowledge not God's goodness in the day and night, nor study to make him any grateful returns, and so break the everlasting covenant and defeat the gracious designs and intentions of it.

V. These judgments shall humble men's pride and mar their mirth. When the earth is made empty, 1. It is a great mortification to men's pride (v. 4): *The haughty people of the earth do languish*; for they have lost that which supported their pride, and for which they magnified themselves. As for those that have held their heads highest, God can make them hang the head. 2. It is a great damp to men's jollity. This is enlarged upon much (v. 7—9): *All the merry-hearted do sigh*. Such is the nature of carnal mirth, it is but as *the crackling of thorns under a pot*, Eccl. vii. 6. Great laughs commonly end in a sigh. Those that make the world their chief joy cannot rejoice evermore. When God sends his judgments into the earth he designs thereby to make those serious that were wholly addicted to their pleasures. *Let your laughter be turned into mourning*. When the earth is emptied the *noise of those that rejoice in it ends*. Carnal joy is a noisy thing; but the noise of it will soon be at an end, and the end of it is heaviness. Two things are made use of to excite and express vain mirth, and the jovial crew is here deprived of both:—(1.) Drinking: *The new wine mourns*; it has grown sour for want of drinking; for, how proper soever it may be for the heavy heart (Prov. xxxi. 6), it does not relish to them

as it does to the merry-hearted. *The vine languishes*, and gives little hopes of a vintage, and therefore *the merry-hearted do sigh*; for they know no other gladness than that of their corn, and wine, and oil increasing (Ps. iv. 7), and, if you *destroy their vines and their fig-trees, you make all their mirth to cease*, Hosea ii. 11, 12. *They shall not now drink wine with a song and with huzzas*, as they used to do, but rather drink it with a sigh; nay, *Strong drink shall be bitter to those that drink it*, because they cannot but mingle their tears with it; or, through sickness, they have lost the relish of it. God has many ways to embitter wine and strong drink to those that love them and have the highest gust of them: distemper of body, anguish of mind, the ruin of the estate or country, will make the strong drink bitter and all the delights of sense tasteless and insipid. (2.) Music: *The mirth of tabrets ceases, and the joy of the harp*, which used to be at their feasts, ch. v. 12. The captives in Babylon hang their harps on the willow trees. In short, *All joy is darkened*; there is not a pleasant look to be seen, nor has any one power to force a smile; all the *mirth of the land is gone* (v. 11); and, if it was that mirth which Solomon calls *madness*, there is no great loss of it.

VI. The cities will in a particular manner feel from these desolations of the country (v. 10): *The city of confusion is broken, is broken down* (so we read it); it lies exposed to invading powers, not only by the breaking down of its walls, but by the confusion that the inhabitants are in. *Every house is shut up*, perhaps by reason of the plague, which has burned or consumed the inhabitants, so that there are *few men left*, v. 6. Houses infected are usually shut up that no man may come in. Or they are shut up because they are deserted and uninhabited. *There is a crying for wine*, that is, for the spoiling of the vintage, so that there is likely to be no wine. *In the city*, in Jerusalem itself, that had been so much frequented, there shall be left nothing but *desolation*; grass shall grow in the streets, and *the gate is smitten with destruction* (v. 12); all that used to pass and repass through the gate are smitten, and all the strength of the city is cut off. How soon can God make a city of order a city of confusion, and then it will soon be a city of desolation!

13 When thus it shall be in the midst of the land among the people, *there shall be* as the shaking of an olive-tree, and as the gleaning grapes when the vintage is done. 14 They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing for the majesty of the Lord, they shall cry aloud from the sea. 15 Wherefore glorify ye the Lord

in the fires, *even* the name of the LORD God of Israel in the isles of the sea.

Here is mercy remembered in the midst of wrath. In Judah and Jerusalem, and the neighbouring countries, when they are overrun by the enemy, Sennacherib or Nebuchadnezzar, there shall be a remnant preserved from the general ruin, and it shall be a devout and pious remnant. And this method God usually observes when his judgments are abroad; he does not make a full end, *ch. vi. 13.* Or we may take it thus: Though the greatest part of mankind have all their comfort ruined by the emptying of the earth, and the making of that desolate, yet there are some few who understand their interests better, who have laid up their treasure in heaven and not in things below, and therefore can keep up their comfort and joy in God even *when the earth mourns and fades away.* Observe,

I. The small number of this remnant, *v. 13.* When all goes to ruin *there shall be as the shaking of an olive-tree, and the gleaning grapes,* here and there one who shall escape the common calamity (as Noah and his family when the old world was drowned), that shall be able to sit down upon a heap of the ruins of all their creature comforts, and even then rejoice in the Lord (*Hab. iii. 16—18*), who, when all faces gather blackness, can lift up their heads with joy, *Luke xxi. 26, 28.* These few are dispersed, and at a distance from each other, like the gleanings of the olive-tree; and they are concealed, hid under the leaves. The Lord only knows those that are his; the world does not.

II. The great devotion of this remnant, which is the greater for their having so narrowly escaped this great destruction (*v. 14*): *They shall lift up their voice; they shall sing.* 1. They shall sing for joy in their deliverance. When the mirth of carnal worldlings ceases the joy of the saints is as lively as ever; when the merry-hearted do sigh because the vine languishes the upright-hearted do sing because the covenant of grace, the fountain of their comforts and the foundation of their hopes, never fails. Those that rejoice in the Lord can rejoice in tribulation, and by faith may be in triumphs when all about them are in tears. 2. They shall sing to the glory and praise of God, shall sing not only for the mercy but *for the majesty of the Lord.* Their songs are awful and serious, and in their spiritual joys they have a reverend regard to the greatness of God, and keep at a humble distance when they attend him with their praises. The majesty of the Lord, which is matter of terror to wicked people, furnishes the saints with songs of praise. They shall sing for the magnificence, or transcendent excellency, of the Lord, shown both in his judgments and in his mercies; for we must sing, and sing unto him, of both, *Ps. ci. 1.* Those

who have made, or are making, their escape from the land (that being emptied and made desolate) to the sea and the isles of the sea shall thence cry aloud; their dispersion shall help to spread the knowledge of God and they shall make even remote shores to ring with his praises. It is much for the honour of God if those who fear him rejoice in him, and praise him, even in the most melancholy times.

III. Their holy zeal to excite others to the same devotion (*v. 15*); they encourage their fellow-sufferers to do likewise. 1. Those who are *in the fires*, in the furnace of affliction, those fires by which the *inhabitants of the earth are burned*, *v. 6.* Or in the valleys the low, dark, dirty places. 2. Those who are *in the isles of the sea*, whether they are banished, or are forced to flee for shelter and hide themselves remote from all their friends. They went *through fire and water* (*Ps. lvi. 12*); yet in both let them glorify the Lord, and glorify him as the Lord God of Israel. Those who through grace carry glory in tribulation ought to glorify God in tribulation, and give him thanks for their comforts, which abound as their affliction do abound. We must in every fire, even the hottest, in every isle, even the remotest keep up our good thoughts of God. Where though he slay us, yet we trust in him—when, though for his sake we are killed a day long, yet none of these things move us—then we glorify the Lord in the fire. Thus the three children, and the martyr that sang at the stake.

16 From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs, *even* glory to the righteous. But I said, My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me! The treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously; yea, the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously. 17 Fear, and the pit, and the snare, *are* upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth. 18 And it shall come to pass, *that* he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake. 19 The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. 20 The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard and shall be removed like a cottage and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall and not rise again. 21 And it shall

come to pass in that day, *that* the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones *that are* on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. 2 And they shall be gathered together, *as* prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited. 23 Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun shamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.

These verses, as those before, plainly speak,

I. Comfort to saints. They may be driven, by the common calamities of the places where they live, into *the uttermost parts of the earth*, or perhaps they are forced thither for their religion; but there they are singing, not sighing. Thence have we heard songs, and it is a comfort to us to hear them, to hear that good people carry their religion along with them even to the most distant regions, to hear that God visits them there and gives encouragement to hope that he will gather them thence, Deut. xxx. 4. And this is their song, *even glory to the righteous*: the word is singular, and may refer to the *righteous God*, who is just in all that has brought upon us. This is glorifying the Lord in the fires. Or the meaning may be, "These songs redound to the glory or beauty of the righteous that sing them." We owe the greatest honour imaginable to ourselves when we employ ourselves in honouring and glorifying God. This may have reference to the sending of the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth, as far off as this land of ours, in the days of the Messiah, the glad tidings of which are echoed back in songs heard thence, from churches planted there, even glory to the righteous God, agreeing with the angels' song, *Glory be to God in the highest*, and glory to all righteous men; for the work of redemption was ordained before the world for our glory.

II. Terror to sinners. The prophet, having comforted himself and others with the prospect of a saved remnant, returns to lament the miseries he saw breaking in like a mighty torrent upon the earth: "*But I will, My leanness! my leanness! woe unto me!*" The very thought of it frets me, and makes me lean," v. 16. He foresees,

1. The prevalence of sin, that iniquity should abound (v. 16): *The treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously*; this is itself judgment, and that which provokes God to bring other judgments. (1.) Men are false to one another; there is no faith in man, but a universal dishonesty. Truth, that sacred bond of society, has departed,

and there is nothing but treachery in men's dealings. See Jer. ix. 1, 2. (2.) They are all false to their God; as to him, and their covenant with him, the children of men are all treacherous dealers, and have dealt very treacherously with their God, in departing from their allegiance to him. This is the original, and this the aggravation, of the sin of the world; and, when men have been false to their God, how should they be true to any other?

2. The prevalence of wrath and judgment for that sin. (1.) The inhabitants of the earth will be pursued from time to time, from place to place, by one mischief or other (v. 17, 18): *Fear, and the pit, and the snare* (fear of the pit and the snare) are upon them wherever they are; for the sons of men know not what evil they may suddenly be snared in, Eccl. ix. 12. These three words seem to be chosen for the sake of an elegant paranomasia, or, as we now scornfully call it, a jingle of words: *Pachad, and Pachath, and Pach*; but the meaning is plain (v. 18), that *evil pursues sinners* (Prov. xiii. 21), that the curse shall overtake the disobedient (Deut. xxviii. 15), that those who are secure because they have escaped one judgment know not how soon another may arrest them. What this prophet threatens all the inhabitants of the earth with another makes part of the judgment of Moab, Jer. xlviii. 43, 44. But it is a common instance of the calamitous state of human life that when we seek to avoid one mischief we fall into a worse, and that the end of one trouble is often the beginning of another; so that we are least safe when we are most secure. (2.) The earth itself will be shaken to pieces. It will be literally so at last, when all the *works therein shall be burnt up*; and it is often figuratively so before that period. *The windows from on high are open* to pour down wrath, as in the universal deluge. *Upon the wicked God shall rain snares* (Ps. xi. 6); and, the fountains of the great deep being broken up, *the foundations of the earth do shake* of course, the frame of nature is unhinged, and all is in confusion. See how elegantly this is expressed (v. 19, 20): *The earth is utterly broken down; it is clean dissolved; it is moved exceedingly*, moved out of its place. *God shakes heaven and earth*, Hag. ii. 6. See the misery of those who lay up their treasure in the things of the earth and mind those things; they place their confidence in that which will shortly be *utterly broken down and dissolved*. *The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard*; so unsteady, so uncertain, are all the motions of these things. Worldly men dwell in it as in a palace, as in a castle, as in an impregnable tower; but *it shall be removed like a cottage*, so easily, so suddenly, and with so little loss to the great landlord. The pulling down of the earth will be but like the pulling down of a

cottage, which the country is willing to be rid of, because it does but harbour beggars; and therefore no care is taken to rebuild it: *It shall fall, and not rise again*; but there shall be new heavens and a new earth, in which shall dwell nothing but righteousness. But what is it that shakes the earth thus and sinks it? It is the transgression thereof that shall be heavy upon it. Note, Sin is a burden to the whole creation: it is a heavy burden, a burden under which it groans now and will sink at last. Sin is the ruin of states, and kingdoms, and families; they fall under the weight of that *talent of lead*, Zech. v 7, 8. (3.) God will have a particular controversy with the kings and great men of the earth (v. 21): *He will punish the host of the high ones*. Hosts of princes are no more before God than hosts of common men; what can a host of high ones do with their combined force when the Most High, the Lord of hosts, contends with them to abase their height, and scatter their hosts, and break all their confederacies? The high ones, that are on high, that are puffed up with their height and grandeur, that think themselves so high that they are out of the reach of any danger, God will visit upon them all their pride and cruelty, with which they have oppressed and injured their neighbours and subjects, and it shall now return upon their own heads. *The kings of the earth* shall now be reckoned with *upon the earth*, to show that verily there is a God that judges in the earth and will render to the proudest of kings according to the fruit of their doings. Let those that are trampled upon by the high ones of the earth comfort themselves with this, that though they cannot, dare not, must not, resist them, yet there is a God that will call them to an account, that will triumph over them upon their own dunghill: for the earth they are kings of is in the eye of God no better. This is general only. It is particularly foretold (v. 22) that they shall be *gathered together as prisoners*, convicted condemned prisoners, are *gathered in the pit*, or dungeon, and there they shall be *shut up* under close confinement. The kings and high ones, who took all possible liberty themselves, and took a pride and pleasure in shutting up others, shall now be themselves shut up. Let not the free man glory in his freedom, any more than the strong man in his strength, for he knows not what restraints he is reserved for. But *after many days they shall be visited*, either, [1.] They shall be visited in wrath; it is the same word, in another form, that is used (v. 21), *the Lord shall punish them*; they shall be reserved to the day of execution, as condemned prisoners are, and as fallen angels are *reserved in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day*, Jude 6. Let this account for the delays of divine vengeance; sentence is not executed speedily, because execution-day has not yet come, and

perhaps will not come till after many days; but it is certain that the wicked is reserved for the day of destruction, and is therefore preserved in the mean time, but *shall be brought forth to the day of wrath*, Job xxi. 30. Let us therefore judge nothing before the time. [2.] They shall be visited in mercy, and be discharged from their imprisonment, and shall again obtain, if not their dignity, yet their liberty. Nebuchadnezzar, in his conquests, made many kings and princes his captives, and kept them in the dungeon in Babylon, and, among the rest, Jehoiachin king of Judah; but after many days, when Nebuchadnezzar's head was laid, his son visited them, and granted (as should seem) some reviving to them all in their bondage; for it is made an instance of his particular kindness to Jehoiachin that *he set his throne above the throne of the rest of the kings that were with him*, Jer. lii. 33. If we apply this to the general state of mankind, it imports a revolution of conditions: those that were high are punished, those that were punished are relieved, after many days, that none in this world may be secure though their condition be ever so prosperous, nor any despair though their condition be ever so deplorable.

3. Glory to God in all this, v. 23. When all this comes to pass, when the proud enemies of God's church are humbled and brought down, (1.) Then it shall appear beyond contradiction, that the Lord reigns, which is always true, but not always alike evident. When the kings of the earth are punished for their tyranny and oppression then it is proclaimed and proved to all the world that God is King of kings—King above them, by whom they are conquerable—King over them, to whom they are accountable—that he reigns as *Lord of hosts*, of all hosts, of their hosts,—that he reigns in *Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem*, in his church for the honour and welfare of that, pursuant to the promises on which that is founded: he reigns in his word and ordinances,—that he reigns *before his ancients*, before all his saints, especially before his ministers, the elders of his church, who have their eyes upon all the out-goings of his power and providence, and, in all these events, observe his hand. God's ancients, the old disciples, the experienced Christians, that have often when they have been perplexed, gone into the sanctuary of God in Zion and Jerusalem and acquainted themselves with his manifestations of himself there, shall see more than others of God's dominion and sovereignty in these operations of his providence. (2.) Then it shall appear, beyond comparison, that he reigns *gloriously*, in such brightness and lustre that *the moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed*, as the smaller lights are eclipsed and extinguished by the greater. Great men, who thought themselves to have as bright a lustre and as vast

dominion as the sun and moon, shall be shamed when God appears above them, much more when he appears against them. When shall their faces be filled with shame, that they may seek God's name. The eastern nations worshipped the sun and moon; but, when God shall appear so gloriously for his people against his and their enemies, all these pretended deities shall be shamed that ever they received the homage of their deluded worshippers. The glory of the Creator infinitely outshines the glory of the brightest creatures. In the great day, when the Judge of heaven and earth shall shine forth in his glory, the sun shall by his transcendent lustre be turned into darkness and the moon into blood.

CHAP. XXV.

After the threatenings of wrath in the foregoing chapter we have here, I. Thankful praises for what God had done, which the prophet, in the name of the church, offers up to God, and teaches us to offer the like, ver. 1—5. II. Precious promises of what God would yet further do for his church, especially in the grace of the gospel, ver. 6—8. III. The church's triumph in God over her enemies hereupon, ver. 9—12. This chapter looks as pleasantly upon the church as the former looked dreadfully upon the world.

O LORD, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth. 2 For thou hast made of a city an heap; of a defended city a ruin: a palace of strangers to no city; it shall never be built. Therefore shall the strong people glorify thee, the city of the terrible nations shall fear thee. 4 For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall. 5 Thou shalt bring down the voice of strangers, as the heat in a dry place; even the heat with the shadow of a cloud: the branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low.

It is said in the close of the foregoing chapter that the Lord of hosts shall reign gloriously; now, in compliance with this, the prophet here speaks of the glorious majesty of his kingdom (Ps. cxlv. 12), and gives him the glory of it; and, however this prophecy might have an accomplishment in the destruction of Babylon and the deliverance of the Jews out of their captivity there, it seems to look rather, to the praises that should be offered to God by the gospel church for Christ's victories over our spiritual enemies and the comforts he has provided for all believers.

I. The prophet determines to praise God himself; for those that would stir up others should in the first place stir up themselves

to praise God (v. 1): "*O Lord! thou art my God, a God in covenant with me.*" When God is punishing the kings of the earth upon the earth, and making them to tremble before him, a poor prophet can go to him, and, with a humble boldness, say, *O Lord! thou art my God, and therefore I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name.* Those that have the Lord for their God are bound to praise him; for therefore he took us to be his people that we might be unto him for a name and for a praise, Jer. xiii. 11. In praising God we exalt him; not that we can make him higher than he is, but we must make him to appear to ourselves and others higher than he does. See Exod. xv. 2.

II. He pleases himself with the thought that others also shall be brought to praise God, v. 3. "*Therefore, because of the desolations thou hast made in the earth by thy providence (Ps. xlv. 8) and the just vengeance thou hast taken on thy and thy church's enemies, therefore shall the strong people glorify thee in concert, and the city (the metropolis) of the terrible nations (or the cities of such nations) shall fear thee.*" This may be understood, 1. Of those people that have been strong and terrible against God. Those that have been enemies to God's kingdom, and have fought against the interests of it with a great deal of strength and terror, shall either be converted, and glorify God by joining with his people in his service, or at least convinced, so as to own themselves conquered. Those that have been the terror of the mighty shall be forced to tremble before the judgments of God and call in vain to rocks and mountains to hide them. Or, 2. Of those that shall be now made strong and terrible for God and by him, though before they were weak and trampled upon. God shall so visibly appear for and with those that fear him and glorify him that all shall acknowledge them a strong people and shall stand in awe of them. There was a time when many of the people of the land became Jews, for the fear of the Jews fell upon them (Esther viii. 17), and when those that knew their God were strong and did exploits (Dan. xi. 32), for which they glorified God.

III. He observes what is, and ought to be, the matter of this praise. We and others must exalt God and praise him; for, 1. He has done wonders, according to the counsel of his own will, v. 1. We exalt God by admiring what he has done as truly wonderful, wonderful proofs of his power beyond what any creature could perform, and wonderful proofs of his goodness beyond what such sinful creatures as we are could expect. These wonderful things, which are new and surprising to us, and altogether unthought of, are according to his counsels of old, devised by his wisdom and designed for his own glory and the comfort of his people. All the operations of providence are according to God's eternal counsels (and those faithful-

ness and truth itself), all consonant to his attributes, consistent with one another, and sure to be accomplished in their season. 2. He has in particular humbled the pride, and broken the power, of the mighty ones of the earth (v. 2): "*Thou hast made of a city, of many a city, a heap of rubbish. Of many a defended city, that thought itself well guarded by nature and art, and the multitude and courage of its militia, thou hast made a ruin.*" What created strength can hold out against Omnipotence? "Many a city so richly built that it might be called a *palace*, and so much frequented and visited by persons of the best rank from all parts that it might be called a *palace of strangers*, thou hast made to be no city; it is levelled with the ground, and not one stone left upon another, and it shall never be built again." This has been the case of many cities in divers parts of the world, and in our own nation particularly; cities that flourished once have gone to decay and are lost, and it is scarcely known (except by urns or coins dug up out of the earth) where they stood. How many of the cities of Israel have long since been heaps and ruins! God hereby teaches us that *here we have no continuing city* and must therefore seek one to come which will never be a ruin or go to decay. 3. He has seasonably relieved and succoured his necessitous and distressed people (v. 4): "*Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy.*" As God weakens the strong that are proud and secure, so he strengthens the weak that are humble and serious, and stay themselves upon him. Nay, he not only makes them strong, but he is himself their strength; for in him they strengthen themselves, and it is his favour that is the *strength of their hearts*. He is a *strength to the needy in his distress*, when he needs strength, and when his distress drives him to God. And, as he strengthens them against their inward decays, so he shelters them from outward assaults. He is a *refuge from the storm* of rain or hail, and a *shadow from the scorching heat* of the sun in summer. God is a sufficient protection to his people in all weathers, hot and cold, wet and dry. The armour of righteousness serves both *on the right hand and on the left*, 2 Cor. vi. 7. Whatever dangers or troubles God's people may be in, effectual care is taken that they shall sustain no real hurt or damage. When perils are most threatening and alarming God will then appear for the safety of his people: "*When the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall, which makes a great noise, but cannot overthrow the wall.*" The enemies of God's poor are terrible ones; they do all they can to make themselves so to them. Their rage is like a blast of wind, loud, and blustering, and furious; but, like the wind, it is under a divine check; for God *holds the winds in his fist*, and God will be such a shelter to his people that they shall

be able to stand the shock, keep their ground and maintain their integrity and peace. storm beating on a ship tosses it, but the which beats on a wall never stirs it, Ps. lxxix. 10; cxxxviii. 7. 4. That he does and will shelter those that trust in him from the insolence of their proud oppressors (v. 5): "*Thou shalt, thou dost, bring down the noise of strangers; thou shalt abate and still it, as the noise in a dry place is abated and moderated by the shadow of a cloud* interposing. The *bravado* or rather the song or triumph, of the *terrible ones* shall be brought low, and they shall be made to change their note and lower their voice. Observe here, (1.) The oppressors God's people are called *strangers*; for they forget that those they oppress are made of the same mould, of the same blood, with them. They are called *terrible ones*; for they affect to be, rather than amiable ones, they would rather be feared than loved. (2.) Their insolence towards the people of God is noisy and hot, and that is all; it is but the noise of strangers, who think to carry the point by hectoring and bullying all that stand in their way, and talking big. *Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise*, Jer. xli. 1. It is like the heat of the sun scorching in the middle of the day; but where is it when the sun has set? (3.) Their noise, and heat, and their triumph, will be humbled and brought low, when their hopes are baffled and their honours laid in the dust. The branches, even the top branches, of the *terrible ones*, will be broken off, and thrown to the dunghill. (4.) If the labourers in God's vineyard be at any time called to *bear the burden and heat of the day*, he will find some way or other to refresh them, as with the shadow of a cloud, that they may not be oppressed above measure.

6 And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. 7 And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. 8 He will swallow up death in victory; and the LORD God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it.

If we suppose (as many do) that this refers to the great joy which there should be in Zion and Jerusalem when the army of the Assyrians was routed by an angel, when the Jews were released out of the captivity in Babylon, or upon occasion of some other equally surprising deliverance, yet we cannot avoid making it to look

urther, to the grace of the gospel and the glory which is the crown and consummation of that grace; for it is at our resurrection through Christ that the saying here written *shall be brought to pass*; then, and not till then (if we may believe St. Paul), it shall have its full accomplishment: *Death is swallowed up in victory*, 1 Cor. xv. 54. This is a key to the rest of the promises here connected together. And so we have here a prophecy of the salvation and the grace brought unto us by Jesus Christ, into which the prophets enquired and searched diligently, 1 Pet. i. 10.

I. That the grace of the gospel should be a royal feast for all people; not like that of Ahasuerus, which was intended only to show the grandeur of the master of the feast (Esther i. 4); for this is intended to gratify the guests, and therefore, whereas all *here* was for show, all *here* is for substance. The preparations made in the gospel for the kind reception of penitents and supplicants with God are often in the New Testament set forth by the similitude of a feast, as Matt. xxii. 1. &c., which seems to be borrowed from this prophecy. 1. God himself is the Master of the feast, and we may be sure he prepares like himself, as becomes him to give, rather than as becomes us to receive. *The Lord of hosts* makes this feast. 2. The guests invited are *all people*, Gentiles as well as Jews. *Go preach the gospel to every creature*. There is enough for all, and whoever will may come, and partake freely, even those that are gathered out of the highways and the hedges: 3. The place is *Mount Zion*. Thence the preaching of the gospel takes rise: the preachers must begin at Jerusalem. The gospel church is the Jerusalem that is above; there this feast is made, and to it all the invited guests must go. 4. The provision is very rich, and every thing is of the best. It is a *feast*, which supposes abundance and variety; it is a continual feast to believers, it is their own fault if it be not. It is a *feast of fat things and full of marrow*; so relishing, so nourishing, are the comforts of the gospel to all those that feast upon them and digest them. The returning prodigal was entertained with the fatted calf; and David has that pleasure in communion with God with which his soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness. It is a *feast of wines on the lees*, the strongest-bodied wines, that have been kept long upon the lees, and then are well refined from them, so that they are clear and fine. There is that in the gospel which, like wine properly used, makes glad the heart and raises the spirits, and is fit for those that are of a heavy heart, being under convictions of sin and mourning for it, that they may drink and forget their misery (for that the proper use of wine—it is a cordial for those that need it, Prov. xxxi. 6, 7), may

be of good cheer, knowing that their sins are forgiven, and may be vigorous in their spiritual work and warfare, as a strong man refreshed with wine.

II. That the world should be freed from that darkness of ignorance and mistake in the mists of which it had been so long lost and buried (v. 7): *He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering* (the covering of the face) with which all people are covered (hood-winked or blind-folded) so that they cannot see their way nor go about their work, and by reason of which they wander endlessly. Their faces are covered as those of men condemned, or dead men. There is a *veil spread over all nations*, for they all sit in darkness; and no marvel, when the Jews themselves, among whom *God was known*, had a *veil upon their hearts*, 2 Cor. iii. 15. But this veil the Lord will destroy, by the light of his gospel shining in the world, and the power of his Spirit opening men's eyes to receive it. He will raise those to spiritual life that have long been dead in trespasses and sins.

III. That death should be conquered, the power of it broken, and the property of it altered: *He will swallow up death in victory*, v. 8. 1. Christ will himself, in his resurrection, triumph over death, will break its bands, its bars, asunder, and cast away all its cords. The grave seemed to swallow him up, but really he swallowed it up. 2. The happiness of the saints shall be out of the reach of death, which puts a period to all the enjoyments of this world, embitters them, and stains the beauty of them. 3. Believers may triumph over death, and look upon it as a conquered enemy: *O death! where is thy sting?* 4. When the dead bodies of the saints shall be raised at the great day, and their mortality swallowed up of life, then death will be for ever swallowed up of victory; and it is the last enemy.

IV. That grief shall be banished, and there shall be perfect and endless joy: *The Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces*. Those that mourn for sin shall be comforted and have their consciences pacified. In the covenant of grace there shall be that provided which is sufficient to counterbalance all the sorrows of this present time, to wipe away our tears, and to refresh us. Those particularly that suffer for Christ shall have consolations abounding as their afflictions do abound. But in the joys of heaven, and nowhere short of them, will fully be *brought to pass this saying*, as that before, for there it is that God shall *wipe away all tears*, Rev. vii. 17; xxi. 4. And *there shall be no more sorrow*, because *there shall be no more death*. The hope of this should now wipe away all excessive tears, all the weeping that hinders sowing.

V. That all the reproach cast upon religion and the serious professors of it shall be for ever rolled away: *The rebuke of his*

people, which they have long lain under, the calumnies and misrepresentations by which they have been blackened, the insolence and cruelty with which their persecutors have trampled on them and trodden them down, *shall be taken away*. Their righteousness shall be brought forth as the light, in the view of all the world, who shall be convinced that they are not such as they have been invidiously characterized; and so their salvation from the injuries done them as such shall be wrought out. Sometimes in this world God does that for his people which *takes away their reproach from among men*. However, it will be done effectually at the great day; for the Lord has spoken it, who can, and will, make it good. Let us patiently bear sorrow and shame now, and improve both; for shortly both will be done away.

9 And it shall be said in that day, Lo, *this is our God*; we have waited for him, and he will save us: *this is the LORD*; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. 10 For in this mountain shall the hand of the LORD rest, and Moab shall be trodden down under him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill. 11 And he shall spread forth his hands in the midst of them, as he that swimmeth spreadeth forth *his hands* to swim: and he shall bring down their pride together with the spoils of their hands. 12 And the fortress of the high fort of thy walls shall he bring down, lay low, and bring to the ground, *even to the dust*.

Here is, I. The welcome which the church shall give to these blessings promised in the foregoing verses (v. 9): *It shall be said in that day, with a humble holy triumph and exultation, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him!* Thus will the deliverance of the church out of long and sore troubles be celebrated; thus will it be as life from the dead. With such transports of joy and praise will those entertain the glad tidings of the Redeemer who looked for him, and for redemption in Jerusalem by him; and with such a triumphant song as this will glorified saints enter into the joy of their Lord. 1. God himself must have the glory of all: "*Lo, this is our God, this is the Lord*." This which is done is his doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. Herein he has done like himself, has magnified his own wisdom, power, and goodness. Herein he has done for us like our God, a God in covenant with us, and whom we serve." Note, Our triumphs must not terminate in

what God does for us and gives to us, but must pass through them to himself, who is the author and giver of them: *This is our God*. Have any of the nations of the earth such a God to trust to? No, *their rock is not as our rock. There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun*. 2. The longer it has been expected the more welcome it is. "*This is he whom we have waited for, in dependence upon his word of promise, and a full assurance that he would come in the season, in due time, and therefore we were willing to tarry his time; and now we find it is not in vain to wait for him, for the mercy comes at last, with an abundant recompence for the delay*." 3. It is matter of joy unspeakable: "*We will be glad and rejoice in his salvation*." We that share in the benefits of it will concur in the joyful thanksgivings for it." 4. It is an encouragement to hope for the continuance and perfection of this salvation: *We have waited for him, and he will save us*, will carry on what he has begun; for as for God, our God, *his work is perfect*.

II. A prospect of further blessings for the securing and perpetuating of these. 1. The power of God shall be engaged for them and shall continue to take their part. *In this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest*, v. 10. The church and people of God shall have continued proofs of God's presence with them and residence among them; his hand shall be continually over them, to protect and guard them, and continually stretched out to them, for their supply. Mount Zion is *his rest for ever*; here he will dwell. 2. The power of their enemies which is engaged against them, shall be broken. Moab is here put for all the adversaries of God's people, that are vexatious to them; they shall all be trodden down and threshed (for then they beat out the corn by treading it) and shall be thrown out as straw to the dunghill, being good for nothing else. God having caused his hand to rest upon this mountain, it shall not be a hand that hangs down, or is folded up, feeble and inactive; but he shall spread forth his hands, in the midst of his people, like one that swims, which intimates that he will employ and exert his power for them vigorously,—that he will be doing for them on all sides,—that he will easily and effectually put by the opposition that is given to his gracious intentions for them, and thereby further and push forward his good work among them,—and that on their behalf he will be continually active, for so the swimmer is. It is foretold, particularly, what he shall do for them. (1.) *He shall bring down the pride of their enemies* (and Moab was notoriously guilty of pride, ch. xvi. 6) by a humbling judgment after another, stripping them of that which they are proud of. (2.) *He shall bring down the spoils of their hands*, shall take from them that which they have

got by spoil and rapine. He shall bring down the arms of their hands, which are lifted up against God's Israel; he shall quite break their power, and disable them to do mischief. (3.) He shall ruin all their fortifications, *v.* 12. Moab has his walls, and his high forts, with which he hopes to secure himself, and from which he designs to annoy the people of God; but God shall bring them all down, lay them low, bring them to the ground, to the dust; and so those who trusted to them will be left exposed. There is no fortress impregnable to Omnipotence, no fort so high but the arm of the Lord can overtop it and bring it down. This destruction of Moab is typical of Christ's victory over death (spoken of *v.* 8), his spoiling principalities and powers in his cross (Col. ii. 15), his pulling down Satan's strong-holds by the preaching of his gospel (2 Cor. x. 4), and his reigning till all his enemies be made his footstool, Ps. cx. 1.

CHAP. XXVI.

This chapter is a song of holy joy and praise, in which the great things God had engaged, in the foregoing chapter, to do for his people against his enemies and their enemies are celebrated: it is prepared to be sung when that prophecy should be accomplished; for we must be forward to meet God with our thanksgivings when he is coming towards us with his mercies. Now the people of God are here taught, I. To triumph in the safety and holy security both of the church in general and of every particular member of it, under the divine protection, *ver.* 1-4. II. To triumph over all opposing powers, *ver.* 5, 6. III. To walk with God, and wait for him, in the worst and darkest times, *ver.* 7-9. IV. To lament the stupidity of those who regarded not the providence of God, either merciful or afflictive, *ver.* 10, 11. V. To encourage themselves, and one another, with hopes that God would still continue to do them good (*ver.* 12, 14), and engage themselves to continue in his service, *ver.* 13. VI. To recollect the kind providences of God towards them in their low and distressed condition, and their conduct under those providences, *ver.* 15-18. VII. To rejoice in hope of a glorious deliverance, which should be as a resurrection to them (*ver.* 19), and to retire in the expectation of it, *ver.* 20, 21. And this is written for the support and assistance of the faith and hope of God's people in all ages, even those upon whom the ends of the world have come.

In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. 2 Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in. 3 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. 4 Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength.

To the prophecies of gospel grace very fitly is a song annexed, in which we may give God the glory and take to ourselves the comfort of that grace: *In that day*, the gospel day, which the day of the victories and enlargements of the Old-Testament church was typical of (to some of which perhaps this has a primary reference), *in that day this song shall be sung*; there shall be persons to sing it, and cause and hearts to sing it; it shall be sung in the land of Judah, which was a figure of the gospel church; for the gospel covenant is said to

be made with the house of Judah, Heb. viii. 8. Glorious things are here said of the church of God.

I. That it is strongly fortified against those that are bad (*v.* 1): *We have a strong city*. It is a city incorporated by the charter of the everlasting covenant, fitted for the reception of all that are made free by that charter, for their employment and entertainment; it is a strong city, as Jerusalem was, while it was a city compact together, and had God himself a wall of fire round about it, so strong that none would have believed that an enemy could ever enter into the gates of Jerusalem, Lam. iv. 12. The church is a strong city, for it has walls and bulwarks, or counterscarps, and those of God's own appointing; for he has, in his promise, appointed salvation itself to be its defence. Those that are designed for salvation will find that to be their protection, 1 Pet. i. 4.

II. That it is richly replenished with those that are good, and they are instead of fortifications to it; for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, if they are such as they should be, are its strength, Zech. xii. 5. The gates are here ordered to be opened, *that the righteous nation, which keeps the truth, may enter in*, *v.* 2. They had been banished and driven out by the iniquity of the former times, but now the laws that were made against them are repealed, and they have liberty to enter in again. Or, There is an act for a general naturalization of all the righteous, whatever nation they are of, encouraging them to come and settle in Jerusalem. When God has done great things for any place or people he expects that thus they should render according to the benefit done unto them; they should be kind to his people, and take them under their protection and into their bosom. Note, 1. It is the character of righteous men that they keep the truths of God, a firm belief of which will have a commanding influence upon the regularity of the whole conversation. Good principles fixed in the head will produce good resolutions in the heart and good practices in the life. 2. It is the interest of states to countenance such, and court them among them, for they bring a blessing with them.

III. That all who belong to it are safe and easy, and have a holy security and serenity of mind in the assurance of God's favour. 1. This is here the matter of a promise (*v.* 3): *Thou wilt keep him in peace, peace, in perfect peace, inward peace, outward peace, peace with God, peace of conscience, peace at all times, under all events*; this peace shall be put into, and kept in the possession of, *whose mind is stayed upon God, because it trusts in him*. It is the character of every good man that he trusts in God, puts himself under his guidance and government, and depends upon

him that it shall be greatly to his advantage to do so. Those that trust in God must have their minds stayed upon him, must trust him at all times, under all events, must firmly and faithfully adhere to him, with an entire satisfaction in him; and such as do so God will keep in perpetual peace, and that peace shall keep them. When evil tidings are abroad *those* shall calmly expect the event, and not be disturbed by frightful apprehensions arising from them, whose hearts are *fixed, trusting in the Lord*, Ps. cxii. 7. 2. It is the matter of a precept (v. 4): "Let us make ourselves easy by *trusting in the Lord for ever*; since God has promised peace to those that stay themselves upon him, let us not lose the benefit of that promise, but repose an entire confidence in him. Trust in him for ever, at all times, when you have nothing else to trust to; trust in him for that peace, that portion, which will be for ever." Whatever we trust to the world for, it will be but for a moment: all we expect from it is confined within the limits of time. But what we trust in God for will last as long as we shall last. For in the *Lord Jehovah—Jah, Jehovah*, in him who was, and is, and is to come, there is a rock of ages, a firm and lasting foundation for faith and hope to build upon; and the house built on that rock will stand in a storm. Those that trust in God shall not only find in him, but receive *from him, everlasting strength*, strength that will carry them to everlasting life, to that blessedness which is for ever; and therefore let them trust in him for ever, and never cast away nor change their confidence.

5 For he bringeth down them that dwell on high; the lofty city, he layeth it low; he layeth it low, *even* to the ground; he bringeth it *even* to the dust. 6 The foot shall tread it down, *even* the feet of the poor, *and* the steps of the needy. 7 The way of the just *is* uprightness: thou, most upright, dost weigh the path of the just. 8 Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for thee; the desire of *our* soul *is* to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. 9 With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments *are* in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. 10 Let favour be showed to the wicked, *yet* will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the

majesty of the LORD. 11 LORD, *when* thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: *but* they shall see, and be ashamed for *their* envy at the people; yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them.

Here the prophet further encourages us to trust in the Lord for ever, and to continue waiting on him; for,

I. He will make humble souls that trust in him to triumph over their proud enemies, v. 5, 6. Those that exalt themselves shall be abased: For he *brings down those that dwell on high*; and wherein they deal proudly he is, and will be, above them. Even the lofty city Babylon itself, or Nineveh, he lays it low, ch. xxv. 12. He can do it, be it ever so well fortified. He has often done it. He will do it, for he resists the proud. It is his glory to do it, for he proves himself to be God by *looking on the proud and abasing them*, Job xl. 12. But, on the contrary, those that humble themselves shall be exalted; for *the feet of the poor* shall tread upon the lofty cities, v. 6. He does not say, Great armies shall tread them down; but, When God will have it done, even the feet of the poor shall do it, Mal. iv. 3. *You shall tread down the wicked. Come, set your feet on the necks of these kings.* See Ps. cxlvii. 6; Rom. xvi. 20.

II. He takes cognizance of the way of his people and has delight in it (v. 7): *The way of the just is evenness* (so it may be read): it is their endeavour and constant care to walk with God in an even steady course of obedience and holy conversation. *My foot stands in an even place*, goes in an even path, Ps. xxvi. 12. And it is their happiness that God makes their way plain and easy before them: *Thou, most upright, dost level (or make even) the path of the just*, by preventing or removing those things that would be stumbling-blocks to them, so that nothing shall offend them, Ps. cxix. 165. God *weighs* it (so we read it); he considers it, and will give them grace sufficient for them, to help them over all the difficulties they may meet with in their way. Thus with the upright God will show himself upright.

III. It is our duty, and will be our comfort, to wait for God, and to keep up holy desires towards him in the darkest and most discouraging times, v. 8, 9. This has always been the practice of God's people, even when God has frowned upon them, 1. To keep up a constant dependence upon him: "*In the way of thy judgments we have still waited for thee*; when thou hast corrected us we have looked to no other hand than thine to relieve us," as the servant looks only to the hand of his master, till he have mercy upon him, Ps. cxxiii. 2. We cannot appeal from God's justice but to his mercy. If God's judgments continue long, if it be a

road of judgments (so the word signifies), yet we must not be weary but continue waiting. 2. To send up holy desires towards him. Our troubles, how pressing soever, must never put us out of conceit with our religion, nor turn us away from God; but still *the desire of our soul must be to his name and to the remembrance of him*; and in the night, the darkest longest night of affliction, *with our souls must we desire him*. (1.) Our great concern must be for God's name, and our earnest desire must be that his name may be glorified, whatever becomes of us and our names. This is that which we must wait for, and pray for. "*Father, glorify thy name, and we are satisfied.*" (2.) Our great comfort must be in the remembrance of that name, of all that whereby God has made himself known. The remembrance of God must be our great support and pleasure; and, though sometimes we be unmindful of him, yet still our desire must be towards the remembrance of him and we must take pains with our own hearts to have him always in mind. (3.) Our desires towards God must be inward, fervent, and sincere. With our soul we must desire him, with our soul we must pant after him (Ps. xlii. 1), and with our spirits within us, with the innermost thought and the closest application of mind, we must seek him. We make nothing of our religion, whatever our profession be, if we do not make heart-work of it. (4.) Even in the darkest night of affliction our desires must be towards God, as our sun and shield; for, however God is pleased to deal with us, we must never think the worse of him, nor cool in our love to him. (5.) If our desires be indeed towards God, we must give evidence that they are so by seeking him, and seeking him early, as those that desire to find him, and dread the thoughts of missing him. Those that would seek God and find him must seek betimes, and seek him earnestly. Though we come ever so early, we shall find him ready to receive us.

IV. It is God's gracious design, in sending abroad his judgments, thereby to bring men to seek him and serve him: *When thy judgments are upon the earth*, laying all waste, then we have reason to expect that not only God's professing people, but even *the inhabitants of the world, will learn righteousness*, will have their mistakes rectified and their lives reformed, will be brought to acknowledge God's righteousness in punishing them, will repent of their own unrighteousness in offending God, and so be brought to walk in right paths. They will do this; that is, judgments are designed to bring them to this, they have a natural tendency to produce this effect, and, though many continue obstinate, yet some even of the inhabitants of the world will profit by this discipline, and will learn righteousness: surely they will; they are strangely stupid if they do

not. Note, The intention of afflictions is to teach us righteousness; and blessed is the man whom God chastens, and thus teaches, Ps. xciv. 12. *Discite justitiam, moniti, et non temnere divos*—*Let this rebuke teach you to cultivate righteousness, and cease from despising the gods.*—Virgil.

V. Those are wicked indeed that will not be wrought upon by the favourable methods God takes to subdue and reform them; and it is necessary that God should deal with them in a severe way by his judgments, which shall prevail to humble those that would not otherwise be humbled. Observe,

1. How sinners walk contrary to God, and refuse to comply with the means used for their reformation and to answer the intentions of them, v. 10. (1.) *Favour is shown to them*. They receive many mercies from God; he causes his sun to shine and his rain to fall upon them, nay, he prospers them, and into their hands he brings plentifully; they escape many of the strokes of God's judgments, which others less wicked than they have been cut off by; in some particular instances they seem to be remarkably favoured above their neighbours, and the design of all this is that they may be won upon to love and serve that God who thus favours them; and yet it is all in vain: *they will not learn righteousness*, will not be led to repentance by the goodness of God, and therefore it is requisite that God should send his judgments into the earth, to reckon with men for abused mercies. (2.) They live in a land of uprightness, where religion is professed and is in reputation, where the word of God is preached, and where they have many good examples set them,—in a land of *evenness*, where there are not so many stumbling-blocks as in other places,—in a land of *correction*, where vice and profaneness are discountenanced and punished; yet there they will deal unjustly, and go on frowardly in their evil ways. Those that do wickedly deal unjustly both with God and man, as well as with their own souls; and those that will not be reclaimed by the justice of the nation may expect the judgments of God upon them. Nor can those expect a place hereafter in the land of blessedness who now conform not to the laws and usages, nor improve the privileges and advantages, of the land of uprightness; and why do they not? It is because they will not behold the majesty of the Lord, will not believe, will not consider, what a God of terrible majesty he is whose laws and justice they persist in the contempt of. God's majesty appears in all the dispensations of his providence; but they regard it not, and therefore study not to answer the ends of those dispensations. Even when we receive of the mercy of the Lord we must still behold the majesty of the Lord and his goodness. (3.) God lifts up his hand to give them warning, that they may, by re-

penitance and prayer, make their peace with him; but they take no notice of it, are not aware that God is angry with them, or coming forth against them: *They will not see*, and none so blind as those who will not see, who shut their eyes against the clearest conviction of guilt and wrath, who ascribe that to chance, or common fate, which is manifestly a divine rebuke, who regard not the threatening symptoms of their own ruin, but cry Peace to themselves, when the righteous God is waging war with them.

2. How God will at length be too hard for them; for, when he judges, he will overcome: *They will not see, but they shall see*, shall be made to see, whether they will or no, that God is angry with them. Atheists, scorners, and the secure, will shortly feel what now they will not believe, that *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*. They will not see the evil of sin, and particularly the sin of hating and persecuting the people of God; but they shall see, by the tokens of God's displeasure against them for it and the deliverances in which God will plead his people's cause, that what is done against them he takes as done against himself and will reckon for it accordingly. They shall see that they have done God's people a great deal of wrong, and therefore shall be ashamed of their enmity and envy towards them, and their ill usage of such as deserved better treatment. Note, Those that bear ill-will to God's people have reason to be ashamed of it, so absurd and unreasonable is it; and, sooner or later, they shall be ashamed of it, and the remembrance of it shall fill them with confusion. Some read it, *They shall see and be confounded for the zeal of the people*, by the zeal God will show for his people; when they shall be made to know how jealous God is for the honour and welfare of his people they shall be confounded to think that they might have been of that people and would not. Their doom therefore is that, since they slighted the happiness of God's friends, *the fire of his enemies shall devour them*, that is, the fire which is prepared for his enemies and with which they shall be devoured, the fire designed for the devil and his angels. Note, Those that are enemies to God's people, and envy them, God looks upon as his enemies, and will deal with them accordingly.

12 LORD, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us. 13 O LORD our God, *other* lords beside thee have had dominion over us: *but* by thee only will we make mention of thy name. 14 *They are* dead, they shall not live; *they are* deceased, they shall not rise: therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all

their memory to perish. 15 Thou hast increased the nation, O LORD thou hast increased the nation: thou art glorified: thou hadst removed *it* far *unto* all the ends of the earth. 16 LORD, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer *when* thy chastening *was* upon them. Like as a woman with child, *thou* draweth near the time of her delivery is in pain, *and* crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight O LORD. 18 We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen. 19 *Thy* dead *men* shall live, *together with* my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew *is as* the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.

The prophet in these verses looks back upon what God had done with them, both in mercy and judgment, and sings unto God of both, and then looks forward upon what he hoped God would do for them. Observe,

I. His reviews and reflections are mixed. When he looks back upon the state of the church he finds,

1. That God had in many instances been very gracious to them and had done great things for them. (1.) In general (v. 12): *Thou hast wrought all our works in us, or for us*. Whatever good work is done by us, it is owing to a good work wrought by the grace of God in us; it is he that puts good thoughts and affections into our hearts if at any time they be there, and that *works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure*. *Acti, agimus*—Being acted upon, we act. And if any kindness be shown us, or any of our affairs be prosperous and successful, it is God that works it for us. Every creature, every business, that is in any way serviceable to our comfort, is made by him to be so; and sometimes he makes that to work for us which seemed to make against us. (2.) In particular (v. 15): "*Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord!* so that a little one has become a thousand (in Egypt they multiplied exceedingly, and afterwards in Canaan, so that they filled the land); and in this *thou art glorified*," for the multitude of the people is the honour of the prince, and therein God was glorified as faithful to his covenant with Abraham, that he would make him a father of many nations. Note, God's nation is a growing nation, and it is

the glory of God that it is so. The increase of the church, that holy nation, is *therefore* to be rejoiced in because it is the increase of those that make it their business to glorify God in this world.

2. That yet he had laid them under his rebukes.

(1.) The neighbouring nations had sometimes oppressed them and tyrannised over them (v. 13): "*O Lord our God! thou who hast the sole right to rule us, whose subjects and servants we are, to thee we complain (for whither else should we go with our complaints?) that other lords besides thee have had dominion over us.*" Not only in the days of the Judges, but afterwards, God frequently sold them into the hand of their enemies, or rather, by their iniquities, they sold themselves, ch. lii. 3—5. When they had been careless in the service of God, God suffered their enemies to have dominion over them, that they might know the difference between his service and the service of the kingdoms of the countries. It may be understood as a confession of sin, their serving other gods, and subjecting themselves to the superstitious laws and customs of their neighbours, by which other lords (for they called their idols *baals*, lords) had dominion over them, besides God. But now they promise that it shall be so no more: "Henceforth by thee only will we make mention of thy name; we will worship thee only, and in that way only which thou hast instituted and appointed." The same may be our penitent affection: *Other lords, besides God, have had dominion over us*; every lust has been our lord, and we have been led captive by it; and has been long enough, and too long, that we have thus wronged both God and ourselves. The same therefore must be our new resolution, that henceforth we will make mention of God's name only and by him only, that we will keep close to God and our duty and never desert it.

(2.) They had sometimes been carried into captivity before their enemies (v. 15): "The nation which at first thou didst increase, and make to take root, thou hast now diminished, and plucked up, and removed to all the ends of the earth, driven out to the utmost parts of heaven," as is threatened, Deut. xxx. 4; xxviii. 64. But observe, Between the mention of the increasing of them and that of the removing of them it is said, *Thou art glorified*; for the judgments God inflicts upon his people for their sins are for his honour, as well as the mercies he bestows upon them in performance of his promise.

(3.) The prophet remembers that when they were thus oppressed and carried captive they cried unto God, which was good evidence that they neither had quite forsaken him nor were quite forsaken of him, and that there were merciful intentions in the judgments they were under (v. 16): *Lord, in trouble have they visited*

thee. This was usual with the people of Israel, as we find frequently in the story of the Judges. When other lords had dominion over them they humbled themselves, and said, *The Lord is righteous*, 2 Chron. xii. 6. See here, [1.] The need we have of afflictions. They are necessary to stir up prayer; when it is said, *In trouble have they visited thee*, it is implied that in their peace and prosperity they were strangers to God, kept at a distance from him, and seldom came near him, as if, when the world smiled upon them, they had no occasion for his favours. [2.] The benefit we often have by afflictions. They bring us to God, quicken us to our duty, and show us our dependence upon him. Those that before seldom looked at God now visit him; they come frequently, they become friendly, and make their court to him. Before, prayer came drop by drop, but now they *pour out a prayer*; it comes now like water from a fountain, not like water from a still. They poured out a *secret speech*; so the margin. Praying is speaking to God, but it is a secret speech; for it is the language of the heart, otherwise it is not praying. Afflictions bring us to secret prayer, in which we may be more free and particular in our addresses to him than we can be in public. In affliction those will seek God early who before sought him slowly, Hos. v. 15. It will make men fervent and fluent in prayer. "They poured out a prayer, as the drink-offerings were poured out, when thy chastening was upon them." But it is to be feared, when the chastening is off them, they will by degrees return to their former carelessness, as they had often done.

(4.) He complains that their struggles for their own liberty had been very painful and perilous, but that they had not been successful, v. 17, 18. [1.] They had the throes and pangs they dreaded: "We have been like a woman in labour, that cries out in her pangs; we have with a great deal of anxiety and toil endeavoured to help ourselves, and our troubles have been increased by those attempts;" as when Moses came to deliver Israel the tale of bricks was doubled. Their prayers were quickened by the acuteness of their pains, and became as strong and vehement as the cries of a woman in sore travail. *So have we been in thy sight, O Lord!* It was a comfort and satisfaction to them, in their distress, that God had his eye upon them, that all their miseries were in his sight; he was no stranger to their pangs or their prayers. *Lord, all my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hidden from thee*, Ps. xxxviii. 9. Whenever they came to present themselves before the Lord with their complaints and petitions they were in agonies like those of a woman in travail. [2.] They came short of the issue and success they desired and hoped for: "*We have been with child*; we have had great expectation of a speedy and happy deliverance, have been big with hopes,

and, when we have been in pain, have comforted ourselves with this, that the joyful birth would make us forget our misery, John xvi. 21. But, alas! *we have as it were brought forth wind*; it has proved a false conception; our expectations have been frustrated, and our pains have been rather dying pains than travailing ones; we have had a miscarrying womb and dry breasts. All our efforts have proved abortive: *We have not wrought any deliverance in the earth, for ourselves or for our friends and allies, but rather have made our own case and theirs worse; neither have the inhabitants of the world, whom we have been contesting with, fallen before us, either in their power or in their hopes; but they are still as high and arrogant as ever.*" Note, A righteous cause may be strenuously pleaded both by prayer and endeavour, both with God and man, and yet for a great while may be left under a cloud, and the point may not be gained.

II. His prospects and hopes are very pleasant. In general, "*Thou wilt ordain peace for us* (v. 12), that is, all that good which the necessity of our case calls for." What peace the church has, or hopes for, it is of God's ordaining; and we may comfort ourselves with this, that, what trouble soever may for a time be appointed to the people of God, peace will at length be ordained for them; for the *end of those men is peace*. And, if God by his Spirit *work all our works in us*, he will ordain peace for us (for the work of righteousness shall be peace), and that is true and lasting peace, such as the world can neither give nor take away, which God ordains; for, to those that have it, it shall be unchangeable as the ordinances of the day and of the night. Moreover, from what God has done for us, we may encourage ourselves to hope that he will yet further do us good. "*Thou hast heard the desire of the humble, and therefore wilt* (Ps. x. 17); and, when this peace is ordained for us, then *by thee only will we make mention of thy name* (v. 13); we will give the glory of it to thee only, and not to any other, and we will depend upon thy grace only to enable us to do so." We cannot praise God's name but by his strength. Two things in particular the prophet here comforts the church with the prospect of:—

1. The amazing ruin of her enemies (v. 14): *They are dead, those other lords that have had dominion over us*; their power is irrecoverably broken; they are quite cut off and extinguished: and *they shall not live*, shall never be able to hold up the head any more. Being deceased, *they shall not rise*, but, like Haman, when they have begun to fall before the seed of the Jews they shall sink like a stone. Because they are sentenced to this final ruin, therefore, in pursuance of that sentence, God himself has visited them in wrath, as a righteous Judge, and has cut off both the men themselves (*he has destroyed them*) and the remembrance of them: they and

their names are buried together in the dust. He has *made all their memory to perish*; they are either forgotten or made mention of with detestation. Note, The cause that is maintained in opposition to God and his kingdom among men, though it may prosper awhile, will certainly sink at last, and that adhere to it will perish with it. The Jewish doctors, comparing this with what the prophets say, infer that the resurrection of the dead will be long to the Jews only, and that those of other nations shall not rise. But we know better; we know that *all who are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God*, and that this speaks of the final destruction of Christ's enemies, which is the second death. 2. The surprising resurrection of her friends, v. 15. Though the church rejoices not in the birth of the man-child, of which she travailed with pain, *but has as it were brought forth wind* (v. 18), yet the disappointment shall be balanced in a way equivalent: *They dead now shall live*; those who were thought to be dead, who had received a sentence of death within themselves, who were cast out as they had been naturally dead, shall appear again in their former vigour. A spirit of life from God shall enter into the slain witness, and they shall prophesy again, Rev. xi. 11. *The dry bones shall live*, and become an exceedingly great army, Ezek. xxxvii. 10. *Together with my dead body shall they arise*. We believe the resurrection of the dead, our dead bodies at the last day, as Job i. 21. and the prophet here, that will facilitate our belief of the promised restoration of the church's lustre and strength in this world. When God's time shall have come, howsoever she may be brought, they shall arise, even Jerusalem, the city of God, but now lying like a dead body, a carcase to which the eagles are gathered together. God will do it still for his, so does the prophet; but they shall arise, shall be rebuilt, and flourish again. And therefore let the poor, desolate, melancholy remains of its inhabitants, that dwell as in dust, *awake and sing*; for they shall see Jerusalem, the city of their solemnities, a quiet habitation again, ch. xxx. 20. The dew of God's favour shall be to them as the evening dew to the herbs that were parched with the heat of the sun all day; they shall revive and refresh them. And as the spring-dews, that water the earth, and make the herbs that lay buried in it to put forth and bud, so shall they flourish again, and *earth shall cast out the dead*, as it casts up the herbs out of their roots. The earth, in which they seemed to be lost, shall contribute to their revival. When the church and her interests are to be restored neither the dew of heaven nor the fatness of the earth shall wanting to do their part towards the restoration. Now this (as Ezekiel's vision, which is a comment upon it) may be fitly accommodated, (1.) To the spiritual resurrection of those that were dead in sin, by the power

Christ's gospel and grace. So Dr. Lightfoot applies it, *Hor. Hebr. in Joh. xii.* "The Gentiles shall live; with my body they shall arise; that is, they shall be called after Christ's resurrection, shall rise with him, and sit with him in heavenly places; they shall arise my body (says he); they shall become the mystical body of Christ, shall arise as part of him." (2.) To the resurrection, when dead saints shall live, and rise together with Christ's dead body; he arose as the first-fruits, and believers shall arise by virtue of their union with him in his communion in his resurrection.

20 Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be over-past. 21 For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall close her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.

These two verses are supposed not to belong to the song which takes up the rest of the chapter, but to begin a new matter, and be rather an introduction to the following chapter than the conclusion of this. Or, whereas, in the foregoing song, the people of God had spoken to him, complaining of their grievances, here he returns an answer to their complaints, in which,

I. He invites them into their chambers (20): "*Come, my people, come to me, come with me*" (he calls them nowhere but where he himself will accompany them); that the storm that disperses others bring them nearer together. Come, and enter into thy chambers; stay not abroad, lest you be caught in the storm, as the Egyptians in the Red Sea, Exod. ix. 21. 1. "Come into chambers of distinction; come into your own apartments, and continue not any longer with the children of Babylon. *Come from among them, and be you separate,*" Jer. vi. 17; Rev. xviii. 4. If God has set apart those that are godly for himself, they ought to set themselves apart. 2. "Into chambers of defence, in which by the secrecy he strength of them you may be safe in the worst of times." The attributes of God in the secret of his tabernacle, Ps. xxvii. 5. His name is a strong tower, into which we may run for shelter, Prov. xviii. 10. We may try by faith find a way into these chambers, and there hide ourselves; that is, with holy security and serenity of mind, we set up ourselves under the divine protection. Come, as Noah into the ark, for he shut the doors about him. When dangers are threatening it is good to retire, and lie hid, as Elijah did by the brook Cherith. 3. Into chambers of devotion. "Enter into thy closet,

and shut thy door, Matt. vi. 6. Be private with God: *Enter into thy chamber, to examine thyself, and commune with thy own heart, to pray, and humble thyself before God.*" This work is to be done in times of distress and danger; and thus we hide ourselves, that is, we recommend ourselves to God to hide us, and he will hide us either under heaven or in heaven. Israel must keep within doors when the destroying angel is slaying the first-born of Egypt, else the blood on the door-posts will not secure them. So must Rahab and her family when Jericho is being destroyed. Those are most safe that are least seen. *Qui bene latuit, bene cavit*—He has lived well who has sought a proper degree of concealment.

II. He assures them that the trouble would be over in a very short time, that they should not long be in any fright or peril: "*Hide thyself for a moment*, the smallest part of time we can conceive, like an atom of matter; nay, if you can imagine one moment shorter than another, it is but for a little moment, and that with a quasi too, as it were for a little moment, less than you think of. When it is over it will seem as nothing to you; you will wonder how soon it is gone. You shall not need to lie long in confinement, long in concealment. The indignation will presently be over-past: that is, the indignation of the enemies against you, their persecuting power and rage, which force you to abscond. *When the wicked rise, a man is hid*. This will soon be over; God will cut them off, will break their power, defeat their purposes, and find a way for your enlargement." When Athanasius was banished from Alexandria by an edict of Julian, and his friends greatly lamented it, he bade them be of good cheer. *Nube cuius est quæ cito pertransit*—It is a little cloud, that will soon blow over. You shall have tribulation ten days; that is all, Rev. ii. 10. This enables God's suffering people to call their afflictions light, that they are but for a moment.

III. He assures them that their enemies should be reckoned with for all the mischief they had done them by the sword, either of war or persecution, r. 21. The Lord will punish them for the blood they have shed. Here is, 1. The judgment set, and process issued out: *The Lord comes out of his place, to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity*, in giving such disturbance to all about them. There is a great deal of iniquity among the inhabitants of the earth; but though they all combine in it, though hand join in hand to carry it on, yet it shall not go unpunished. Besides the everlasting punishment into which the wicked shall go hereafter, there are often remarkable punishments of cruelty, oppression, and persecution, in this world. When men's indignation is over-past, and they have done their worst, let them then expect God's indignation, for he sees that his day is coming, Ps. xxxvii. 13.

God comes out of his place to punish. He shows himself in an extraordinary manner from heaven, the firmament of his power, from the sanctuary, the residence of his grace. He is raised up out of his holy habitation, where he seemed before to conceal himself; and now he will do something great, the product of his wise, just, and secret counsels, as a prince that goes to take the chair or take the field, Zech. ii. 13. Some observe that God's place is the mercy-seat; there he delights to be; when he punishes he comes out of his place, for he has no pleasure in the death of sinners. 2. The criminals convicted by the notorious evidence of the fact: *The earth shall disclose her blood*; the innocent blood, the blood of the saints and martyrs, which has been shed upon the earth like water, and has soaked into it, and been concealed and covered by it, shall now be brought to light, and brought to account; for God will make inquisition for it, and will give those that shed it blood to drink, for they are worthy. Secret murders, and other secret wickednesses, shall be discovered, sooner or later. And the slain which the earth has long covered she shall no longer cover, but they shall be produced as evidence against the murderers. The voice of Abel's blood cries from the earth, Gen. iv. 10, 11; Job xx. 27. Those sins which seemed to be buried in oblivion will be called to mind, and called over again, when the day of reckoning comes. Let God's people therefore wait awhile with patience, for behold the Judge stands before the door.

CHAP. XXVII.

In this chapter the prophet goes on to show, 1. What great things God would do for his church and people, which should now shortly be accomplished in the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib and the destruction of the Assyrian army; but it is expressed generally, for the encouragement of the church in after ages, with reference to the power and prevalency of her enemies. 1. That proud oppressors should be reckoned with, ver. 1. 2. That care should be taken of the church, as of God's vineyard, ver. 2, 3. 3. That God would let fall his controversy with the people, upon their return to him, ver. 4, 5. 4. That he would greatly multiply and increase them, ver. 6. 5. That, as to their afflictions, the property of them should be altered (ver. 7), they should be mitigated and moderated (ver. 8), and sanctified, ver. 9. 6. That though the church might be laid waste, and made desolate, for a time (ver. 10, 11), yet it should be restored, and the scattered members should be gathered together again, ver. 12, 13. All this is applicable to the grace of the gospel, and God's promises to, and providences concerning, the Christian church, and such as belong to it.

IN that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent, and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea. 2 In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine. 3 I the LORD do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day. 4 Fury is not in me: who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. 5 Or let him take

hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me. 6 He shall cause the that come of Jacob to take root, Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.

The prophet is here singing of judgment and mercy.

1. Of judgment upon the enemies of God's church (v. 1), tribulation to those that trouble it, 2 Thess. i. 6. When the Lord comes of his place, to punish the inhabitants of the earth (ch. xxvi. 21), he will be sure to punish leviathan, the dragon that is in the sea, even that proud oppressing tyrant, that is the terror of the mighty, and, like the leviathan, is fierce that none dares stir him up, and as hard as a stone, and when he raves up himself the mighty are afraid, Job 41. 10, 24, 25. The church has many enemies, but commonly some one that is more formidable than the rest. So Sennacherib in his day, and Nebuchadnezzar in his, and Antiochus in his; so Pharaoh had been formerly, and is called leviathan and the dragon, ch. li. 9; Ps. lxxiv. 13, 14; Ezek. xxix. 3. The New-Testament church has had many leviathans; we read of a great red dragon ready to devour it, Rev. xii. 3. The malignant persecuting powers are here compared to the leviathan for bulk, and strength, and the mighty bustle they make in the world,—to dragons for their rage and fury,—to serpents, piercing serpents, penetrating in their counsels, quick in their motions, and which, if they once get in their head, soon wind in their whole body,—crossing a bar (so the margin), standing in the way of all their neighbours and obstructing them,—to crooked serpents, subtle and insinuating,—to perverse and mischievous. Great and mighty princes, if they oppose the people of God, are in God's account as dragons and serpents, the plagues of mankind; and the LORD will punish them in due time. They are too big for men to deal with and call to account, and therefore the great God will take the matter into his own hands. He has a sore, and great, and strong sword, wherewith to do execution upon them when the measure of their iniquity is full and their day of come to fall. It is emphatically expressed in the original: *The Lord with his sword that cruel one, and that great one, and that strong one, shall punish this unwieldy, unruly criminal; and it shall be capital punishment: He shall slay the dragon that is in the sea; for the wages of his sin is death.* This shall not only be a prevention of doing further mischief, as the slaying of a wild beast, but a just punishment for the mischief he has done, as the putting of a traitor or rebel to death. God has a strong sword for the doing of this, variety of judgment sufficient to humble the proudest and bre-

most powerful of his enemies; and he do it when the day of execution comes: *that day* he will punish, his day which is *evening*, Ps. xxxvii. 13. This is applicable to the spiritual victories obtained by our Lord Jesus over the powers of darkness. He is not only disarmed, spoiled, and cast out, but prince of this world, but with his strong arm, the virtue of his death and the preaching of his gospel, he does and will *destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil*, that great leviathan, that old serpent, the dragon. He shall be bound, so that he may not deceive the nations, and this is a punishment to him (Rev. xx. 2, 3); and at length, for deceiving the nations, he shall be cast into the lake of fire, Rev. xx. 10.

II. Of mercy to the church. In that same day, when God is punishing the leviathan, let the church and all her friends be joyful and cheerful; let those that attend her sing to her for her comfort, sing her asleep to these assurances; let it be sung in her assemblies,

1. That she is God's vineyard, and is under his particular care, v. 2, 3. She is, in God's eye, a *vineyard of red wine*. The world is as a fruitless worthless wilderness; but the church is enclosed as a vineyard, a peculiar place, and of value, that has great pains taken of it and great pains taken with it, and from which precious fruits are gathered, wherewith they honour God and man. It is a vineyard of *red wine*, yielding the best and choicest grapes, intimating the formation of the church, that it now brings forth good fruit unto God, whereas before it brought forth fruit to itself, or brought forth wild grapes, *ch. v. 4*. Now God takes care, (1.) Of the safety of this vineyard: *I the Lord do keep it*. He speaks this as glowing in it that he is, and has undertaken to be, the keeper of Israel. Those that bring forth fruit to God are and shall be always under his protection. He speaks this as assuring us that they shall be so: *I the Lord, that can do every thing, but cannot lie nor deceive, I do keep it; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day*. God's vineyard in this world lies much exposed to injury; there are many that would hurt it, would tread it down and lay it waste (Ps. lxxx. 13); but God will suffer no real hurt or damage to be done it, but what he will bring good out of it. He will keep it constantly, night and day, and not without need, for the enemies are restless in their designs and attempts against it, and, both night and day, seek an opportunity to do it a mischief. God will keep it in the night of affliction and persecution, and in the day of peace and prosperity, the temptations of which are no less dangerous. God's people shall be preserved, not only from the *pestilence that walketh in darkness*, but from the *destruction that wasteth at noon-day*, Ps. xci. 6. This vineyard shall be well fenced. (2.) Of the

fruitfulness of this vineyard: *I will water it every moment*, and yet it shall not be overwatered. The still and silent dews of God's grace and blessing shall continually descend upon it, that it may bring forth much fruit. We need the constant and continual waterings of the divine grace; for, if that be at any time withdrawn, we wither, and come to nothing. God waters his vineyard by the ministry of the word by his servants the prophets, whose doctrine shall drop as the dew. Paul plants, and Apollos waters, but God gives the increase; for without him the watchman wakes and the husbandman waters in vain.

2. That, though sometimes he contends with his people, yet, upon their submission, he will be reconciled to them, v. 4, 5. *Fury is not in him towards his vineyard*; though he meets with many things in it that are offensive to him, yet he does not seek advantages against it, nor is extreme to mark what is amiss in it. It is true if he find in it briars and thorns instead of vines, and they be set in battle against him (as indeed that in the vineyard which is not for him is against him), he will tread them down and burn them; but otherwise, "If I am angry with my people, they know what course to take; let them humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and so take hold of my strength with a sincere desire to make their peace with me, and I will soon be reconciled to them, and all shall be well." God sees the sins of his people and is displeased with them; but, upon their repentance, he turns away his wrath. This may very well be construed as a summary of the doctrine of the gospel, with which the church is to be watered every moment. (1.) Here is a quarrel supposed between God and man; for here is a battle fought, and peace to be made. It is an old quarrel, ever since sin first entered. It is, on God's part, a righteous quarrel, but, on man's part, most unrighteous. (2.) Here is a gracious invitation given us to make up this quarrel, and to get these matters in variance accommodated: "Let him that is desirous to be at peace with God take hold of his strength, of his strong arm, which is lifted up against the sinner to strike him dead; and let him by supplication keep back the stroke. Let him wrestle with me, as Jacob did, resolving not to let me go without a blessing; and he shall be *Israel—a prince with God*." Pardoning mercy is called the power of our Lord; let him take hold of that. Christ is the *arm of the Lord*, *ch. liii. 1*. Christ crucified is the power of God (1 Cor. i. 24); let him by a lively faith take hold of him, as a man that is sinking catches hold of a bough, or cord, or plank, that is within his reach, or as the malefactor took hold of the horns of the altar, believing that there is no other name by which he can be saved, by which he can be reconciled. (3.) Here is a threefold cord of arguments

to persuade us to do this. [1.] Time and space are given us to do it in; for *fury is not in God*; he does not carry it towards us as great men carry it towards their inferiors, when the one is in a fault and the other in a fury. Men in a fury will not take time for consideration; it is, with them, but a word and a blow. Furious men are soon angry, and implacable when they are angry; a little thing provokes them, and no little thing will pacify them. But it is not so with God; he considers our frame, is slow to anger, does not stir up all his wrath, nor always chide. [2.] It is in vain to think of contesting with him. If we persist in our quarrel with him, and think to make our part good, it is but like setting briars and thorns before a consuming fire, which will be so far from giving check to the progress of it that they will but make it burn the more outrageously. We are not an equal match for Omnipotence. *Woe unto him therefore that strives with his Maker!* He knows not the power of his anger. [3.] This is the only way, and it is a sure way, to reconciliation: "Let him take this course to make peace with me, *and he shall make peace*; and thereby good, all good, shall come unto him." God is willing to be reconciled to us if we be but willing to be reconciled to him.

3. That the church of God in the world shall be a growing body, and come at length to be a great body (v. 6): *In times to come* (so some read it), *in after-times*, when these calamities are overpast, or in the days of the gospel, the latter days, *he shall cause Jacob to take root*, deeper root than ever yet; for the gospel church shall be more firmly fixed than ever the Jewish church was, and shall spread further. Or, *He shall cause those of Jacob* that come back out of their captivity, or (as we read it) *those that come of Jacob, to take root downward, and bear fruit upward*, ch. xxxvii. 31. They shall be established in a prosperous state, and then they shall *blossom and bud*, and give hopeful prospects of a great increase; and so it shall prove, for *they shall fill the face of the world with fruit*. Many shall be brought into the church, proselytes shall be numerous, some out of all the nations about that shall be to the God of Israel for a name and a praise; and the converts shall be fruitful in the fruits of righteousness. The preaching of the gospel brought forth fruit in all the world (Col. i. 6), fruit that remains, John xv. 16.

7 Hath he smitten him, as he smote those that smote him? Or is he slain according to the slaughter of them that are slain by him? 8 In measure, when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it: he stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east-wind. 9

By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is as the fruit to take away his sin; when he maketh all the stones of the altar as chalk-stones that are beaten sunder, the groves and images shall not stand up. 10 Yet the defenceless city shall be desolate, and the habitation forsaken, and left like a wilderness: there shall the calf feed and there shall he lie down, and consume the branches thereof. When the boughs thereof are withered, they shall be broken off: then women come, and set them on fire, for it is a people of no understanding, therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will show them no favour. 12 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall beat down from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel. 13 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish, out of the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount Jerusalem.

Here is the prophet again singing of mercy and judgment, not, as before, judgment and mercy to the church, but judgment to the church and mercy mixed with that judgment.

I. Here is judgment threatened even to Jacob and Israel. *They shall blossom and bud* (v. 6), but, 1. They shall be *smitten and slain* (v. 7), some of them shall. God find any thing amiss among them, will lay them under the tokens of his displeasure for it. Judgment shall begin in the house of God, and those whom God has known of all the families of the earth he will punish in the first place. 2. Jerusalem, their *defenced city*, shall be desolate, v. 10, 11. "God having tried a variety of methods with them for their reformation, which, as many, have proved ineffectual, he will for time lay their country waste," which was accomplished when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Chaldeans; then that *habitation* was for a long time *forsaken*. If less judgment do not do the work, God will send greater, for *when he judges he will overcome*. Jerusalem had been a defenced city, not so much by art or nature as by grace and the divine protection; but, when God was provoked

withdraw, her defence departed from her, and then she was left like a wilderness. And in the pleasant gardens of Jerusalem cattle shall feed, shall lie down there, and there shall be none to disturb them or drive them away; there they shall be *levant and couchant*, and they shall eat the tender branches of the fruit-trees," which perhaps further signifies that the people should become an easy prey to their enemies. "*When the boughs thereof are withered as they grow upon the tree, being blasted by winds and frosts and not pruned, they shall be broken off for fuel, and the women and children shall come and set them on fire.* There shall be a total destruction, for the very trees shall be destroyed." And this is a figure of the deplorable state of the vineyard (v. 2) when it brought forth wild grapes (ch. v. 2); and our Saviour seems to refer to this when he says of the branches of the vine which abide not in him that they are *cast forth and withered, and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned* (John xv. 6), which was in a particular manner fulfilled in the unbelieving Jews. The similitude is explained in the following words, *It is a people of no understanding, brutish and sottish, and destitute of the knowledge of God, and that have no relish or savour of divine things, like a withered branch that has no sap in it; and this is at the bottom of all those sins for which God left them desolate, their idolatry first and afterwards their inidelity. Wicked people, however in other things they may be wits and politicians, in their greatest concerns are of no understanding; and their ignorance, being wilful, shall not only not be their excuse, but it shall be the ground of their condemnation; for therefore he that made them, that gave them their being, will not have mercy on them, nor save them from the ruin they bring upon themselves; and he that formed them into a people, formed them for himself, to show forth his praise, seeing they do not answer the end of their formation, but hate to be reformed, to be new-formed, will reject them, and show them no favour; and then they are undone: or, if he that made us by his power do not make us happy in his favour, we had better never have been made. Sinners flatter themselves with hopes of impunity, at least that they shall not be dealt with so severely as their ministers tell them, because God is merciful and because he is their Maker. But here we see how weak and insufficient those pleas will be; for, if they be of no understanding, he that made them, though he made them, and hates nothing that he has made, and though he has mercy in store for those who so far understand their interests as to apply to him for it, yet on them he will have no mercy, and will show them no favour.*

II. Here is a great deal of mercy mixed with this judgment; for there are good peo-

ple mixed with those that are corrupt and degenerate, *a remnant according to the election of grace*, on whom God will have mercy and to whom he will show favour: and these promises seem to point at all the calamities of the church, for which God would graciously provide these allies.

1. Though they shall be smitten and slain, yet not to that degree, and in that manner, in which their enemies shall be smitten and slain, v. 7. God has smitten Jacob, and he is slain. Many of those that understand among the people shall fall by the sword and by flame many days, Dan. xi. 33. But it shall not be as those are smitten and slain, (1.) Who smote him formerly, who were the rod of God's anger and the staff in his hand, which he made use of for the correction of his people, and to whose turn it shall come to be reckoned with even for that: the child is spared, but the rod is burnt. (2.) Who shall afterwards be slain by him, when he shall get the dominion, and repay them in their own coin, or slain for his sake in the pleading of his cause. God's people and God's enemies are here represented, [1.] As struggling with each other; so the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent have been, are, and will be. In this contest there are slain on both sides. God makes use of wicked men, not only to smite, but to slay his people; for they are his sword, Ps. xvii. 13. But, when the cup of trembling comes to be put into their hand, it will be much worse with them than ever it was with God's people in their greatest straits. The seed of the woman has only his heel bruised, but the serpent has his head crushed and broken. Note, Though God's persecuted people may be great losers, and great sufferers, for a while, yet those that oppress them will prove to be greater losers and greater sufferers at last, here or hereafter; for God will render double to them, Rev. xviii. 6. [2.] As sharing together in the calamities of this present time. They are both smitten, both slain, and both by the hand of God; for there is *one event to the righteous and to the wicked*. But is Jacob smitten as his enemies are? No, by no means; to him the property is altered, and it becomes quite another thing. Note, However it may seem to us, there is really a vast difference between the afflictions and deaths of good people and the afflictions and deaths of wicked people.

2. Though God will debate with them, yet it shall be in measure, and the affliction shall be mitigated, moderated, and proportioned to their strength, not to their deserts, v. 8. He will deal out afflictions to them as the wise physician prescribes medicines to his patients, just such a quantity of each ingredient, or orders how much blood shall be taken when a vein is opened; thus God orders the troubles of his people, not suffering them to be tempted above what they are able

1 Cor. x. 13. He measures out their afflictions by a little at a time, that they may not be pressed above measure; for he knows their frame, and corrects in judgment, and does not stir up all his wrath. When the affliction is shooting forth, when he is sending it out and giving it its commission, then he debates in measure, and not in extremity. He considers what we can bear when he begins to correct; and when he proceeds in his controversy, so that it is the *day of his east-wind*, which is not only blustering and noisy, but blasting and noxious, yet he stays his rough wind, checks it, and sets bounds to it, does not suffer it to blow so hard as was feared; when he is winnowing his corn, it is with a gentle gale, that shall only blow away the chaff, but not the good corn. God has the winds at his command, and every affliction under his check. *Hitherto it shall go, but no further.* Let us not despair, when things are at the worst; be the winds ever so rough, ever so high, God can say unto them, *Peace, be still.*

3. Though God will afflict them, yet he will make their afflictions to work for the good of their souls, and correct them as the father does the child, to drive out the foolishness that is bound up in their hearts (v. 9): *By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged.* This is the design of the affliction, to this it is adapted as a proper means, and, by the grace of God working with it, it shall have this blessed effect. It shall mortify the habits of sin; by this those defilements of the soul shall be purged away. It shall break them off from the practice of sin: *This is all the fruit*, this is it that God intends, this is all the harm it will do them, *to take away their sin*, than which they could not have a greater kindness done them, though it be at the expense of an affliction. Therefore, because the affliction is mitigated and moderated, and the rough wind stayed, therefore we may conclude that he designs their reformation, not their destruction; and, because he deals thus gently with us, we should therefore study to answer his ends in afflicting us. The particular sin which the affliction was intended to cure them of was the sin of idolatry, the sin which did most easily beset that people and to which they were strangely addicted. *Ephraim is joined to idols.* But by the captivity in Babylon they were not only weaned from this sin, but set against it. *Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?* Jacob has his sin taken away, his beloved sin, *when he makes all the stones of the altar*, of his idolatrous altar, the stones of which were precious and sacred to him, *as chalk-stones that are beaten asunder*; he not only has them in contempt, and values them no more than chalk-stones, but he conceives an indignation at them, and, in a holy revenge, beats them asunder as easily as chalk-stones are broken to pieces. *The groves and the*

images shall not stand before this penitent but they shall be thrown down too, never to be set up again. This was according to the law for the demolishing and destroying of all the monuments of idolatry (Deut. vii. 5); and according to this promise, since the captivity in Babylon, no people in the world have such a rooted aversion to idols and idolatry as the people of the Jews. Note, The design of affliction is to separate between good and sin, especially that which has been *own iniquity*; and then it appears that the affliction has done us good when we keep a distance from the occasions of sin, and use all needful precaution that we may not only not relapse into it, but not so much as be tempted to it, Ps. cxix. 67.

4. Though Jerusalem shall be desolate and forsaken for a time, yet there will come a day when its scattered friends shall resort to it again out of all the countries whither they were dispersed (v. 12, 13); though the body of the nation is abandoned as a people of no understanding, yet those that are indeed children of Israel shall be gathered together again, as the sheep of the flock whither the shepherds that scattered them are reckoned with, Ezek. xxxiv. 10—19. Now observe concerning these scattered Israelites (1.) Whence they shall be fetched: *The Lord shall beat them off as fruit from the tree, or beat them out as corn out of the ear.* He shall find them out, and separate them from those among whom they dwelt, and with whom they seemed to be incorporated *from the channel of the river Euphrates north-east, unto Nile, the stream of Egypt*, which lay south-west—those that were driven into the land of Assyria, and were captives there in the land of their enemies, where they were ready to perish for want of necessities, and ready to despair of deliverance—and those that were *outcasts in the land of Egypt*, whither many of those that were left behind after the captivity in Babylon, went, contrary to God's express command (Jer. xlii. 6, 7), and there lived as outcasts: God has mercy in store for them all, and will make them to appear that, though they are cast out, they are not cast off. (2.) In what manner they shall be brought back: *"You shall be gathered one by one, not in multitudes, not in troops forcing your way; but silently, and as it were by stealth, dropping in, first one and then another."* This intimates that the remnant that shall be saved consists but of a few, and those saved with difficulty, and saved as by fire, scarcely saved; they shall not come for company, but as God shall stir up every man's spirit. (3.) By what means they shall be gathered together: *The great trumpet shall be blown, and then they shall come.* Cyrus's proclamation of liberty to the captives is this great trumpet, which awakened the Jews that were asleep in their thralldom to bestir themselves; it was like the sounding of the jubilee-trumpet, which

published the year of release. This is applicable both to the preaching of the gospel, which sinners are gathered in to the grace of God, such as were outcasts and ready to perish (those that were afar off are made nigh; the gospel proclaims the acceptable year of the Lord), and also to the archangel's trumpet at the last day, by which saints shall be gathered to the glory of God, that they as outcasts in their graves. (4.) For that end they shall be gathered together: *to worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.* When the captives rallied again, and returned to their own land, the chief thing they had their eye upon, and the first thing they applied themselves to, was the worship of God. The holy temple was in ruins, but they had the holy mount, *the place of the altar*, Gen. xiii. 4. Liberty to worship God is the most valuable and desirable liberty; and, after restraints and dispersions, free access to his house should be more welcome to us than a free access to our own houses. Those that are gathered by the sounding of the gospel trumpet are brought to worship God and added to the church; and the great trumpet of all will gather the saints together, *to serve God day and night in his temple.*

CHAP. XXVIII.

This chapter, I. The Ephraimites are reproved and threatened for their pride and drunkenness, their security and sensuality, ver. 1-5. But, in the midst of this, here is a gracious promise of God's favour to the remnant of his people, ver. 5-6. II. They are likewise reproved and threatened for their dulness and stupidity, and unaptness to profit by the instructions which the prophets gave them in God's name, ver. 9-13. III. The rulers of Jerusalem are reproved and threatened for their insolent contempt of God's judgments, and setting them at defiance; and, after a gracious promise of Christ and his grace, they are made to know that the vain hopes of escaping the judgments of God with which they flattered themselves would certainly deceive them, ver. 14-22. IV. All this is confirmed by a comparison borrowed from the husbandman which the husbandman takes with his ground and grain, according to which they must expect God would proceed with his people, whom he had lately called his threshing and the corn of his floor (ch. xxi. 10) ver. 23-29. This is written for our admonition, and is profitable for reproof and warning to us.

WOE to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine! 2 Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, *which* as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand. 3 The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden under feet: 4 And the glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley, shall be a fading flower, and as the hasty fruit before the summer; which *when* he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand, he eateth it up. 5 In that day shall the LORD of hosts be

for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people, 6 And for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate. 7 But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way: the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. 8 For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, *so that there is no place clean.*

Here, I. The prophet warns the kingdom of the ten tribes of the judgments that were coming upon them for their sins, which were soon after executed by the king of Assyria, who laid their country waste, and carried the people into captivity. Ephraim had his name from *fruitfulness*, their soil being very fertile and the products of it abundant and the best of the kind; they had a great many *fat valleys* (c. 1, 4), and Samaria, which was situated on a hill, was, as it were, *on the head of the fat valleys*. Their country was rich and pleasant, and as the garden of the Lord: it was the glory of Canaan, as that was the glory of all lands; their harvest and vintage were the *glorious beauty* on the head of their valleys, which were covered over with corn and vines. Now observe,

1. What an ill use they made of their plenty. What God gave them to serve him with they perverted, and abused, by making it the food and fuel of their lusts. (1.) They were puffed up with pride by it. The goodness with which God crowned their years, which should have been to him a crown of praise, was to them a *crown of pride*. Those that are rich in the world are apt to be high-minded, 1 Tim. vi. 17. Their king, who wore the crown, was proud that he ruled over so rich a country; Samaria, their royal city, was notorious for pride. Perhaps it was usual at their festivals, or revels, to wear garlands made up of flowers and ears of corn, which they wore in honour of their fruitful country. Pride was a sin that generally prevailed among them, and therefore the prophet, in his name who resists the proud, boldly proclaims a *woe to the crown of pride*. If those who wear crowns be proud of them, let them not think to escape this woe. What men are proud of, be it ever so mean, is to them as a crown; he that is proud thinks himself as great as a king. But woe to those who thus exalt themselves, for they shall be abased; their pride is the preface to their destruction. (2.) They indulged themselves in sensuality,

Ephraim was notorious for drunkenness, and excess of riot; Samaria, the head of the fat valleys, was full of those that were *overcome with wine*, were *broken with it*, so the margin. See how foolishly drunkards act, and no marvel when, in the very commission of the sin, they make fools and brutes of themselves; they yield, [1.] To be conquered by the sin; it overcomes them, and *brings them into bondage* (2 Pet. ii. 19); they are led captive by it, and the captivity is the more shameful and inglorious because it is voluntary. Some of these wretched slaves have themselves owned that there is not a greater drudgery in the world than hard drinking. They are overcome not with the wine, but with the love of it. [2.] To be ruined by it. They are broken by wine. Their constitution is broken by it, and their health ruined. They are broken in their callings and estates, and their families are brought to ruin by it. Their peace with God is broken, and their souls are in danger of being eternally undone, and all this for the gratification of a base lust. Woe to these *drunkards of Ephraim*! Ministers must bring the general woes of the word home to particular places and persons. We must say, *Woe to drunkards*; their condition is a woeful condition, their brutish pleasures are to be pitied, and not envied; *they shall not inherit the kingdom of God* (1 Cor. vi. 10); the curse is in force against them, Deut. xxix. 19, 20. Nay, we must go further, and say, *Woe to the drunkards of such a place*, that they may hear and fear; nay, and, *Woe to this or that person*, if he be a drunkard. There is a particular woe to the drunkards of Ephraim, for they are of God's professing people, and it becomes them worse than any other; they know better, and therefore should give a better example. Some make the *crown of pride* to belong to the drunkards, and to mean the garlands with which those were crowned that got the victory in their wicked drinking matches and drank down the rest of the company. They were proud of their being mighty to drink wine; but woe to those who thus glory in their shame.

2. The justice of God in taking away their plenty from them, which they thus abused. Their *glorious beauty*, the plenty they were proud of, is but a *fading flower*; it is meat that perishes. The most substantial fruits, if God blast them and blow upon them, are but fading flowers, v. 1. God can easily take away their *corn in the season thereof* (Hos. ii. 9), and recover *locum vastatum*—ground that has been alienated and has run to waste, those goods of his which they prepared for Baal. God has an officer ready to make a seizure for him, has one at his beck, a *mighty and strong one*, who is able to do the business, even the king of Assyria, who *shall cast down to the earth with the hand*, shall easily and effectually, and with the turn of a hand, destroy all that

which they are proud of and pleased with v. 2. He shall throw it down to the ground to be broken to pieces with a strong hand with a hand that they cannot oppose. The *crown of pride*, and the *drunkards of Ephraim*, shall be trodden under foot (v. 3) they shall lie exposed to contempt, and shall not be able to recover themselves. Drunkards, in their folly, are apt to talk proudly and vaunt themselves most when they most shame themselves; but they thereby render themselves the more ridiculous. The beauty of their valleys, which they gloried in, will be, (1.) Like a *fading flower* (as before v. 1); it will wither of itself, and has in itself the principles of its own corruption; it will perish in time by its own moth and rust. (2.) Like the *hasty fruit*, which, as soon as it is discovered, is plucked and eaten up; so the wealth of this world, besides that it is apt to decay of itself, is subject to be devoured by others as greedily as the first-ripe fruit, which is earnestly desired, Mic. vii. 1. *Thieves break through and steal*. The harvest which the worldling is proud of the *hungry eat up* (Job v. 5); sooner do they see the prey but they catch at it, and swallow up all they can lay their hands on. It is likewise easily devoured as that fruit which, being ripe before it has grown, is very small, and is soon eaten up, and there being little of it, and that a little worth, it is not reserved, but used immediately.

II. He next turns to the kingdom of Judah, whom he calls the *residue of a people* (v. 5), for they were but two tribes to the other ten.

1. He promises them God's favours, and that they shall be taken under his guidance and protection when the beauty of Ephraim shall be left exposed to be trodden down and eaten up, v. 5, 6. *In that day*, when the Assyrian army is laying Israel waste, and Judah might think that their neighbour's house being on fire their own was in danger, in that day of treading down and perplexity, then God will be to the residue of his people all they need and can desire, not only to the kingdom of Judah, but to those of Israel who had kept their integrity, and, as was probably the case with some, betook themselves to the land of Judah, to be sheltered by good king Hezekiah. When the Assyrian, that mighty one, was in Israel as a *tempest of hail*, noisy and battering, a *destroying storm* bearing down all before it, especially at sea, and as a *flood of mighty waters overflowing* the country (v. 2), then in that day will the Lord of hosts, of a hosts, distinguish by peculiar favours his people who have distinguished themselves by a steady and singular adherence to him, and that which they most need he will himself be to them. This very much enhances the worth of the promises that God, covenanting to be to his people a God al-

cient, undertakes to be himself all that them which they can desire. (1.) He will put all the credit and honour upon them which are requisite, not only to rescue them from contempt, but to gain them esteem and reputation. He will be to them *as a crown of glory and for a diadem of duty*. Those that wore the crown of pride looked upon God's people with disdain, and imputed upon them, for they were the song of the drunkards of Ephraim; but God will appear for them by his providence as to make it evident that they have his favour towards them, and that shall be to them a crown of glory; for what greater glory can any people have than for God to acknowledge them as his own? And he will so appear in them, by his grace, as to make it evident that they have his image renewed in them, and that shall be to them a diadem of beauty; for what greater beauty can any person have than the beauty of holiness? (2.) Those that have God for their God will be to them as a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty; for they are made to him kings and priests. (3.) He will give them all the wisdom and grace necessary to the due discharge of the duty of their place. He will be to them *as a spirit of judgment to those that are in judgment*; the privy counsellors shall be guided by wisdom and discretion and judges shall govern by justice and equity. It is a great mercy to any people when those that are called to places of power and public trust are qualified for their places, when those that sit in judgment have a spirit of judgment, a spirit of government. (4.) He will give them the courage and boldness requisite to carry them resolutely through the difficulties and oppositions they are likely to meet with. He will be to them *as a strength to those that turn the siege to the gate*, to the gates of the enemy, to those cities they besiege, or to their own cities, when they sally out upon the enemies that besiege them. The strength of the diadem depends as much upon God as the wisdom of the magistracy; and where God is both these he is to that people a crown of glory. This may well be supposed to belong to Christ, and so the Chaldee paraphrast understands it: *In that day shall the Messiah be a crown of glory*. Simeon calls it *the glory of his people Israel*; and he is the glory of God to us wisdom, righteousness, and strength.

2. He complains of the corruptions that were found among them, and the many corrupt ones (v. 7): *But they also, many of the seed of Judah, have erred through wine*. There are drunkards of Jerusalem, as well as drunkards of Ephraim; and therefore the mercy of God is to be so much the more admired that he has not blasted the glory of Judah as he has done that of Ephraim. Sparing mercy lays us under peculiar obligations when it is thus distinguishing. Ephraim's sins are found in

Judah, and yet not Ephraim's ruins. *They have erred through wine*. Their drinking to excess is itself a practical error; they think to raise their fancy by it, but they ruin their judgment, and so put a cheat upon themselves; they think to preserve their health by it and help digestion, but they spoil their constitution and hasten diseases and deaths. It is also the occasion of a great many errors in principle; their understanding is clouded and their conscience debauched by it; and therefore, to support themselves in it, they espouse corrupt notions, and form their minds in favour of their lusts. Probably some were drawn in to worship idols by their love of the wine and strong drink which there was plenty of at their idolatrous festivals; and so they erred through wine, as Israel, for love of the daughters of Moab, joined themselves to Baal-peor. Three things are here observed as aggravations of this sin:—(1.) That those were guilty of it whose business it was to warn others against it and to teach them better, and therefore who ought to have set a better example: *The priest and the prophet are swallowed up of wine*; their office is quite drowned and lost in it. The priests, as sacrificers, were obliged by a particular law to be temperate (Lev. x. 9), and, as rulers and magistrates, it was not for them to drink wine, Prov. xxxi. 4. The prophets were a kind of Nazarites (as appears by Amos ii. 11), and, as reprovers by office, were concerned to keep at the utmost distance from the sins they reprov'd in others; yet there were many of them ensnared in this sin. What! a priest, a prophet, a minister, and yet drunk! *Tell it not in Gath*. Such a scandal are they to their coat. (2.) That the consequences of it were very pernicious, not only by the ill influence of their example, but the prophet, when he was drunk, *erred in vision*; the false prophets plainly discovered themselves to be so when they were in drink. The priest *stumbled in judgment and forgot the law* (Prov. xxxi. 5); he reeled and staggered as much in the operations of his mind as in the motions of his body. What wisdom or justice can be expected from those that sacrifice reason, and virtue, and conscience, and all that is valuable to such a base lust as the love of strong drink is? Happy art thou, O land! when *thy princes eat and drink for strength, and not for drunkenness*, Eccl. x. 17. (3.) That the disease was epidemic, and the generality of those that kept any thing of a table were infected with it: *All tables are full of vomit*, v. 8. See what an odious thing the sin of drunkenness is, what an affront it is to human society; it is rude and ill-mannered enough to sicken the beholders, for the tables where they eat their meat are filthily stained with the marks of this sin, which the sinners declare as Sodom. Their tables are full of

vomit, so that the victor, instead of being proud of his crown, ought rather to be ashamed of it. It bodes ill to any people when so sottish a sin as drunkenness has become national.

9 Whom shall he teach knowledge? And whom shall he make to understand doctrine? *Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.* 10 For precept *must be* upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line; here a little, *and* there a little: 11 For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. 12 To whom he said, *This is the rest wherewith* ye may cause the weary to rest; and this *is* the refreshing; yet they would not hear. 13 But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, *and* there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

The prophet here complains of the wretched stupidity of this people, that they were unteachable and made no improvement of the means of grace which they possessed; they still continued as they were, their mistakes not rectified, their hearts not renewed, nor their lives reformed. Observe,

I. What it was that their prophets and ministers designed and aimed at. It was to *teach* them *knowledge*, the knowledge of God and his will, and to *make them understand doctrine*, v. 9. This is God's way of dealing with men, to enlighten men's minds first with the knowledge of his truth, and thus to gain their affections, and bring their wills into a compliance with his laws; thus he enters in by the door, whereas the thief and the robber climb up another way.

II. What method they took, in pursuance of this design. They left no means untried to do them good, but taught them as children are taught, little children that are beginning to learn, that are taken from the breast to the book (v. 9), for among the Jews it was common for mothers to nurse their children till they were three years old, and almost ready to go to school. And it is good to begin betimes with children, to teach them, as they are capable, the good knowledge of the Lord, and to instruct them even when they are but newly weaned from the milk. The prophets taught them as children are taught; for, 1. They were constant and industrious in teaching them. They took great pains with them, and

with great prudence, teaching them as needed it and were able to bear it (v. 9). *Precept upon precept. It must be so, or some read it has been so.* They have taught, as children are taught to read *precept upon precept*, and taught to write *line upon line, a little here and a little there*, a little of one thing and a little of another, that the variety of instructions might be pleasing and inviting,—a little at one time and a little at another, that they might have their memories overcharged,—a little from one prophet and a little from another, that every one might be pleased with his friend and him whom he admired. Note, our instruction in the things of God is a requisite that we have precept upon precept and line upon line, that one precept and line should be followed, and so enforced, and another; the precept of justice must be followed, the precept of piety, and the precept of charity upon that of justice. Nay, it is necessary that the same precept and line should be often repeated and inculcated upon us, that we may the better understand them and the more easily reflect them when we have occasion for them. Teachers should accommodate themselves to the capacity of the learners, give them what they most need and can best bear, a little at a time, Deut. vi. 6, 7. 2. They courted and persuaded them to learn, v. 13. God, by his prophets, said to them, *“This is the rest, the only rest, wherewith you may cause the weary to rest; this will be the refreshing of your own souls, and will bring rest to your country from wars and other calamities with which it has been long harassed.”* Note, God by his word calls us to nothing but what is necessary for our advantage; for the service of God is the only true rest for those that are weary of the service of sin and there is no refreshment but under the easy yoke of the Lord Jesus.

III. What little effect all this had upon the people. They were as unapt to learn as young children newly weaned from the milk, and it was as impossible to fasten anything upon them (v. 9): nay, one would choose rather to teach a child of two years old than undertake to teach them; for they have not only (like such a child) no capacity to receive what is taught them, but are prejudiced against it. As children, *have need of milk, and cannot bear strong meat*, Heb. v. 12. 1. They would not hear (v. 12), no, not that which would be so refreshing to them. They had no capacity to hear it. The word of God commanded their serious attention, but could not get it; they were where it was preached, they turned a deaf ear to it, or as it came at one ear it went out at the other. 2. They would not heed. It was unto them *precept upon precept, and line upon line* (v. 9).

they went on in a road of external performances; they kept up the old custom of depending upon the prophet's preaching and was continually sounding in their ears, that that was all; it made no impression upon them; they had the letter of the precept, but no experience of the power and spirit of it; it was continually beating upon them, but it beat nothing into them. Nay, it should seem, they ridiculed the prophet's preaching, and bantered it. The word of the Lord was unto them *Tsau latsau, u lakau*; in the original it is in rhyme; they made a song of the prophet's words, and sang it when they were merry over their wine. David was the song of the drunkards. It is great impiety, and a high affront to God, thus to make a jest of sacred things, speak of that vainly which should make serious.

IV. How severely God would reckon with them for this. 1. He would deprive them the privilege of plain preaching, and speak them *with stammering lips and another tongue*, v. 11. Those that will not understand what is plain and level to their capacity, but despise it as mean and trifling, are justly amused with that which is above them. Or God will send foreign armies among them, whose language they understand not, to lay their country waste. Those that will not hear the comfortable voice of God's word shall be made to hear the dreadful voice of his rod. Or these words may be taken as denoting God's gracious condescension to their capacity in his dealing with them; he lisped to them in their own language, as nurses do to their children, with stammering lips, to humour them; he changed his voice, tried first one way and then another; the apostle quotes it as a proof (1 Cor. xiv. 21), applying it to the use of tongues, and complaining that yet for this they would not hear. 2. He would bring utter ruin upon them. By their profane contempt of God and his word they are hastening on their own ruin, and ripening themselves for it; it is *that they may go and fall backward*, may grow worse and rise, may depart further and further from God, and proceed from one sin to another, till they be quite *broken, and snared, and ruined*, v. 13. They have here a lesson, and there a little of the word of God; they think it too much, and say to the seers, *not*; but it proves too little to convert them, and will prove enough to condemn them. If it be not a *savour of life unto life*, it will be a *savour of death unto death*.

14 Wherefore hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. 15 Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell: we are at agreement; when the over-

flowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us; for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: 16 Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. 17 Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place. 18 And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it. 19 From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night: and it shall be a vexation only to understand the report. 20 For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it. 21 For the Lord shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act. 22 Now therefore be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong: for I have heard from the Lord God of hosts a consumption, even determined upon the whole earth.

The prophet, having reproved those that made a jest of the word of God, here goes on to reprove those that made a jest of the judgments of God, and set them at defiance; for he is a jealous God, and will not suffer either his ordinances or his providences to be brought into contempt. He addresses himself to the scornful men who ruled in Jerusalem, who were the magistrates of the city, v. 14. It is bad with a people when their thrones of judgment become the seats of the scornful, when rulers are scorners; but that the rulers of Jerusalem should be men of such a character, that they should make light of God's judgments and scorn to take notice of the tokens of his displeasure, is very sad. Who will be mourners in Zion if they are scorners? Observe,

I. How these scornful men lulled themselves asleep in carnal security, and even challenged God Almighty to do his worst (v.

15) *You have said, We have made a covenant with death and the grave.* They thought themselves as sure of their lives, even when the most destroying judgments were abroad, as if they had made a bargain with death, upon a valuable consideration, not to come till they sent for him or not to take them away by any violence, but by old age. If we be at peace with God, and have made a covenant with him, we have in effect made a covenant with death that it shall come in the fittest time, that, whenever it comes, it shall be no terror to us, nor do us any real damage; death is ours if we be Christ's (1 Cor. iii. 22, 23): but to think of making death our friend, or being in league with it, while by sin we are making God our enemy and are at war with him, is the greatest absurdity that can be. It was a fond conceit which these scorners had, "*When the overflowing scourge shall pass through our country, and others shall fall under it, yet it shall not come to us, not reach us, though it extend far, not bear us down, though it is an overflowing scourge.*" It is the greatest folly imaginable for impenitent sinners to think that either in this world or the other they shall fare better than their neighbours. But what is the ground of their confidence? Why, truly, *We have made lies our refuge.* Either, 1. Those things which the prophets told them would be lies and falsehood to them and would deceive, but which they themselves looked upon as substantial fences. The protection of their idols, the promises with which their false prophets soothed them, their policy, their wealth, their interest in the people; these they confided in, and not in God; nay, these they confided in against God. Or, 2. Those things which should be lies and falsehood to the enemy, who was *flagellum Dei*—the scourge of God, the overflowing scourge; they would secure themselves by imposing upon the enemy with their stratagems of war, or their feigned submissions in treaties of peace. The rest of the cities of Judah were taken because they made an obstinate defence; but the rulers of Jerusalem hope to succeed better. They think themselves greater politicians than those of the country towns; they will compliment the king of Assyria with a promise to surrender their city, or to become tributaries to him, with a purpose at the same time to shake off his yoke as soon as the danger is over, not caring though they be found liars to him, as the expression is, Deut. xxxiii. 29. Note, Those put a cheat upon themselves that think to gain their point by putting cheats upon those they deal with. Those that pursue their designs by trick and fraud, by mean and paltry shifts, may perhaps compass them, but cannot expect comfort in them. Honesty is the best policy. But such refuges as these are those driven to that depart from God, and throw themselves out of his protection.

II. How God, by the prophet, awakes them out of this sleep, and shows them the folly of their security.

1. He tells them upon what grounds their might be secure. He does not disturb their false confidences, till he has first showed them a firm bottom on which they may pose themselves (p. 16): *Behold, I lay Zion for a foundation a stone.* This foundation is, (1.) The promises of God in general—his word, upon which he has caused people to hope—his covenant with Abraham that he would be a God to him and his; it is a foundation, a foundation of stone, firm and lasting, for faith to build upon; it is a tried stone, for all the saints have stayed themselves upon it and it never failed them. (2.) The promise of Christ in particular; to him this is expressly applied in the New Testament, 1 Pet. ii. 6—8. He is that stone which has become the head of the corner. The great promise of the Messiah and his kingdom, which was to begin at Jerusalem, was sufficient to make God's people easy in worst of times; for they knew well that he came *the sceptre should not depart from Judah.* Zion shall continue while this foundation is yet to be laid there. "*Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, for the comfort of them that dare not make lies their refuge, Behold, and look upon me as one that has undertaken to lay in Zion a Stone.*" Jesus Christ is a foundation of God's laying. *This is the Lord's doing.* He is laid in Zion, in the church, in the holy hill. He is a tried stone, a trying stone (so some), a touch-stone, to shall distinguish between true and counterfeit. He is a precious stone, for such are the foundations of the New Jerusalem (Rev. xxi. 19), a corner-stone, in whom the stones of the building are united, the head-stone of the corner. And he that believes these promises, and rests upon them, *shall not make haste, shall not run to and fro in a hurry, men at their wits' end, shall not be shifted hither and thither for his own safety, nor driven to his feet by any terrors, nor a wicked man is said to be* (Job xviii. 11) *with a fixed heart shall quietly wait the event, saying, Welcome the will of God. shall not make haste in his expectations, as to anticipate the time set in the divine counsels, but, though it tarry, will wait the appointed hour, knowing that he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.* He that believes will not make more haste than good speed, but be satisfied that God's time is the best time, and wait with patience for it. The apostle from the LXX. explains this, 1 Pet. ii. 6. *He that believes on him shall not be confounded; his expectations shall not be frustrated, but far out-done.*

2. He tells them that upon the ground which they now built on they could not be secure, but their confidences would certainly fail them (p. 17): *Judgment will I lay to the keel, and righteousness to the plummet.* This denoteth

1.) The building up of his church; having laid the foundation (v. 16), he will raise structure, as builders do, by line and plummet, Zech. iv. 10. Righteousness shall be the line and judgment the plummet. The church, being founded on Christ, shall be formed and reformed by the scripture, the standing rule of judgment and righteousness. *Judgment shall return unto righteousness.* Ps. xciv. 15. Or,

2.) The punishing of the church's enemies, against whom he will proceed in strict justice, according to the threatenings of the scripture.

He will give them their deserts, and bring upon them the judgments they have deserved, but in wisdom too, and by an exact rule, that the tares may not be plucked with the wheat. And when God comes to execute judgment,

[1.] These scornful men will be made ashamed of the vain hopes with which they have deluded themselves. *First*, They have trusted to make lies their refuge; but it will not prove a refuge of lies, which the hail shall sweep away, that tempest of hail spoken of in v. 18.

2. Those that make lies their refuge and build upon the sand, and the building will fall when the storm comes, and bury the builder in the ruins of it. Those that make lies their hiding place but Christ shall see that the waters will overflow it, as every vessel but the ark was over-topped and thrown by the waters of the deluge.

3. Those that are confident in the hope of the hypocrite; this will be the ruin of all his confidences. *Secondly*, They have trusted to a covenant with death, and an agreement with the grave; but it shall be annulled, as made without his consent.

4. Those that have the keys and sovereign command of life and death. Those do but delude themselves that think by any wiles to evade the judgments of God. *Thirdly*, They have trusted to the overflowing scourge should be turned from them; but the prophet tells them that when others were falling by the calamity, they should not only share in it, but should be trodden down by it: "You shall be made to it for a treading down; it shall come upon you as much as over any other, and you shall become its easy prey." They were further told (v. 19), 1. That it shall befall them; they shall be so far from escaping it that they shall be the first that shall fall by it: "From the time it goes forth it shall take you, as if it came on purpose to take you." 2. That it shall pursue them daily: "Morning by morning shall it pass by you; as duly as the day returns you shall see some desolation or other made by it; divine justice will follow its blow; you shall never be safe nor easy by day nor by night; there shall be a pestilence walking in the land, and a destruction wasting at noon."

3. That there shall be no avoiding it: "The understanding of the report of its approach shall not give you any opportunity

to make your escape, for there shall be no way of escape open; but it shall be only a vexation, you shall see it coming, and not see how to help yourselves." Or, "The very report of it at a distance will be a terror to you; what then will the thing itself be?"

Evil tidings are a terror and vexation to scornful men, but he whose heart is fixed, trusting in God, is not afraid of them; whereas, when the overflowing scourge comes, then all the comforts and confidences of scornful men fail them, v. 20. (1.) That in which they thought to repose themselves reaches not to the length of their expectations: *The bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself upon it*, so that he is forced to cramp and contract himself. (2.) That in which they thought to shelter themselves proves insufficient to answer the intention: *The covering is narrower than that a man can wrap himself in it*. Those that do not build upon Christ as their foundation, but rest in a righteousness of their own, will prove in the end thus to have deceived themselves; they can never be easy, safe, nor warm; the bed is too short, the covering is too narrow; like our first parents' fig-leaves, the shame of their nakedness will still appear.

[2.] God will be glorified in the accomplishment of his counsels, v. 21. When God comes to contend with these scornful men, *First*, He will do his work, and bring to pass his act, he will work for his own honour and glory, according to his own purpose; the work shall appear to all that see it to be the work of God as the righteous Judge of the earth. *Secondly*, He will do it now against his people, as formerly he did it against their enemies, by which his justice will appear to be impartial; he will now rise up against Jerusalem as, in David's time, against the Philistines in Mount Perazim (2 Sam. v. 20), and as, in Joshua's time, against the Canaanites in the valley of Gibeon. If those that profess themselves members of God's church by their pride and scornfulness make themselves like Philistines and Canaanites, they must expect to be dealt with as such. *Thirdly*, This will be his strange work, his strange act, his foreign deed. It is work that he is backward to: he rather delights in showing mercy, and does not afflict willingly. It is work that he is not used to as to his own people; he protects and favours them. It is a strange work indeed if he turn to be their enemy and fight against them, ch. lxiii. 10. It is a work that all the neighbours will stand amazed at (Deut. xxix. 24); and therefore the ruins of Jerusalem are said to be an astonishment, Jer. xxv. 18.

Lastly, We have the use and application of all this (v. 22): "Therefore be you not mockers; dare not to ridicule either the reproofs of God's word or the approaches of his judgments." Mocking the messengers of the Lord was Jerusalem's measure-filling sin. The consideration of the judgments of

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God that are coming upon hypocritical professors should effectually silence mockers, and make them serious: "*Be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong, both the bands by which you are bound under the dominion of sin*" (for there is little hope of the conversion of mockers) "*and the bands by which you are bound over to the judgments of God.*" God has bands of justice strong enough to hold those that break all the bonds of his law asunder and cast away all his cords from them. Let not these mockers make light of divine threatenings, for the prophet (who is one of those with whom the secret of the Lord is) assures them that the Lord God of hosts has, in his hearing, *determined a consumption upon the whole earth*; and can they think to escape? or shall their unbelief invalidate the threatening?

23 Give ye ear, and hear my voice; hearken, and hear my speech. 24 Doth the ploughman plough all day to sow? Doth he open and break the clods of his ground? 25 When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat and the appointed barley and the rie in their place? 26 For his God doth instruct him to discretion, *and* doth teach him. 27 For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing-instrument, neither is a cart-wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff; and the cummin with a rod. 28 Bread-corn is bruised; because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break *it with* the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it *with* his horsemen. 29 This also cometh forth from the LORD of hosts, *which* is wonderful in counsel, *and* excellent in working.

This parable, which (like many of our Saviour's parables) is borrowed from the husbandman's calling, is ushered in with a solemn preface demanding attention, *He that has ears to hear, let him hear*, hear and understand, v. 23.

I. The parable here is plain enough, that the husbandman applies himself to the business of his calling with a great deal of pains and prudence, *secundum artem*—according to rule, and, as his judgment directs him, observes a method and order in his work. 1. In his ploughing and sowing: *Does the ploughman plough all day to sow?* Yes, he does, and he *ploughs in hope* and sows *in hope*, 1 Cor. ix. 10. *Does he open and break the clods?* Yes, he does, that the land may be fit to receive the seed. And *when he has thus*

made plain the face thereof does he not his seed, seed suitable to the soil? For husbandman knows what grain is fit to clayey ground and what for sandy ground, and, accordingly, he sows each in its place *wheat in the principal place* (so the margin reads it), for it is the principal grain, was a staple commodity of Canaan (Ez. xxvii. 17), and *barley in the appointed place*. The wisdom and goodness of the God of nature are to be observed in this, that, to oblige his creatures with a grateful variety of productions, he has suited to them an agreeable variety of earths. 2. In his threshing, v. 28. This also he proportions to the grain: it is to be threshed out. *The fitches and cummin*, being easily got out of their husks, are only threshed with a staff and a rod; but *the bread-corn* requires more force, therefore that must be bruised with a threshing instrument, a sledge shod with iron, was drawn to and fro over it, to beat out the corn; and yet *he will not be ever threshing* nor any longer than is necessary to loose the corn from the chaff; *he will not break or crush it, into the ground with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it to pieces with his horsemen*; the grinding of it is reserved for another operation. Observe, by the way, what pains are to be taken, not only for earning, but for the preparing of our necessary food; and yet, after all, it is meat that perishes. Shall we then grudge to labour much more for the meat which endureth everlasting life? Bread-corn is bruised, Christ was so; *it pleased the Lord to bruise him*, that he might be the bread of life to us.

II. The interpretation of the parable is not so plain. Most interpreters make further answer to those who set the judgments of God at defiance: "Let them know that as the husbandman will not be always ploughing, but will at length sow his seed, so God will not be always threatening, but will at length execute his threatenings upon sinners the judgments which he has deserved; but in wisdom, and in proportion to their strength, not that they may be ruined, but that they may be reformed and brought to repentance by them." But I think may give this parable a greater latitude in the exposition of it. 1. In general, that who gives the husbandman this wisdom doubtless, himself infinitely wise. It is God that instructs the husbandman to discretion, *as his God*, v. 26. Husbandmen have a great deal of discretion wherewith to order their affairs, and ought not to undertake that business unless they do in some measure understand it; and they should by observation and experience endeavour to improve themselves in the knowledge of it. Since the king himself is served of the field, the advancing the art of husbandry is a common service to mankind more than the cultivating of other arts. The skill of the husbandman is from God, as every good and perfect gift

He takes off somewhat of the weight and error of the sentence passed on man for sin, that when God, in execution of it, sent man to till the ground, he taught him how to do most to his advantage, otherwise, in the greatness of his folly, he might have been ever tilling the sand of the sea, labouring to no purpose. It is he that gives men capacity for this business, an inclination to it, and a delight in it; and if some were not by providence cut out for it, and made to receive (as Issachar, that tribe of husbandmen) their tents, notwithstanding the toil and fatigue of this business, we should soon want the supports of life. If some are more discreet and judicious in managing these or any other affairs than others are, God must be acknowledged in it; and to him husbandmen must seek for direction in their business, for they, above other men, have an immediate dependence upon the divine Providence. As to the other instance of the husbandman's conduct in threshing his corn, it is said, *This also comes forth from the Lord of hosts, v. 29.* Even the plainest dictate of sense and reason must be acknowledged to come forth from the Lord of hosts. And, if it is from him that men do things wisely and discreetly, we must needs acknowledge him to be *wise in counsel and excellent in working.* God's working is according to his will; he never acts against his own mind, as men often do, and there is a counsel in his whole will: he is *therefore* excellent in working, because he is wonderful in counsel. 2. God's church is his husbandry, Cor. 3. 9. If Christ is the true vine, his church is the husbandman (John xv. 1), and he is continually by his word and ordinances cultivating it. *Does the ploughman plough day, and break the clods of his ground, that it may receive the seed, and does not assist by his ministers break up the fallow ground? Does not the ploughman, when the ground is fitted for the seed, cast in the seed in its proper soil? He does so, and so the great God sows his word by the hand of his ministers (Matt. xiii. 19), who are to divide the word of truth and give every one his portion. Whatever the soil of the heart is, there is some seed or other in the word proper for it. And, as the word of God, so the word of God is thus wisely made use of. Afflictions are God's threshing-instruments, designed to loosen us from the world, to separate between us and our chaff, and to prepare us for use. And, as to these, God will make use of them as there is occasion; but he will proportion them to our strength; they shall be no heavier than there is need. The rod and the staff will answer the end, and will not make use of his cart-wheel and his horsemen. And where these are necessary, as for the bruising of the bread-corn which will not otherwise be got clean from the straw, yet he will not be ever threshing; he will not always chide, but his anger shall*

endure but for a moment; nor will he crush under his feet the prisoners of the earth. And herein we must acknowledge him wonderful in counsel and excellent in working.

CHAP. XXIX.

This woe to Ariel, which we have in this chapter, is the same with the "burden of the valley of vision" (ch. xlii. 1), and (it is very probable) points at the same event—the besieging of Jerusalem by the Assyrian army, which was cut off there by an angel; yet it is applicable to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, and its last desolations by the Romans. Here is, I. The event itself foretold, that Jerusalem should be greatly distressed (ver. 1–4. 6), but that their enemies, who distressed them, should be baffled and defeated, ver. 5, 7, 8. II. A reproof to three sorts of sinners—1. Those that were stupid, and regardless of the warnings which the prophet gave them, ver. 9–12. 2. Those that were formal and hypocritical in their religious performances, ver. 13, 14. 3. Those politicians that atheistically and profanely despised God's providence, and set up their own projects in competition with it, ver. 15, 16. III. Precious promises of grace and mercy to a distinguished remnant whom God would sanctify, and in whom he would be sanctified, when their enemies and persecutors should be cut off, ver. 17–24.

WOE to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt! Add ye year to year; let them kill sacrifices. 2 Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow: and it shall be unto me as Ariel. 3 And I will camp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with a mount, and I will raise forts against thee. 4 And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust. 5 Moreover the multitude of thy strangers shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones shall be as chaff that passeth away: yea, it shall be at an instant suddenly. 6 Thou shalt be visited of the LORD of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire. 7 And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her munition, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night-vision. 8 It shall even be as when a hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite: so shall the multitude of all the nations be, that fight against mount Zion.

That it is Jerusalem which is here called Ariel is agreed, for that was the city where

David dwelt; that part of it which was called *Zion* was in a particular manner the city of David, in which both the temple and the palace were. But why it is so called is very uncertain: probably the name and the reason were then well known. Cities, as well as persons, get surnames and nicknames. *Ariel* signifies *the lion of God*, or *the strong lion*: as the lion is king among beasts, so was Jerusalem among the cities, giving law to all about her; it was *the city of the great King* (Ps. xlviii. 1, 2); it was the head-city of Judah, who is called a *lion's whelp* (Gen. xlix. 9) and whose ensign was a lion; and he that is the lion of the tribe of Judah was the glory of it. Jerusalem was a terror sometimes to the neighbouring nations, and, while she was a righteous city, was bold as a lion. Some make *Ariel* to signify *the altar of burnt-offerings*, which devoured the beasts offered in sacrifice as the lion does his prey. Woe to that altar in the city where David dwelt; that was destroyed with the temple by the Chaldeans. I rather take it as a woe to Jerusalem, Jerusalem; it is repeated here, as it is Matt. xxiii. 37, that it might be the more awakening. Here is,

I. The distress of Jerusalem foretold. Though Jerusalem be a strong city, as a lion, though a holy city, as a lion of God, yet, if iniquity be found there, woe be to it. It was *the city where David dwelt*; it was he that brought that to it which was its glory, and which made it a type of the gospel church, and his dwelling in it was typical of Christ's residence in his church. This is mentioned as an aggravation of Jerusalem's sin, that in it were set both the testimony of Israel and the *thrones of the house of David*. 1. Let Jerusalem know that her external performance of religious services will not serve as an exemption from the judgments of God (v. 1): "*Add year to year; go on in the road of your annual feasts, let all your males appear there three times a year before the Lord, and none empty, according to the law and custom, and let them never miss any of these solemnities: let them kill the sacrifices, as they used to do; but, as long as their lives are unreformed and their hearts unhumiliated, let them not think thus to pacify an offended God and to turn away his wrath.*" Note, Hypocrites may be found in a constant track of devout exercises, and treading around in them, and with these they may flatter themselves, but can never please God nor make their peace with him. 2. Let her know that God is coming forth against her in displeasure, that she shall be *visited of the Lord of hosts* (v. 6); her sins shall be enquired into and punished: God will reckon for them with terrible judgments, with the frightful alarms and rueful desolations of war, which shall be like *thunder and earthquakes, storms and tempests, and devouring fire*, especially upon the account of the *great noise*. When a foreign enemy was not

in the borders, but in the bowels of the country, roaring and ravaging, and laying all waste (especially such an army as that the Assyrians, whose commanders being very insolent, as appears by the conduct Rabshakeh, the common soldiers, no doubt were much more rude), they might see the Lord of those hosts visiting them with thunder and storm. Yet, this being here said to *great noise*, perhaps it is intimated that they shall be worse frightened than hurt. Particularly, (1.) Jerusalem shall be besieged straitly besieged. He does not say, *I will destroy Ariel*, but *I will distress Ariel*; as she is *therefore* brought into distress, though being thereby awakened to repent and reform, she may not be brought to destruction. *I will (v. 3) encamp against thee round about.* It was the enemy's army that encamped against it; but God says that he will do it, for though it be his hand, he does it by them. God has often and long, by a host of angels, encamped for them round about them for their protection and deliverance; but now he *turned to be their enemy* and fought against them. The siege laid against them was his laying, and the forts raised against them were of his raising. Note, When men fight against us we must, in them, see God contending with us. (2.) She shall be in great distress, to see the country laid waste and all the fenced cities of Judah in the enemies' hands. *There shall be heaviness and sorrow (v. 4) mourning and lamentation*—so these words are sometimes rendered. Those that are most merry and jovial are commonly when they come to be in distress, most overwhelmed with heaviness and sorrow; the laughter is then turned into mourning. "*Ariel, Jerusalem shall then be unto me as Ariel, the altar, with fire upon it and slain victims about it: so it was when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Chaldeans; and many, doubt, were slain when it was besieged by the Assyrians. 'The whole city shall be an altar in which sinners, falling by the judgment that are abroad, shall be as victims to divine justice.'*" Or thus:—"*There shall be heaviness and sorrow; they shall repent, and reform, and return to God, and then it shall be to me as Ariel. Jerusalem shall be like itself, shall become to me a Jerusalem again, a holy city,*" ch. i. 26. (3.) She shall be humbled, and mortified, and made submissive (v. 4): "*Thou shalt be brought down from the height of arrogancy and insolence to which thou hast arrived: the proud look and the proud language shall be brought down by one humbling providence after another.*" Those that despise God's judgments shall be humbled by them; for the proudest sinners shall either bend or break before him. They had talked big, had *lift up the horn on high*, and had *spoken with stiff neck* (Ps. lxxv. 5); but now thou shalt *speak out of the ground, out of the dust, one that has a familiar spirit, whispering a*

of the dust. This intimates, [1.] That they should be faint and feeble, not able to speak up, nor to say all they would say; but as those who are sick, or whose spirits are ready to fail, their speech shall be low and interrupted. [2.] That they should be fearful, and in consternation, forced to speak low as being afraid lest their enemies should overhear them and take advantage against them. [3.] That they should be tame, and obliged to submit to the conquerors. When Jezekeiah submitted to the king of Assyria, saying, *I have offended, that which thou utterest on me I will bear* (2 Kings xviii. 14), when his speech was low, out of the dust, God can make those to crouch that have been most daring, and quite dispirit them.

II. The destruction of Jerusalem's enemies is foretold, for the comfort of all that were her friends and well-wishers in this distress (v. 5, 7): "*Thou shalt be brought down* (v. 4), *to speak out of the dust*; so low thou shalt be reduced. But" (so it may be rendered) "*the multitude of thy strangers and thy terrible ones, the numerous armies of the enemy, shall themselves be like small dust, not able to speak at all, or so much as whisper, but as chaff that passes away.* Thou shalt be abased, but they shall be quite dispersed, smitten and slain after another manner (ch. xxvii. 7); they shall pass away, *yea it shall be in an instant, suddenly*: the enemy shall be surprised with the destruction, and you with the salvation." The army of the Assyrians was by an angel laid dead upon the spot, in an instant, suddenly. Such will be the destruction of the enemies of the gospel Jerusalem. *In one hour shall their judgment come*, Rev. xviii. 10. Again (v. 6), "*Thou shalt be visited, or* (as used to be rendered) *She shall be visited with thunder and a great noise.* Thou shalt be put into a fright which thou shalt soon recover. But (v. 7) *the multitude of the nations that fight against her shall be as a dream of a night-vision*; they and their prosperity and success shall soon vanish past recall." *The multitude of the nations that fight against Zion shall be as a hungry man who dreams that he eats, but still is hungry*; that is, 1. Whereas they hoped to make a prey of Jerusalem, and to enrich themselves with the plunder of that opulent city, their hopes shall prove vain dreams, with which their fancies may please and sport themselves for a while, but they shall be disappointed. They fancied themselves masters of Jerusalem, but shall never be so. 2. They themselves, and all their pomp, and power, and prosperity, shall vanish like a dream when one awakes, shall be of as little value and as short continuance, Ps. lxxiii. 0. He shall fly away as a dream, Job xx. The army of Sennacherib vanished and was gone quickly, though it had filled the country as a dream fills a man's head, especially as a dream of meat fills the head of

him that went to bed hungry. Many understand these verses as part of the threatening of wrath, when God comes to distress Jerusalem, and lay siege to her. (1.) The multitude of her friends, whom she relies upon for help shall do her no good; for, though they are terrible ones, they shall be like the small dust, and shall pass away. (2.) The multitude of her enemies shall never think they can do her mischief enough; but, when they have devoured her much, still they shall be but like a man who dreams he eats, hungry, and greedy to devour her more.

9 Stay yourselves, and wonder; cry ye out, and cry: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink. 10 For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered. 11 And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot, for it is sealed: 12 And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned. 13 Wherefore the LORD said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: 14 Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work amongst this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid. 15 Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the LORD, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us, and who knoweth us? 16 Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? Or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?

Here, I. The prophet stands amazed at

the stupidity of the greatest part of the Jewish nation. They had Levites, who taught the good knowledge of the Lord and had encouragement from Hezekiah in doing so, 2 Chron. xxx. 22. They had prophets, who brought them messages immediately from God, and signified to them what were the causes and what would be the effects of God's displeasure against them. Now, one would think, *surely this great nation*, that has all the advantages of divine revelation, is a wise and understanding people, Deut. iv. 6. But, alas! it was quite otherwise, v. 9. The prophet addresses himself to the sober thinking part of them, calling upon them to be affected with the general carelessness of their neighbours. It may be read, "They delay, they put off, their repentance, but wonder you that they should be so sottish. They sport themselves with their own deceivings; they riot and revel; but do you cry out, lament their folly, cry to God by prayer for them." The more insensible they are of the hand of God gone out against them the more do you lay to heart these things." Note, The security of sinners in their sinful ways is just matter of lamentation and wonder to all serious people, who should think themselves concerned to pray for those that do not pray for themselves. But what is the matter? What are we thus to wonder at? 1. We may well wonder that the generality of the people should be so sottish and brutish, and so infatuated, as if they were intoxicated: *They are drunken, but not with wine* (not with wine only, though with that they were often drunk), and they *erred through wine*, ch. xxviii. 7. They were drunk with the love of pleasures, with prejudices against religion, and with the corrupt principles they had imbibed. Like drunken men, they know not what they do or say, nor whither they go. They are not sensible of the divine rebukes they are under. *They have beaten me, and I felt it not*, says the drunkard, Prov. xxiii. 35. God speaks to them once, yea, twice; but, like men drunk, they perceive it not, they understand it not, but forget the law. *They stagger* in their counsels, are unstable and unsteady, and stumble at every thing that lies in their way. There is such a thing as spiritual drunkenness. 2. It is yet more strange that God himself should have poured out upon them a spirit of deep sleep, and closed their eyes (v. 10), that he who bids them awake and open their eyes should yet lay them to sleep and shut their eyes; but it is in a way of righteous judgment, to punish them for their *loving darkness rather than light*, their loving sleep. When God by his prophets called them they said, *Yet a little sleep, a little slumber*; and therefore he gave them up to strong delusions, and said, *Sleep on now*. This is applied to the unbelieving Jews, who rejected the gospel

of Christ, and were justly hardened in the infidelity, till wrath came upon them to the uttermost. Rom. xi. 8, *God has given them the spirit of slumber*. And we have reason to fear it is the woeful case of many who live in the midst of gospel light. 3. It is very sad that this should be the case with those who were their prophets, and rulers and seers, that those who should have been their guides were themselves blindfolded, and it is easy to tell what the fatal consequences will be when the blind lead the blind. This was fulfilled when, in the latter days of the Jewish church, the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, were the great opposers of Christ and his gospel, and brought themselves under a judicial infatuation. 4. The sad effect of this was that all the means of conviction, knowledge, and grace, which they enjoyed, were ineffectual, and did not answer the end (v. 11, 12): "*The vision of all the prophets, true and false, has become to you as the words of a book, or letter, that is sealed up*; you cannot discern the truth in the real visions and the falsehood of the pretended ones." Or, every vision particular that this prophet had seen for them, and published to them, had become unintelligible; they had it among them, but were never the wiser for it, any more than a man (though a good scholar) is for a book delivered to him sealed up, and which he may not open the seals of. He sees it is a book, and that is all; he knows nothing what is in it. So they knew that what Isaiah said was a vision and prophecy, but the meaning of it was hidden from them; it was only a sound of words to them, which they were not at all alarmed by, nor affected with; it answered not the intention for it made no impression at all upon them. Neither the learned nor the unlearned were the better for all the messages God sent them by his servants the prophets, nor desired to be so. The ordinary sort of people excused themselves from regarding what the prophets said with their want of learning and a liberal education, as if they were not concerned to know and do the will of God because they were not bred scholars: *It is nothing to me, I am unlearned*. Those of better rank pretended that the prophet had a peculiar way of speaking, which was obscure to them, and which, though they were men of letters, they had not been used to; and, *Si non vis intelligi, debes negligi*—If you wish not to be understood, you deserve to be neglected. Both these are groundless pretences; for God's prophets have been no unfaithful debtors either to the wise or to the unwise. Rom. i. 14. Or we may take it thus:—The book of prophecy was given to them sealed so that they could not read it, as a judgment upon them; because it had often been delivered to them unsealed, and the

would not take pains to learn the language of it, and then made excuse for their not reading it because they were not learned. But observe, "The vision has become thus to you whose minds the god of this world has blinded; but it is not so in itself, it is not so to all; the same vision which to you is a savour of death unto death to others is and shall be a savour of life unto life." Knowledge is easy to him that understands.

II. The prophet, in God's name, threatens those that were formal and hypocritical in their exercises of devotion, v. 13, 14. Observe here,

1. The sin that is here charged upon them—dissembling with God in their religious performances, v. 13. He that knows the heart, and cannot be imposed upon with shows and pretences, charges it upon them, whether their hearts condemn them or it or no. He that is greater than the heart, and knows all things, knows that though they draw nigh to him with their mouth, and honour him with their lips, yet they are not sincere worshippers. To worship God is to make our approaches to him, and to present our adorations of him; it is to draw nigh to him as those that have business with him, with an intention therein to honour him. This we are to do with our mouth and with our lips, in speaking of him and in speaking to him; we must render to him the calves of our lips, Hosea xiv. 2. And, if the heart be full of his love and care, out of the abundance of that the mouth will speak. But there are many whose religion is lip-labour only. They say that which expresses an approach to God and an adoration of him, but it is only from the teeth outward. For, (1.) They do not apply their minds to the service. When they pretend to be speaking to God they are thinking of a thousand impertinences: *They have removed their hearts far from me*, that they might not be employed in prayer, nor come within reach of the word. When work was to be done for God, which required the heart, that was sent out of the way on purpose, with the fool's eyes, into the ends of the earth. (2.) They do not make the word of God the rule of their worship, nor his will their reason: *Their ear towards me is taught by the precept of men*. They worshipped the God of Israel, not according to his appointment, but their own inventions, the directions of their false prophets or their idolatrous kings, or the usages of the nations that were round about them. The tradition of the elders was of more value and validity with them than the laws which God commanded Moses. Or, if they did worship God in a way conformable to his institution in the days of Hezekiah, a great reformer, they had more an eye to the precept of the king than to God's command. This our Saviour applies to the Jews in his time, who were formal in their

devotions and wedded to their own inventions, and pronounces concerning them that in vain they did worship God, Matt. xv. 8, 9.

2. It is a spiritual judgment with which God threatens to punish them for their spiritual wickedness (v. 14): *I will proceed to do a marvellous work*. They did one strange thing; they removed all sincerity from their hearts. Now God will go on and do another; he will remove all sagacity from their heads. *The wisdom of their wise men shall perish*. They played the hypocrite, and thought to put a cheat upon God, and now they are left to themselves to play the fool, and not only to put a cheat upon themselves, but to be easily cheated by all about them. Those that make religion no more than a pretence, to serve a turn, are out in their politics; and it is just with God to deprive those of their understanding who part with their uprightness. This was fulfilled in the wretched infatuation which the Jewish nation were manifestly under, after they had rejected the gospel of Christ; they removed their hearts far from God, and therefore God justly removed wisdom far from them, and hid from their eyes the things that belonged even to their temporal peace. This is a marvellous work; it is surprising, it is astonishing, that wise men should of a sudden lose their wisdom and be given up to strong delusions. Judgments on the mind, though least taken notice of, are to be most wondered at.

III. He shows the folly of those that thought to act separately and secretly from God, and were carrying on designs independent upon God and which they projected to conceal from his all-seeing eye. Here we have, 1. Their politics described (v. 15): *They seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord*, that he may not know either what they do or what they design; they say, "Who sees us? No man, and therefore not God himself." The consultations they had about their own safety they kept to themselves, and never asked God's advice concerning them; nay, they knew they were displeasing to him, but thought they could conceal them from him; and, if he did not know them, he could not baffle and defeat them. See what foolish fruitless pains sinners take in their sinful ways; they seek deep, they sink deep, to hide their counsel from the Lord, who sits in heaven and laughs at them. Note, A practical disbelief of God's omniscience is at the bottom both of the carnal worship and of the carnal confidences of hypocrites; Ps. xciv. 7; Ezek. viii. 12; ix. 9. 2. The absurdity of their politics demonstrated (v. 16): *"Surely your turning of things upside down thus, your various projects, turning your affairs this and that way to make them shape as you would have them—or rather your inverting the order of things, and*

thinking to make God's providence give attendance to your projects, and that God must know no more than you think fit, which is perfectly turning things upside down and beginning at the wrong end—*shall be esteemed as the potter's clay.* God will turn and manage you, and all your counsels, with as much ease and as absolute a power as the potter forms and fashions his clay. See how God despises, and therefore what little reason we have to dread, those contrivances of men that are carried on without God, particularly those against him. (1.) Those that think to hide their counsels from God do in effect deny him to be their Creator. It is as if the work should say of him that made it, "He made me not; I made myself." If God made us, he certainly knows us, as the Psalmist shows (Ps. cxxxix. 1, 13—16); so that those who say that he does not see them might as well say that he did not make them. Much of the wickedness of the wicked arises from this, they forget that God formed them, Deut. xxxii. 18. Or, (2.) Which comes to the same thing, they deny him to be a wise Creator: *The thing framed saith of him that framed it, He had no understanding;* for if he had understanding to make us so curiously, especially to make us intelligent beings and to *put understanding into the inward part* (Job xxxviii. 36), no doubt he has understanding to know us and all we say and do. As those that quarrel with God, so those that think to conceal themselves from him, do in effect charge him with folly; but *he that formed the eye, shall he not see?* Ps. xciv. 9.

17 *Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest?* 18 And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. 19 The meek also shall increase *their* joy in the LORD, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. 20 For the terrible one is brought to nought, and the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off: 21 That make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought. 22 Therefore thus saith the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale. 23 But when he seeth

his children, the work of mine hands in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel. 24 They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.

Those that thought to hide their counsels from the Lord were said to turn things upside down (v. 16), and they intended to do it unknown to God; but God here tells them that he will turn things upside down his way; and let us see whose word shall stand his or theirs. They disbelieve Providence. "Wait awhile," says God, "and you shall be convinced by ocular demonstration that there is a God who governs the world, and that he governs it and orders all the changes that are in it for the good of his church. The wonderful revolution here foretold may refer primarily to the happy settlement of the affairs of Judah and Jerusalem after the defeat of Sennacherib's attempt, and the repose which good people then enjoyed, when they were delivered from the alarms of the sword both of war and persecution. But it may look further, to the rejection of the Jews at the first planting of the gospel (for their hypocrisy and infidelity were here foretold, v. 13) and the admission of the Gentile into the church.

I. In general, it is a great and surprising change that is here foretold, v. 17. *Lebanon that was a forest, shall be turned into a fruitful field;* and Carmel, that was a fruitful field shall become a forest. It is a counterchange. Note, Great changes, both for the better and for the worse, are often made in a very little while. It was a sign given them of the defeat of Sennacherib that the ground should be more than ordinarily fruitful (ch. xxxvii. 30). *You shall eat this year such as grows of itself* food for man shall be (as food for beasts is the spontaneous product of the soil. The Lebanon became a fruitful field, so fruitful that that which used to be reckoned a fruitful field in comparison with it was looked upon but as a forest. When a great harvest of souls was gathered in to Christ from among the Gentiles then the wilderness was turned into a fruitful field; and the Jewish church that had long been a fruitful field, became a desolate and deserted forest, ch. liv. 1.

II. In particular,
1. Those that were ignorant shall become intelligent, v. 18. Those that understood not this prophecy (but it was to them as a sealed book, v. 11) shall, when it is accomplished understand it, and shall acknowledge, not only the hand of God in the event, but the voice of God in the prediction of it: *The deaf shall then hear the words of the book.* The fulfilling of prophecy is the best exposition of it. The poor Gentiles shall then have divine revelation brought among them; and these

that sat in darkness shall see a great light, those that were blind shall see out of obscurity; for the gospel was sent to them to *open their eyes*, Acts xxvi. 18. Observe, In order to the making of men fruitful in good affections and actions, the course God's grace takes with them is to open their understandings and make them hear the words of God's book.

2. Those that were erroneous shall become orthodox (v. 24): *Those that erred in spirit*, that were under mistakes and misapprehensions concerning the words of the book and the meaning of them, shall come to understanding, to a right understanding of things; the Spirit of truth shall rectify their mistakes and lead them into all truth. This should encourage us to pray for those that *have erred and are deceived*, that God can, and often does, bring such to understanding. Those that murmured at the truths of God as hard sayings, and loved to kick quarrels with them, shall learn the true meaning of these doctrines, and then they will be better reconciled to them. Those that erred concerning the providence of God in public affairs, and murmured at the dispensations of it, when they shall see the issue of things shall better understand them and be aware of what God was designing in all, 1 Cor. xiv. 9.

3. Those that were melancholy shall become cheerful and pleasant (v. 19): *The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord*. Those who are poor in the world and poor in spirit, who, being in affliction, accommodate themselves to their affliction, are purely passive and not passionate, when they see God appearing for them, they shall *add*, or *repeat*, joy in the Lord. This intimates that when in their distress they kept up their joy in the Lord, but now they increased it. Note, Those who, when they are in trouble, do not truly rejoice in God, shall soon have grace given them greatly to rejoice in him. When joy in the world is decreasing and fading joy in God is increasing and getting sound. This shining light shall shine more and more; for that which is aimed at is that *this joy may be full*. Even the *poor strong men* may rejoice in the Holy One of Israel, and their poverty needs not deprive them of that joy, Hab. iii. 17, 18. And the meek, the humble, the patient, and dispassionate, shall grow in this joy. Note, The grace of meekness will contribute very much to the increase of our holy joy.

4. The enemies, that were formidable, shall become despicable. Sennacherib, that *terrible* king, and his great army, that put the country to such a consternation, shall be *brought to nought* (v. 20), shall be quite disabled to do any further mischief. The power of Satan, that terrible one indeed, shall be broken by the prevalence of Christ's gospel; and those that were subject to bondage through fear of him that had the

power of death shall be delivered, Heb. ii. 14, 15.

5. The persecutors, that were vexatious, shall be quieted, and so those they were troublesome to shall be quiet from the fear of them. To complete the repose of God's people, not only the terrible one from abroad shall be brought to nought, but the scornors at home too shall be consumed and cut off by Hezekiah's reformation. Those are a happy people, and likely to be so, who, when God gives them victory and success against their terrible enemies abroad, take care to suppress vice, and profaneness, and the spirit of persecution, those more dangerous enemies at home. Or, They shall be consumed and cut off by the judgments of God, shall be singled out to be made examples of. Or, They shall insensibly waste away, being put to confusion by the fulfilling of those predictions which they had made a jest of. Observe what had been the wickedness of these scornors, for which they should be cut off. They had been persecutors of God's people and prophets, probably of the prophet Isaiah particularly, and therefore he complains thus feelingly of them and of their subtle malice. Some as informers and persecutors, others as judges, did all they could to take away his life, or at least his liberty. And this is very applicable to the chief priests and Pharisees, who persecuted Christ and his apostles, and for that sin they and their nation of scornors were cut off and consumed. (1.) They ridiculed the prophets and the serious professors of religion; they despised them, and did their utmost to bring them into contempt; they were scornors, and sat in the seat of the scornful. (2.) They lay in wait for an occasion against them. By their spies they *watch for iniquity*, to see if they can lay hold of any thing that is said or done that may be called an iniquity. Or they themselves watch for an opportunity to do mischief, as Judas did to betray our Lord Jesus. (3.) They took advantage against them for the least slip of the tongue; and, if a thing were ever so little said amiss, it served them to ground an indictment upon. They *made a man*, though he were ever so wise and good a man, though he were a man of God, *an offender for a word*, a word mischosen or misplaced, when they could not but know that it was well meant, v. 21. They cavilled at every word that the prophets spoke to them by way of admonition, though ever so innocently spoken, and without any design to affront them. They put the worst construction upon what was said, and made it criminal by strained innuendoes. Those who consider how apt we all are to speak unadvisedly, and to mistake what we hear, will think it very unjust and unfair to *make a man an offender for a word*. (4.) They did all they could to bring those into trouble that dealt faithfully with them and told them of their faults. Those

that *reprove in the gates*, reprovers by office, that were bound by the duty of their place, as prophets, as judges, and magistrates, to show people their transgressions, they hated these, and laid snares for them, as the Pharisees' emissaries, who were sent to watch our Saviour that they might *entangle him in his talk* (Matt. xxii. 15), that they might have something to lay to his charge which might render him odious to the people or obnoxious to the government. *So persecuted they the prophets*; and it is next to impossible for the most cautious to place their words so warily as to escape such snares. See how base wicked people are, who bear ill-will to those who, out of good-will to them, seek to save their souls from death; and see what need reprovers have both of courage to do their duty and of prudence to avoid the snare. (5.) They pervert judgment, and will never let an honest man carry an honest cause: *They turn aside the just for a thing of nought*; they condemn him, or give the cause against him, upon no evidence, no colour or pretence whatsoever. They run a man down, and misrepresent him, by all the little arts and tricks they can devise, as they did our Saviour. We must not think it strange if we see the best of men thus treated; *the disciple is not greater than his Master*. But wait awhile, and God will not only *bring forth their righteousness*, but cut off and consume these scorners.

6. Jacob, who was made to blush by the reproaches, and made to tremble by the threatenings, of his enemies, shall now be relieved both against his shame and against his fear, by the rolling away of those reproaches and the defeating of those threatenings (v. 22): *Thus the Lord saith who redeemed Abraham*, that is, called him out of Ur of the Chaldees, and so rescued him from the idolatry of his fathers and plucked him as a *brand out of the fire*. He that redeemed Abraham out of his snares and troubles will redeem all that are by faith his genuine seed out of theirs. He that began his care of his church in the redemption of Abraham, when it and its Redeemer were in his loins, will not now cast off the care of it. Because the enemies of his people are so industrious both to blacken them and to frighten them, therefore he will appear for the house of Jacob, and they shall not be ashamed as they have been, but shall have wherewith to answer those that reproach them, nor shall *their faces now wax pale*; but they shall gather courage, and look their enemies in the face without change of countenance, as those have reason to do who have the God of Abraham on their side.

7. Jacob, who thought his family would be extinct and the entail of religion quite cut off, shall have the satisfaction of seeing a numerous progeny devoted to God for a generation, v. 23. (1.) He shall see his children, multitudes of believers and praying people,

the spiritual seed of faithful Abraham wrestling Jacob. Having his quiver full of these arrows, he *shall not be ashamed* (v. 22) but shall speak with his enemy in the gate Ps. cxxvii. 5. Christ *shall not be ashamed* (ch. l. 7), for *he shall see his seed* (ch. liii. 10); he sees some, and foresees more, *in the midst of him*, flocking to the church, and residing there. (2.) His children are the work of God's hands; being formed for him, they are formed for him, *his workmanship created unto good works*. It is some comfort to parents to think that their children are God's creatures, the work of the hands of his providence. But it will be much more a comfort to them to see their children his new creatures, the work of the hands of his grace. (3.) He and his children shall sanctify the name of God as their God, as *the Holy One of Jacob*, and shall fear and worship the God of Israel. This is opposed to his being ashamed and waxing pale; when he is delivered from his contempts and dangers he shall not magnify himself, but *sanctify the Holy One of Jacob*. If God make our condition easy, we must endeavour to make his name glorious. Parents and children are ornaments and comforts indeed to each other when they join in sanctifying the name of God. When parents give up their children, and children give up themselves, to God, to be *to him for a name and a praise*, then the forest will soon become a fruitful field.

CHAP. XXX.

The prophecy of this chapter seems to relate (as that in the foregoing chapter) to the approaching danger of Jerusalem and desolations of Judah by Sennacherib's invasion. Here is, I. A just reproof to those who, in that distress, trusted to the Egyptians for help, and were all in a hurry to fetch succours from Egypt, ver. 1-7. II. A terrible threatening against those who slighted the good advice which God by his prophets gave them for the repose of their mind in that distress, assuring them that whatever became of others, his judgment would certainly overtake them, ver. 8-17. III. A gracious promise to those who trusted in God, that they should not only see through the trouble, but should see happy days after it, times of joy and reformation, plenty of the means of grace, and therewith plenty of outward good things and increasing joys and triumphs (ver. 18-26), and many of these promises are very applicable to gospel grace. IV. A prophecy of the total rout and ruin of the Assyrian army, which should be an occasion of great joy and an introduction to those happy times, ver. 27-33.

WOE to the rebellious children saith the LORD, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin. 2 That walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt! 3 Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion. 4 For his princes were at Zoan, and his ambassadors came to Hanes. 5 They were all ashamed of a people, *that could*

not profit them, nor be a help nor profit, but a shame, and also a reproach. 6 The burden of the beasts of the south: into the land of trouble and anguish, from whence come the young and old lion, the viper and fiery flying serpent, they will carry their riches upon the shoulders of young asses, and their treasures upon the bunches of camels, to a people that shall not profit them. 7 For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and have no purpose: therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength shall sit still.

It was often the fault and folly of the people of the Jews that, when they were insulted by their neighbours on one side, they sought for succour from their neighbours on the other side, instead of looking up to God and putting their confidence in him. Against the Israelites they sought to the Syrians, Chron. xvi. 2, 3. Against the Syrians they sought to the Assyrians, 2 Kings vi. 7. Against the Assyrians they here sought to the Egyptians, and Rabshakeh upbraided them with so doing, 2 Kings xviii.

1. Now observe here,

I. How this sin of theirs is described, and that there was in it that was provoking to God. When they saw themselves in danger and distress, 1. They would not consult God. They would do things of their own heads, and not advise with God, though they had a ready and certain way of doing so by Urim or prophets. They were so confident of the prudence of their own measures that they thought it needless to consult the oracle; nay, they were not willing to put it to that issue: "They take counsel among themselves, and one from another; but they do not ask counsel, much less will they take counsel, of me. They cover with a covering" (they think to secure themselves with one shelter or other, which may serve to cover them from the violence of the storm), "but not of my Spirit" (not such as God by his Spirit, in the mouth of his prophets, directed them to), "and therefore it will prove too short a covering, and refuge of lies." 2. They could not console in God. They did not think it enough to have God on their side, nor were they at all solicitous to make him their friend, but they strengthened themselves in the strength of Pharaoh; they thought him a powerful ally, and doubted not but to be able to cope with the Assyrian while they had him for an ally. The shadow of Egypt (and it was but a shadow) was the covering in which they trusted themselves.

II. What was the evil of this sin. 1. It

bespoke them rebellious children; and a woe is here denounced against them under that character, v. 1. They were, in profession, God's children; but, not trusting in him, they were justly stigmatized as rebellious; for, if we distrust God's providence, we do in effect withdraw ourselves from our allegiance. 2. They added sin to sin. It was sin that brought them into distress; and then, instead of repenting, they trespassed yet more against the Lord, 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. And those that had abused God's mercies to them, making them the fuel of their lusts, abused their afflictions too, making them an excuse for their distrust of God; and so they make bad worse, and add sin to sin; and those that do so, as they make their own chain heavy, so it is just with God to make their plagues wonderful. Now that which aggravated their sin was, (1.) That they took so much pains to secure the Egyptians for their allies: *They walk to go down to Egypt*, travel up and down to find an advantageous road thither; but they have not asked at my mouth, never considered whether God would allow and approve of it or no. (2.) That they were at such a vast expense to do it, v. 6. They load the beasts of the south (horses fetched from Egypt, which lay south from Judea) with their riches, fancying, as it is common with people in a fright, that they were safer any where than where they were. Or they sent their riches thither as bribes to Pharaoh's courtiers, to engage them in their interests, or as pay for their army. God would have helped them gratis; but, if they will have help from the Egyptians, they must pay dearly for it, and they seem willing to do so. The riches that are so spent will turn to a bad account. They carried their effects to Egypt through a land (so it may be read) of trouble and anguish, that vast howling wilderness which lay between Canaan and Egypt, whence come the lion and fiery serpent, Deut. viii. 15. They would venture through that dangerous wilderness, to bring what they had to Egypt. Or it may be meant of Egypt itself, which had been to Israel a house of bondage and therefore a land of trouble and anguish, and which abounded in ravenous and venomous creatures. See what dangers men run into that forsake God, and what dangers they will run into in pursuance of their carnal confidences and their expectations from the creature.

III. What would be the consequence of it. 1. The Egyptians would receive their ambassadors, would address them very respectfully, and be willing to treat with them (v. 4): *His princes were at Zoan*, at Pharaoh's court there, and had their audience of the king, who encouraged them to depend upon his friendship and the succours he would send them. But, 2. They would not answer their expectation: They could not

profit them, v. 5. For God says, *They shall not profit them (v. 6),* and every creature is that to us (and no more) which he makes it to be. The forces they were to furnish them with could not be raised in time; or, when they were raised, they were not fit for service, and they would not venture any of their veteran troops in the expedition; or the march was so long that they could not come up when they had occasion for them; or the Egyptians would not be cordial to Israel, but would secretly incline to the Assyrians, upon some account or other: *The Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose, v. 7.* They shall hinder and hurt, instead of helping. And therefore, 3. These people, that were now so fond of the Egyptians, would at length be ashamed of them, and of all their expectations from them and confidence in them (v. 3): "*The strength of Pharaoh, which was your pride, shall be your shame; all your neighbours will upbraid you, and you will upbraid yourselves, with your folly in trusting to it. And the shadow of Egypt, that land shadowing with wings (ch. xviii. 1), which was your confidence, shall be your confusion; it will not only disappoint you, and be the matter of your shame, but it will weaken all your other supports, and be an occasion of mischief to you.*" God afterwards threatens the ruin of Egypt for this very thing, because they had dealt treacherously with Israel and *been a staff of a reed to them, Ezek. xxix. 6, 7.* The princes and ambassadors of Israel, who were so forward to court an alliance with them, when they come among them shall see so much of their weakness, or rather of their baseness, that *they shall all be ashamed of a people that could not be a help or profit to them, but a shame and reproach, v. 5.* Those that trust in God, in his power, providence, and promise, are never made ashamed of their hope; but those that put confidence in any creature will sooner or later find it a reproach to them. God is true, and may be trusted, but every man a liar, and must be suspected. The Creator is a rock of ages, the creature a broken reed. We cannot expect too little from man nor too much from God.

IV. The use and application of all this (v. 7): "*Therefore have I cried concerning this matter, this project of theirs. I have published it, that all might take notice of it. I have pressed it as one in earnest. Their strength is to sit still, in a humble dependence upon God and his goodness and a quiet submission to his will, and not to wander about and put themselves to great trouble to seek help from this and the other creature.*" If we sit still in a day of distress, hoping and quietly waiting for the salvation of the Lord, and using only lawful regular methods for our own preservation, this will be the strength of our souls both for services and sufferings, and it will engage

divine strength for us. We weaken ourselves, and provoke God to withdraw from us, when we make flesh our arm, for the more our hearts depart from the Lord. When we have tired ourselves by seeking for help from creatures we shall find it the best way of recruiting ourselves to repose in the Creator. *Here I am, let him do with me as he pleases.*

8 Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that may be for the time to come for ever and ever: 9 That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord: 10 Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits: 11 Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us. 12 Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stand thereon: 13 Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, which shall break down suddenly at an instant. 14 And he shall break as the breaking of the potter's vessel, that is broken in pieces; he shall not spare; so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a sherd to take fire from the hearth, or to take water *withal* out of the pit. 15 For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not. 16 But ye said, No; for we will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee; and, We will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift. 17 One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one; at the rebuke of five shall ye flee: till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on a hill.

Here, I. The preface is very awful. The prophet must not only preach this, but he must write it (v. 8), *write it in a table,* to be hung up and exposed to public view; he must carefully *note it*, not in loose paper

which might be lost or torn, but in a book, to be preserved for posterity, in *perpetuam rei memoriam*—for a standing testimony against this wicked generation; let it remain not only to the next succeeding ages, but for ever and ever, while the world stands; and so it shall, for the book of the scriptures, no doubt, shall continue, and be read, to the end of time. Let it be written, 1. To shame the men of the present age, who would not hear and heed it when it was spoken. Let it be written, that it may not be lost; their children may profit by it, though they will not. 2. To justify God in the judgments he was about to bring upon them; people will be tempted to think he was too hard upon them, and over-severe, unless they know how very bad they were, how very provoking, and what fair means God tried with them before he brought it to this extremity. 3. For warning to others not to do as they did, lest they should fare as they fared. It is designed for admonition to those of the remotest place and age, even those upon whom the ends of the world have come, 1 Cor. x. 11. It may be of use for God's ministers not only to preach, but to write; for that which is written remains.

II. The character given of the profane and wicked Jews is very sad. He must, if he will draw them in their own colours, write his concerning them (and we are sure he does not bear false witness against them, nor make them worse than they were, for the judgment of God is according to truth), that this is a rebellious people, v. 9. The Jews were, for aught we know, the only professing people God had then in the world, and yet many of them were a rebellious people. 1. They rebelled against their own convictions and covenants: "They are lying children, that will not stand to what they say, that promise fair, but perform nothing;" when he took them into covenant with himself he said of them, *Surely they are my people, children that will not lie* (ch. lxiii. 8); but they proved otherwise. 2. They rebelled against the divine authority: "They are children that will not hear the law of the Lord, nor heed it, but will do as they have in mind, let God himself say what he will to the contrary."

III. The charge drawn up against them is very high and the sentence passed upon them very dreadful. Two things they here stand charged with, and their doom is read to both, a fearful doom:—

1. They forbade the prophets to speak to them in God's name, and to deal faithfully with them.

(1.) This their sin is described, v. 10, 11. They set themselves so violently against the prophets to hinder them from preaching, or at least from dealing plainly with them in their preaching, did so banter them and browbeat them, that they did in effect say to the prophets, See not. They had the light, but they

loved darkness rather. It was their privilege that they had seers among them, but they did what they could to put out their eyes—that they had prophets among them, but they did what they could to stop their mouths; for they tormented them in their wicked ways, Rev. xi. 10. Those that silence good ministers, and discountenance good preaching, are justly counted, and called, *rebels against God*. See what it was in the prophets' preaching with which they found themselves aggrieved. [1.] The prophets told them of their faults, and warned them of their misery and danger by reason of sin, and they could not bear that. They must speak to them smooth things, must flatter them in their sins, and say that they did well, and there was no harm, no peril, in the course of life they lived in. Let a thing be ever so right and true, if it be not smooth, they will not hear it. But if it be agreeable to the good opinion they have of themselves, and will confirm them in that, though it be ever so false and ever so great a cheat upon them, they will have it prophesied to them. Those deserve to be deceived that desire to be so. [2.] The prophets stopped them in their sinful pursuits, and stood in their way like the angel in Balaam's road, with the sword of God's wrath drawn in their hand; so that they could not proceed without terror. And this they took as a great insult. When they went on frowardly in the way of their hearts they said to the prophets, "Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the paths. What do you do in our way? Cannot you let us alone to do as we please?" Those have their hearts fully set in them to do evil that bid their faithful monitors to stand out of their way. *Forbear, why shouldst thou be smitten?* 2 Chron. xxv. 16. [3.] The prophets were continually telling them of the Holy One of Israel, what an enemy he is to sin and how severely he will reckon with sinners; and this they could not endure to hear of. Both the thing itself and the expression of it were too serious for them; and therefore, if the prophets will speak to them, they will make it their bargain that they shall not call God the Holy One of Israel; for God's holiness is that attribute which wicked people most of all dread. Let us no more be troubled with that state-preface (as Mr. White calls it) to your impertinent harangues. Those have reason to fear perishing in their sins that cannot bear to be frightened out of them.

(2.) Now what is the doom passed upon them for this? We have it, v. 12, 13. Observe, [1.] Who it is that gives judgment upon them: *Thus saith the Holy One of Israel*. That title of God which they particularly excepted against the prophet makes use of. Faithful ministers will not be driven from using such expressions as are proper to awaken sinners, though they be displeasing. We must tell men that God is

the *Holy One of Israel*, and so they shall find him, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear. [2.] What the ground of the judgment is: *Because they despise this word*—either, in general, every word that the prophets said to them, or this word in particular, which declares God to be the *Holy One of Israel*: “they despise this, and will neither make it their fear, to stand in awe of it, nor make it their hope, to put any confidence in it; but, rather than they will be beholden to the *Holy One of Israel*, they will trust in oppression and perverseness, in the wealth they have got and the interest they have made by fraud and violence, or in the sinful methods they have taken for their own security, in contradiction to God and his will. On these they lean, and therefore it is just that they should fall.” [3.] What the judgment is that is passed upon them: “*This iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall.*” This confidence of yours will be like a house built upon the sand, which will fall in the storm and bury the builder in the ruins of it. Your contempt of that word of God which you might build upon will make every thing else you trust to like a wall that bulges out, which, if any weight be laid upon it, comes down, nay, which often sinks with its own weight.” The ruin they would hereby bring upon themselves should be, *First*, A surprising ruin: *The breaking shall come suddenly, at an instant*, when they do not expect it, which will make it the more frightful, and when they are not prepared or provided for it, which will make it the more fatal. *Secondly*, An utter ruin, universal and irreparable: “You and all your confidences shall be not only weak as the potter’s clay (*ch. xxix. 16*), but broken to pieces as the potter’s vessel. He that has the rod of iron shall break it (*Ps. ii. 9*) and he shall not spare, shall not have any regard to it, nor be in care to preserve or keep whole any part of it. But, when once it is broken so as to be unfit for use, let it be dashed, let it be crushed, all to pieces, so that there may not remain one *sherd* big enough to take up a little fire or water”—two things we have daily need of, and which poor people commonly fetch in a piece of a broken pitcher. They shall not only be as a *bowing wall* (*Ps. lxii. 3*), but as a broken mug or glass, which is good for nothing, nor can ever be made whole again.

2. They slighted the gracious directions God gave them, not only how to secure themselves and make themselves safe, but how to compose themselves and make themselves easy; they would take their own way, *v. 15—17*. Observe here,

(1.) The method God put them into for salvation and strength. The God that knew them, and knew what was proper for them, and desired their welfare, gave them this prescription; and it is recommended to us

all. [1.] Would we be saved from the evil of every calamity, guarded against the temptation of it and secured from the curse of it, which are the only evil things in it? It must be *in returning and rest*, in returning to God and reposing in him as our rest. Let us return from our evil ways, into which we have gone aside, and rest and settle in the way of God and duty, and that is the way to be saved. “Return from this project going down to Egypt, and rest satisfied in the will of God, and then you may trust him with your safety. In returning (in the thorough reformation of your hearts and lives) and in rest (in an entire submission of your souls to God and a complacency in him) *you shall be saved.*” [2.] Would we be strengthened to do what is required of us, and to bear what is laid upon us? It must be *in quietness and in confidence*; we must keep our spirits calm and sedate by a continual dependence upon God, and his power and goodness; we must retire into ourselves with a holy quietness, suppressing all turbulent and tumultuous passions, and keeping the peace in our own minds. And we must rely upon God with a holy confidence that he can do what he will and will do what is best for his people. And this will be our strength; it will inspire us with such a holy fortitude as will carry us with ease and courage through all the difficulties we may meet with.

(2.) The contempt they put upon this prescription; they would not take God’s counsel, though it was so much for their own good. And justly will those die of their disease that will not take God for their physician. We are certainly enemies to ourselves if we will not be subjects to him. They would not so much as try the method prescribed: “*But you said, No* (*v. 16*), we will not compose ourselves, for we will flee upon horses and we will ride upon the swift; we will hurry hither and thither to fetch in foreign aids.” They think themselves wiser than God, and that they know what is good for themselves better than he does. When Sennacherib took all the fenced cities of Judah, those rebellious children would not be persuaded to sit still and patiently to expect God’s appearing for them, as he did wonderfully at last; but they would shift for their own safety, and thereby they exposed themselves to so much the more danger.

(3.) The sentence passed upon them for this. Their sin shall be their punishment: “You will flee, and therefore *you shall flee*; you will be upon the full speed, and therefore so shall those be that pursue you.” The dogs are most apt to run barking after him that rides fast. The conquerors protected those that sat still, but pursued those that made their escape; and so that very project by which they hoped to save themselves was justly their ruin and the most guilty suffered most. It is foretold, *v. 17*, [1.] That they

should be easily cut off; they should be so dispirited with their own fears, increased by their flight, that one of the enemy should defeat a thousand of them, and five put an army to flight, which could never be *unless their Rock had sold them*, Deut. xxxii. 30. [2.] That they should be generally cut off, and only here and there one should escape alone in a solitary place, and be left for a spectacle too, *as a beacon upon the top of a mountain*, a warning to others to avoid the like sinful courses and carnal confidences.

18 And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD *is* a God of judgment: blessed *are* all they that wait for him.

19 For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no more: he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee.

20 And *though* the LORD give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers.

21 And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This *is* the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.

22 Ye shall defile also the covering of thy graven images of silver, and the ornament of thy molten images of gold: thou shalt cast them away as a menstruous cloth; thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence.

23 Then shall he give the rain of thy seed, that thou shalt sow the ground withal; and bread of the increase of the earth, and it shall be fat and plenteous: in that day shall thy cattle feed in large pastures.

24 The oxen likewise and the young asses that ear the ground shall eat clean provender, which hath been winnowed with the shovel and with the fan.

25 And there shall be upon every high mountain, and upon every high hill, rivers and streams of waters in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall.

26 Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the LORD bindeth

up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound.

The closing words of the foregoing paragraph (*You shall be left as a beacon upon a mountain*) some understand as a promise that a remnant of them should be reserved as monuments of mercy; and here the prophet tells them what good times should succeed these calamities. Or the first words in this paragraph may be read by way of antithesis, *Notwithstanding this, yet will the LORD wait that he may be gracious*. The prophet, having shown that those who made Egypt their confidence would be ashamed of it, here shows that those who sat still and made God alone their confidence would have the comfort of it. It is matter of comfort to the people of God, when the times are very bad, that *all will be well yet*, well with those that fear God, when we say to the wicked, *It shall be ill with you*.

1. God will be gracious to them and will have mercy on them. This is the foundation of all good. If we find favour with God, and he have mercy upon us, we shall have comfort according to the time that we have been afflicted.

1. The mercy in store for them is very affectingly expressed. (1.) "*He will wait to be gracious* (v. 18); he will wait till you return to him and seek his face, and then he will be ready to meet you with mercy. He will wait, that he may do it in the best and fittest time, when it will be most for his glory, when it will come to you with the most pleasing surprise. He will continually follow you with his favours, and not let slip any opportunity of being gracious to you."

(2.) "*He will stir up himself to deliver you*, will be exalted, will be *raised up out of his holy habitation* (Zech. ii. 13), that he may appear for you in more than ordinary instances of power and goodness; and *thus he will be exalted*, that is, he will glorify his own name. This is what he aims at in having mercy on his people."

(3.) *He will be very gracious* (v. 19), and this in answer to prayer, which makes his kindness doubly kind: "*He will be gracious to thee, at the voice of thy cry*, the cry of thy necessity, when that is most urgent—the cry of thy prayer, when that is most fervent. *When he shall hear it*, there needs no more; at the first word he will answer thee, and say, *Here I am*." Herein he is very gracious indeed. In particular,

[1.] Those who were disturbed in the possession of their estates shall again enjoy them quietly. When the danger is over the people shall dwell in Zion, at Jerusalem, as they used to do; they shall dwell safely, free from the fear of evil. [2.] Those who were all in tears shall have cause to rejoice, and shall weep no more; and those who dwell in Zion, the holy city, will find enough there to wipe away tears from their eyes.

2. This is grounded upon two great truths:

(1.) That *the Lord is a God of judgment*; he is both wise and just in all the disposals of his providence, true to his word and tender of his people. If he correct his children, it is *with judgment* (Jer. x. 24), with moderation and discretion, considering their frame. We think we may safely refer ourselves to a man of judgment; and shall we not commit our way to a God of judgment? (2.) That therefore all those are blessed who *wait for him*, who not only wait on him with their prayers, but wait for him with their hopes, who will not take any indirect course to extricate themselves out of their straits, or anticipate their deliverance, but patiently expect God's appearances for them in his own way and time. Because God is infinitely wise, those are truly happy who refer their cause to him.

II. They shall not again know the want of the means of grace, *v. 20, 21*. Here, 1. It is supposed that they might be brought into straits and troubles after this deliverance was wrought for them. It was promised (*v. 19*), that they should *weep no more* and that God would be *gracious to them*; and yet here it is taken for granted that God may give them the *bread of adversity and the water of affliction*, prisoners' fare (1 Kings xxii. 27), coarse and sorry food, such as the poor use. When one trouble is over we know not how soon another may succeed; and we may have an interest in the favour of God, and such consolations as are sufficient to prohibit weeping, and yet may have bread of adversity given us to eat and water of affliction to drink. Let us therefore not judge of love or hatred by what is before us. 2. It is promised that their eyes should *see their teachers*, that is, that they should have faithful teachers among them, and should have hearts to regard them and not slight them as they had done; and then they might the better be reconciled to the bread of adversity and the water of affliction. It was a common saying among the old Puritans, *Brown bread and the gospel are good fare*. A famine of bread is not so great a judgment as a famine of the word of God, Amos viii. 11, 12. It seems that their teachers had been removed into corners (probably being forced to shift for their safety in the reign of Ahaz), but it shall be so no more. *Veritas non querit angulos—Truth seeks no corners for concealment*. But the teachers of truth may sometimes be driven into corners for shelter; and it goes ill with the church when it is so, when the woman with her crown of twelve stars is forced to flee into the wilderness (Rev. xii. 6), when the prophets are *hidden by fifty in a cave*, 1 Kings xviii. 4. But God will find a time to call the teachers out of their corners again, and to replace them in their solemn assemblies, which shall *see their own teachers*, the *eyes of all the synagogue* being fastened on them, Luke iv. 20. And it will be the more pleasing be-

cause of the restraint they have been for some time under, as light out of darkness, as life from the dead. To all that love God and their own souls this return of faithful teachers out of their corners, especially with a promise that they *shall not be removed into corners any more*, is the most acceptable part of any deliverance, and has comfort enough in it to sweeten even the bread of adversity and the water of affliction. But this is not all: 3. It is promised that they shall have the benefit, not only of the public ministry, but of private and particular admonition and advice (*v. 21*): "*Thy ears shall hear a word behind thee*, calling after thee as a man calls after a traveller that he sees going out of his road." Observe, (1.) Whence this word shall come—from *behind thee*, from some one whom thou dost not see, but who sees thee. "*Thy eyes see thy teachers*; but this is a teacher out of sight, it is thy own conscience, which shall now by the grace of God be awakened to do its office." (2.) What the word shall be: "*This is the way, walk you in it*. When thou art doubting, conscience shall direct thee to the way of duty; when thou art dull and trifling, conscience shall quicken thee in that way." "As God has not left himself without witness, so he has not left us without guides to show us our way." (3.) The seasonableness of this word: It shall come *when you turn to the right hand or to the left*. We are very apt to miss our way; there are turnings on both hands, and those so tracked and seemingly straight that they may easily be mistaken for the right way. There are right-hand and left-hand errors, extremes on each side virtue; the tempter is busy courting us into the by-paths. It is happy then if by the particular counsels of a faithful minister or friend, or the checks of conscience and the strivings of God's Spirit, we be set right and prevented from going wrong. (4.) The success of this word: "*It shall not only be spoken, but thy ears shall hear it*; whereas God has formerly *spoken once, yea, twice*, and thou *hast not perceived it* (Job xxxiii. 14), now thou shalt listen attentively to these secret whispers, and hear them with an obedient ear." If God gives us not only the word, but the hearing ear, not only the means of grace, but a heart to make a good use of those means, we have reason to say, He is very gracious to us, and reason to hope he has yet further mercy in store for us.

III. They shall be cured of their idolatry, shall fall out with their idols, and never be reconciled to them again, *v. 22*. The deliverance God shall work for them shall convince them that it is their interest, as well as duty, to serve him only; and they shall own that, as their trouble was brought upon them for their idolatries, so it was removed upon condition that they should not return to them! This is also the good effect of their seeing their teachers and hearing the word

behind them; by this it shall appear that they are the better for the means of grace they enjoy—they shall break off from their best-beloved sin. Observe, 1. How foolishly mad they had formerly been upon their idols, in the day of their apostasy. Idolaters are said to be *mad upon their idols* (Jer. 1. 38), *doatingly fond of them*. They had *graven images of silver*, and *molten images of gold*, and, though gold needs no painting, they had coverings and ornaments on these; they spared no cost in doing honour to their idols. 2. How wisely mad (if I may so speak) they now were at their idols, what a holy indignation they conceived against them in the day of their repentance. They not only degraded their images, but defaced them, not only defaced them, but defiled them; they not only spoiled the shape of them, but in a pious fury threw away the gold and silver they were made of, though otherwise valuable and convertible to a good use. They could not find in their hearts to make any vessel of honour of them. The rich clothes wherewith their images were dressed up they cast away as a filthy cloth which rendered those that touched it *unclean until the evening*, Lev. xv. 23. Note, To all true penitents sin has become very odious; they loathe it, and loathe themselves because of it; they cast it away to the dunghill, the fittest place for it, nay, to the cross, for they crucify the flesh; their cry against it is, *Crucify it; crucify it*. They say unto it, *Abi hinc in malam rem—Get thee hence*. They are resolved never to harbour it any more. They put as far from as they can all the occasions of sin and temptations to it, though they are as a right eye or a right hand, and protest against it as Ephraim did (Hos. xiv. 8), *What have I to do any more with idols?* Probably this was fulfilled in many particular persons, who, by the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib's army, were convinced of the folly of their idolatry and forsook it. It was fulfilled in the body of the Jewish nation at their return from their captivity in Babylon, for they abhorred idols ever after; and it is accomplished daily in the conversion of souls, by the power of divine grace, from spiritual idolatry to the fear and love of God. Those that join themselves to the Lord must abandon every sin, and say unto it, *Get thee hence*.

IV. God will then give them plenty of all good things. When he gives them their teachers, and they give him their hearts, so that they begin to seek the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, *then all other things shall be added to them*, Matt. vi. 33. And when the people are brought to praise God *then shall the earth yield her increase, and with it God, even our own God, shall bless us*, Ps. lxxvii. 5, 6. So it follows here: "When you shall have abandoned your idols, *then shall God give the rain of your seed*," v.

23. When we return to God in a way of duty he will meet us with his favours. 1. God will give you rain of your seed, rain to water the seed you sow, just at the time that it calls for it, as much as it needs and no more. Observe, How man's industry and God's blessing concur to the good things we enjoy relating to the life that now is: *Thou shalt sow the ground*, that is thy part, and then *God will give the rain of thy seed*, that is his part. It is so in spiritual fruit; we must take pains with our hearts and then wait on God for his grace. 2. The increase of the earth shall be rich and good, and every thing the best of the kind; it shall be *fat and fat*, very fat and very good, *fat and plenteous* (so we read it), good and enough of it. Your land shall be Canaan indeed; it was remarkably so after the defeat of Sennacherib, by the special blessing of God, ch. xxxvii. 30. God would thus repair the losses they sustained by that devastation. 3. Not only the tillage, but the pasture-ground should be remarkably fruitful: *The cattle shall feed in large pastures*; those that are at grass shall have room enough, and the oxen and asses that are kept up for use, to ear the ground, which must be the better fed for their being worked, *shall eat clean provender*. The corn shall not be given them in the chaff as usual, to make it go the further, but they shall have good clean corn fit for man's use, being *winnowed with the fan*. The brute-creatures shall share in the abundance; it is fit they should, for they groan under the burden of the curse which man's sin has brought upon the earth. 4. Even the tops of the mountains, that used to be barren, shall be so well watered with the rain of heaven that there shall be *rivers and streams* there, and running down thence to the valleys (v. 25), and this *in the day of the great slaughter* that should be made by the angel in the camp of the Assyrians, *when the towers and batteries they had erected for the carrying on of the siege of Jerusalem, the army being slain, should fall of course*. It is probable that this was fulfilled in the letter of it, and that about the same time that that army was cut off there were extraordinary rains in mercy to the land.

V. The effect of all this should be extraordinary comfort and joy to the people of God, v. 26. Light shall increase; that is, knowledge shall increase (when the prophecies are accomplished they shall be fully understood) or rather triumph shall: the light of the joy that is sown for the righteous shall now come up with a great increase. *The light of the moon shall become as bright and as strong as that of the sun, and that of the sun shall increase proportionably and be as the light of seven days*; every one shall be much more cheerful and appear much more pleasant than usual. There shall be a high spring-tide of joy in Judah and Jerusalem, upon occasion of the ruin of the

Assyrian army, *when the Lord binds up the breach of his people*, not only saves them from being further wounded, but heals the wounds that have been given them by this invasion and makes up all their losses. The great distress they were reduced to, their despair of relief, and the suddenness of their deliverance, would much augment their joy. This is not unfitly applied by many to the light which the gospel brought into the world to those that sat in darkness, which as far exceeded the Old-Testament light as that of the sun does that of the moon, and which proclaims *healing to the broken-hearted, and the binding up of their wounds*.

27 Behold, the name of the LORD cometh from far, burning *with his anger*, and the burthen *thereof is heavy*: his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire: 28 And his breath, as an overflowing stream, shall reach to the midst of the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity: and *there shall be* a bridle in the jaws of the people, causing *them* to err. 29 Ye shall have a song, as in the night *when a holy solemnity is kept*; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the LORD, to the mighty One of Israel. 30 And the LORD shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall show the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of *his anger*, and *with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones*. 31 For through the voice of the LORD shall the Assyrian be beaten down, *which smote with a rod*. 32 And *in every place where the grounded staff shall pass, which the LORD shall lay upon him, it shall be with tabrets and harps*: and in battles of shaking will he fight with it. 33 For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made *it deep and large*: the pile thereof *is* fire and much wood; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.

This terrible prediction of the ruin of the Assyrian army, though it is a threatening to them, is part of the promise to the Israel of God, that God would not only punish the Assyrians for the mischief they had done to the Israel of God, but would dis-

able and deter them from doing the like again; and this prediction, which would now shortly be accomplished, would ratify and confirm the foregoing promises, which should be accomplished in the latter days. Here is,

I. God Almighty angry, and coming forth in anger against the Assyrians. He is here introduced in all the power and all the terror of his wrath, v. 27. *The name of Jehovah*, which the Assyrians disdain and set at a distance from them, as if they were out of its reach and it could do them no harm, *behold, it comes from far*. A messenger in the name of the Lord comes from as far off as heaven itself. He is a messenger of wrath, *burning with his anger*. God's lips are full of indignation at the blasphemy of Rabshakeh, who compared the God of Israel with the gods of the heathen; *his tongue is as a devouring fire*, for he can speak his proud enemies to ruin; his very breath comes with as much force as an overflowing stream, and with it he shall slay the wicked, ch. xi. 4. He does not stifle or smother his resentments, as men do theirs when they are either causeless or impotent; but he shall cause *his glorious voice to be heard* when he proclaims war with an enemy that sets him at defiance, v. 30. He shall display the indignation of his anger, anger in the highest degree; it shall be as *the flame of a devouring fire*, which carries and consumes all before it, with *lightning* or dissipation, and with *tempest and hailstones*, all which are the formidable phenomena of nature, and therefore expressive of the terror of the Almighty God of nature.

II. The execution done by this anger of the Lord. Men are often angry when they can only threaten and talk big; but when God causes his glorious voice to be heard that shall not be all: he will *show the lighting down of his arm too*, v. 30. The operations of his providence shall accomplish the menaces of his word. Those that *would not see the lifting up of his arm* (ch. xxvi. 11) shall feel the lighting down of it, and find to their cost, that the burden thereof is heavy (v. 27), so heavy that they cannot bear it, nor bear up against it, but must unavoidably sink and be crushed under it. *Who knows the power of his anger* or imagines what an offended God can do? Five things are here prepared for the execution:—1. Here is an *overflowing stream*, that shall reach to the midst of the neck, shall quite overwhelm the whole body of the army, and Sennacherib only, the head of it, shall keep above water and escape this stroke, while yet he is reserved for another in the house of Nisroch his god. The Assyrian army had been to Judah as *an overflowing stream, reaching even to the neck* (ch. viii. 7, 8), and now the breath of God's wrath will be so to it. 2. Here is a *sieve of vanity*, with which God would sift those nations of which the

Assyrian army was composed, *v.* 28. The great God can sift nations, for they are all before him as the small dust of the balance; he will sift them, not to gather out of them any that should be preserved, but so as to shake them one against another, put them into great consternation, and shake them all away at last; for it is a sieve of vanity (which retains nothing) that they are shaken with, and they are found all chaff. 3. Here is a *bridle*, which God has in their jaws, to curb and restrain them from doing the mischief they would do, and to force and constrain them to serve his purposes against their own will, *ch.* x. 7. God particularly says of Sennacherib (*ch.* xxxvii. 29) that he will put a hook in his nose and a bridle in his lips. It is a *bridle causing them to err*, forcing them to such methods as will certainly be destructive to themselves and their interest and in which they will be infatuated. God with a word guides his people into the right way (*v.* 21), but with a bridle he turns his enemies headlong upon their own ruin. 4. Here is a *rod and a staff*, even the *voice of the Lord*, his word giving orders concerning it, with which the *Assyrian shall be beaten down*, *v.* 31. The Assyrian had been himself a rod in God's hand for the chastising of his people, and had smitten them, *ch.* x. 5. That was a transient rod; but against the Assyrian shall go forth a *grounded staff*, that shall give a steady blow, shall stick close to him and strike home, so as to leave an impression upon him. It is a staff with a foundation, founded upon the enemies' deserts and God's determinate counsel. It is a consumption determined (*ch.* x. 23), and therefore there is no escaping it, no getting out of the reach of it; it shall pass in every place where an Assyrian is found, and the Lord shall *lay it upon him*, and cause it to rest, *v.* 32. Such is the woeful case of those that persist in enmity to God: *the wrath of God abides on them.* 5. Here is *Tophet ordained and prepared* for them, *v.* 33. The valley of the son of Hinnom, adjoining to Jerusalem, was called *Tophet*. In that valley, it is supposed, many of the Assyrian regiments lay encamped, and were there slain by the destroying angel; or there the bodies of those that were so slain were burned. Hezekiah had *lately, and from yesterday* (so the word is) *ordained it*; that is, say some, he had cleared it of the images that were set up in it, to which they there burnt their children, and so prepared it to be a receptacle for the dead bodies of their enemies, *for the king of Assyria* (that is, for his army) *it is prepared*, and there is fuel enough ready to burn them all; and they shall be consumed as suddenly and effectually as if the fire were kept burning by a continual stream of brimstone, for such the breath of the Lord, his word and his wrath, will be to it. Now as the prophet, in the foregoing promises, slides insensibly into

the promises of gospel graces and comforts, so here, in the threatening of the ruin of Sennacherib's army, he points at the final and everlasting destruction of all impenitent sinners. Our Saviour calls the future misery of the damned *Gehenna*, in allusion to the valley of Hinnom, which gives some countenance to the applying of this to that misery, as also that in the Apocalypse it is so often called the *lake that burns with fire and brimstone*. This is said to be prepared of old for the devil and his angels, for the greatest of sinners, the proudest, and that think themselves not accountable to any for what they say and do; even for kings it is prepared. It is *deep and large*, sufficient to receive the world of the ungodly; the *pile thereof is fire and much wood*. God's wrath is the fire, and sinners make themselves fuel to it; and the *breath of the Lord* (the power of his anger) *kindles it*, and will keep it ever burning. See *ch.* lxvi. 24. Wherefore *stand in awe and sin not*.

III. The great joy which this should occasion to the people of God. The Assyrian's fall is Jerusalem's triumph (*v.* 29). *You shall have a song as in the night*, a psalm of praise such as those sing who *by night stand in the house of the Lord*, and sing to his glory who *gives songs in the night*. It shall not be a song of vain mirth, but a sacred song, such as was sung when a holy solemnity was kept in a grave and religious manner. Our joy in the fall of the church's enemies must be a holy joy, *gladness of heart, as when one goes, with a pipe* (such as the sons of the prophets used when they prophesied, 1 Sam. x. 5), *to the mountain of the Lord*, there to celebrate the praises of the *Mighty One of Israel*. Nay, in every place where the divine vengeance shall pursue the Assyrians they shall not only fall unlamented, but all their neighbours shall attend their fall *with tabrets and harps*, pleased to see how God, *in battles of shaking*, such as shake them out of the world, fights with them (*v.* 32); for *when the wicked perish there is shouting*; and it is with a particular satisfaction that wise and good men see the ruin of those who, like the Assyrians, have insolently bidden defiance to God and trampled upon all mankind.

CHAP. XXXI.

This chapter is an abridgment of the foregoing chapter; the head of it are much the same. Here is, I. A woe to those who, when the Assyrian army invaded them, trusted to the Egyptians, and not to God, for succour, *ver.* 1-3. II. Assurance given of the care God would take of Jerusalem in that time of danger and distress, *ver.* 4, 5. III. A call to repentance and reformation, *ver.* 6, 7. IV. A prediction of the fall of the Assyrian army, and the fright which the Assyrian king should thereby be put into, *ver.* 8, 9.

WOE to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because *they are many*; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of

Israel, neither seek the LORD! 2 Yet he also *is* wise, and will bring evil, and will not call back his words: but will arise against the house of the evil doers, and against the help of them that work iniquity. 3 Now the Egyptians *are* men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit. When the LORD shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they all shall fail together. 4 For thus hath the LORD spoken unto me, Like as the lion and the young lion roaring on his prey, when a multitude of shepherds is called forth against him, *he* will not be afraid of their voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them: so shall the LORD of hosts come down to fight for mount Zion, and for the hill thereof. 5 As birds flying, so will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver *it*; and passing over he will preserve *it*.

This is the last of four chapters together that begin with woe; and they are all woes to the sinners that were found among the professing people of God, to the drunkards of Ephraim (ch. xxviii. 1), to Ariel (ch. xxix. 1), and to the rebellious children (ch. xxx. 1), and here to those that go down to Egypt for help; for men's relation to the church will not secure them from divine woes if they live in contempt of divine laws. Observe,

I. What the sin was that is here reprov'd, v. 1. 1. Idolizing the Egyptians, and making court to them, as if happy were the people that had the Egyptians for their friends and allies. They go down to Egypt for help in every exigence, as if the worshippers of false gods had a better interest in heaven and were more likely to have success on earth than the servants of the living and true God. That which invited them to Egypt was that the Egyptians had many chariots to accommodate them with, andorses and horsemen that were strong; and, if they could get a good body of forces thence into their service, they would think themselves able to deal with the king of Assyria and his numerous army. Their kings were forbidden to multiply horses and chariots, and were told of the folly of trusting to them (Ps. xx. 7); but they think themselves wiser than their Bible. 2. Slighting the God of Israel: They look not to the Holy One of Israel, as if he were not worth taking notice of in this distress. They advise not with him, seek not his favour, nor are in any care to make him their friend.

II. The gross absurdity and folly of this sin. 1. They neglected one whom, if they would not hope in him, they had reason to fear. They do not seek the Lord, nor make their application to him, yet he also is wise. 2. They are solicitous to get the Egyptians into an alliance with them, because they have the reputation of a politic people, and is not God wise too? and would not infinite wisdom, engaged on their side, strengthen them in more stead than all the policies of Egypt? They are at the pains of going down to Egypt, a tedious journey, when they might have had better advice, and better help, by looking up to heaven, and would not. But, if they will not court God's wisdom to act for them, they shall find it against them. He is wise, too wise for them to outwit, and he will bring evil upon those who thus affront him. He will not call back his words as men do (because they are fickle and foolish), but he will arise against the house of the evil-doers, this cabal of the evildoers that go down to Egypt; God will appear to their confusion, according to the word that he has spoken, and will oppose the help that they think to bring in from the workers of iniquity. Some think the Egyptians made one condition of their coming into an alliance with them that they should worship the gods of Egypt, and they consented to it, and therefore they are both called *evil-doers* and *workers of iniquity*. 2. They trusted to those who were unable to help them and would soon appear to be so, v. 3. Let them know that the Egyptians, whom they depend much upon, are men and not God. As it is good for men to know themselves to be but men (Ps. ix. 20), so it is good for us to consider that those we love and trust to are but men. They therefore can do nothing without God, nothing against him, nothing in comparison with him. They are men, and therefore fickle and foolish, mutable as mortal, here to day and gone to morrow; they are men, and therefore let us not make gods of them, by making them our hope and confidence, and expecting that in them which is to be found in God only; they are not God, they cannot do that for us which God can do, and will, if we trust in him. Let us not then neglect him, to seek help from them; let us not forsake the rock of ages for broken reeds, nor the fountain of living waters for broken cisterns. The Egyptians indeed have horses that are very strong, but they are flesh, and not spirit, and therefore, strong as they are, they may be wearied with a long march, and become unserviceable, or be wounded and slain in battle, and leave their riders to be ridden over. Every one knows this, that the Egyptians are not God, and their horses are not spirit; but those that seek to them for help do not consider it, else they would not put such confidence in them. Sinners may be convicted of folly by the plainest and most self-evident truth

which they cannot deny, but will not believe. 3. They would certainly be ruined with the Egyptians they trusted in, v. 3. *Then the Lord does but stretch out his hand* how easily, how effectually, will he make them ashamed of their confidence in Egypt, and the Egyptians ashamed of the encouragement they gave them to trust in them; *for he that helps and he that is helped shall lie together*, and their mutual alliance shall prove their joint ruin. The Egyptians were shortly to be reckoned with, as appears by *the burden of Egypt* (ch. xix), and then those who fled to them for shelter and succour would fall with them; for there is no escaping the judgments of God. *Evil pursues unners*, and it is just with God to make that creature a scourge to us which we make an idol of. 4. They took God's work out of his hands. They pretended a great deal of care to preserve Jerusalem, in advising to an alliance with Egypt; and, when others could not fall in with their measures, they pleaded self-preservation, and went to Egypt themselves. Now the prophet here tells them that Jerusalem should be preserved without aid from Egypt and that those who relied there should be safe when those who fled to Egypt should be ruined. Jerusalem as under God's protection, and therefore there was no occasion to put it under the protection of Egypt. But a practical distrust of God's all-sufficiency is at the bottom of all our sinful departures from him to the creature. The prophet tells them he had it from God's own mouth: *Thus hath the Lord spoken to me*. They might depend upon it, (1.) that God would appear against Jerusalem's enemies with the boldness of a lion over his prey, v. 4. *When the lion comes out to seize his prey a multitude of shepherds come out against him*; for it becomes neighbours to help one another when persons or goods are in danger. These shepherds dare not come near the lion; all they can do is to make a noise, and with that they think to frighten him off. But does he regard it? *No: he will not be afraid of their voice*, nor base himself so far as to be in the least moved by it either to quit his prey or to make any more haste than otherwise he would do in seizing it. *Thus will the Lord of hosts come down to fight for Mount Zion*, with such an unshaken undaunted resolution not to be moved by any opposition; and he will as easily and irresistibly destroy the Assyrian army as a lion tears a lamb in pieces. Whoever appear against God, they are but like a multitude of poor simple shepherds shouting at a lion, who scorns to take notice of them or so much as to alter his pace for them. Surely those that have such a protector need not go to Egypt for help. (2.) that God would appear for Jerusalem's friends with the tenderness of a bird over her young, v. 5. God was ready to *gather Jerusalem, as a hen gathers her brood under her*

wings (Matt. xxiii. 37); but those that trusted to the Egyptians would not be gathered. *As birds flying to their nests with all possible speed*, when they see them attacked, and fluttering about their nests with all possible concern, hovering over their young ones to protect them and drive away the assailants, with such compassion and affection *will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem*. As an eagle stirs up her young when they are in danger, *takes them and bears them on her wings*, so the Lord led Israel out of Egypt (Deut. xxxii. 11, 12); and he has now the same tender concern for them that he had then, so that they need not flee into Egypt again for shelter. *Defending, he will deliver it*; he will so defend it as to secure the continuance of its safety, not defend it for a while and abandon it at last, but defend it so that it shall not fall into the enemies' hand. *I will defend this city to save it, ch. xxxvii. 35. Passing over he will preserve it*; the word for passing over is used in this sense only here and Exod. xii. 12, 23, 27, concerning the destroying angel's passing over the houses of the Israelites when he slew all the first-born of the Egyptians, to which story this passage refers. The Assyrian army was to be routed by a destroying angel, who should pass over Jerusalem, though that deserved to be destroyed, and draw his sword only against the besiegers. They shall be slain by the pestilence, but none of the besieged shall take the infection. Thus he will again pass over the houses of his people and secure them.

6 Turn ye unto him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted. 7 For in that day every man shall cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which your own hands have made unto you for a sin. 8 Then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword, not of a mighty man; and the sword, not of a mean man, shall devour him: but he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall be discomfited. 9 And he shall pass over to his strong hold for fear, and his princes shall be afraid of the ensign, saith the LORD, whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem.

This explains the foregoing promise of the deliverance of Jerusalem; she shall be fitted for deliverance, and then it shall be wrought for her; for in that method God delivers.

I. Jerusalem shall be reformed, and so she shall be delivered from her enemies within her walls, v. 6, 7. Here is, 1. A gracious call to repentance. This was the Lord's voice crying in the city, the voice of

the rod, the voice of the sword, and the voice of the prophets interpreting the judgment: "Turn you, O turn you now, from your evil ways, unto God, return to your allegiance to him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted, from whom you, O children of Israel! have revolted." He reminds them of their birth and parentage, that they were children of Israel, and therefore under the highest obligations imaginable to the God of Israel, as an aggravation of their revolt from him and as an encouragement to them to return to him. "They have been backsliding children, yet children; therefore let them return, and their backslidings shall be healed. They have deeply revolted, with great address as they supposed (*the revolters are profound*, Hos. v. 2); but the issue will prove that they have revolted dangerously. The stain of their sins has gone deeply into their nature, not to be easily got out, like the blackness of the Ethiopian. *They have deeply corrupted themselves* (Hos. ix. 9); they have sunk deep into misery, and cannot easily recover themselves; therefore you have need to hasten your return to God." 2. A gracious promise of the good success of this call (v. 7): *In that day every man shall cast away his idols*, in obedience to Hezekiah's orders, which, till they were alarmed by the Assyrian invasion, many refused to do. That is a happy fright which frightens us from our sins. (1.) It shall be a general reformation: every man shall cast away his own idols, shall begin with them before he undertakes to demolish other people's idols, which there will be no need of when every man reforms himself. (2.) It shall be a thorough reformation; for they shall part with their idolatry, their beloved sin, with their *idols of silver and gold*, their idols that they are most fond of. Many make an idol of their silver and gold, and by the love of that idol are drawn to revolt from God; but those that turn to God cast that away out of their hearts and will be ready to part with it when God calls. (3.) It shall be a reformation upon a right principle, a principle of piety, not of politics. They shall cast away their idols, because they have been unto them *for a sin*, an occasion of sin; therefore they will have nothing to do with them, though they had been the work of their own hands, and upon that account they had a particular fondness for them. Sin is the work of our own hands, but in working it we have been working our own ruin, and therefore we must cast it away; and those are strangely wedded to it who will not be prevailed upon to cast it away when they see that otherwise they themselves will be cast-aways. Some make this to be only a prediction that those who trust in idols, when they find they stand them in no stead, will cast them away in indignation. But it agrees so exactly with *ch. xxx, 22* that I rather

take it as a promise of a sincere reformation.

II. Jerusalem's besiegers shall be routed and so she shall be delivered from the enemies about her walls. The former makes way for this. If a people return to God they may leave it to him to plead their cause against their enemies. When they have cast away their idols, *then shall the Assyrians fall*, v. 8, 9. 1. The army of the Assyrians shall be laid dead upon the spot *by the sword of a mighty man, nor of a mean man*, nor of any man at all, either Israelite or Egyptian, not forcibly by the sword of a mighty man nor surreptitiously by the sword of a mean man, but by the sword of an angel who strikes more strongly than a mighty man and yet more secretly than a mean man, by the sword of the Lord, and by the power and wrath in the hand of the angel. Thus the young men of the army shall meet death and be discomfited, and become tributaries to death. When God has work to do against the enemies of his church we expect it must be done by mighty men and mean men, officers and common soldiers; whereas God can, if he pleases, do it without either. He needs not armies of men who has legions of angels at command, Matt. xxvi. 53. 2. The king of Assyria shall flee for the same, shall flee from that invisible sword, hoping to get out of the reach of it; and he shall make the best of his way to his own dominion, shall pass over to some strong-hold of his own, for fear lest the Jews should pursue him now that his army was routed. Sennacherib had been very confident that he should make himself master of Jerusalem, and in the most insolent manner had set both God and Hezekiah at defiance; yet now he is made to tremble for fear of both. God will strike a terror into the proudest of men, and make the stoutest heart to tremble. See Job xviii. 11; xx. 24. *His princes that accompany him shall be afraid of the ensign* shall be in a continual fright at the remembrance of the ensign in the air, which perhaps the destroying angel displayed before he gave the fatal blow. Or they shall be afraid of every ensign they see, suspecting it is a party of the Jews pursuing them. The banner that God displays for the encouragement of his people (Ps. lx. 4) will be a terror to his and their enemies. Thus he *cut off the spirit of princes and is terrible to the kings of the earth*. But who will do this? It is the Lord, whose fire is in Zion and whose furnace is in Jerusalem. (1.) Whose residence is there, and who there keeps house, as man does where his fire and his oven are. It is the city of the great King, and let not the Assyrians think to turn him out of the possession of his own house. (2.) Who has there a consuming fire to all his enemies and will make them as a fiery oven in the day of his wrath, Ps. xxi. 9. He is himself *a wall of fire round about Jerusalem*, so that

whoever assaults her does so at his peril, Zech. ii. 5: Rev. xi. 5. (3.) Who has his altar there, on which the holy fire is continually kept burning and sacrifices are daily offered to his honour, and with which he is well pleased; and therefore he will defend this city, especially having an eye to the great sacrifice which was there also to be offered, of which all the sacrifices were types. If we keep up the fire of holy love and devotion in our hearts and houses, we may depend upon God to be a protection to us and them.

CHAP. XXXII.

This chapter seems to be such a prophecy of the reign of Hezekiah as amounts to an abridgment of the history of it, and this with an eye to the kingdom of the Messiah, whose government was typified by the thrones of the house of David, for which reason he is so often called "the Son of David." Here is, I. A prophecy of that good work of reformation with which he should begin his reign, and the happy influence it should have upon the people, who had been wretchedly corrupted and debauched in the reign of his predecessor, ver. 1—8. II. A prophecy of the great disturbance that would be given to the kingdom in the middle of his reign by the Assyrian invasion, ver. 9—14. III. A promise of better times afterwards, towards the latter end of his reign, in respect both of piety and peace (ver. 15—20), which promise may be supposed to look as far forward as the days of the Messiah.

BEHOLD, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. 2 And a man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. 3 And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken. 4 The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly. 5 The vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful. 6 For the vile person will speak villany, and his heart will work iniquity, to practise hypocrisy, and to utter error against the LORD, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail. 7 The instruments also of the churl are evil: he deviseth wicked devices to destroy the poor with lying words, even when the needy speaketh right. 8 But the liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand.

We have here the description of a flourishing kingdom. "Blessed art thou, O land! when it is thus with thee, when kings, princes, and people, are in their places such as they should be." It may be taken as a directory both to magistrates and subjects, what both ought to do; or as a panegyric to

Hezekiah, who ruled well and saw something of the happy effects of his good government, and it was designed to make the people sensible how happy they were under his administration and how careful they should be to improve the advantages of it, and withal to direct them to look for the kingdom of Christ, and the times of reformation which that kingdom should introduce. It is here promised and prescribed, for the comfort of the church,

I. That magistrates should do their duty in their places, and the powers answer the great ends for which they were ordained of God, v. 1, 2. 1. There shall be a king and princes that shall reign and rule; for it cannot go well when there is no king in Israel. The princes must have a king, a monarch over them as supreme, in whom they may unite; and the king must have princes under him as officers, by whom he may act, 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14. They both shall know their place and fill it up. The king shall reign, and yet, without any diminution to his just prerogative, the princes shall rule in a lower sphere, and all for the public good. 2. They shall use their power according to law, and not against it. They shall reign in righteousness and in judgment, with wisdom and equity, protecting the good and punishing the bad; and those kings and princes Christ owns as reigning by him who decree justice, Prov. viii. 15. Such a King, such a Prince, Christ himself is; he reigns by rule, and in righteousness will he judge the world, ch. ix. 7; xi. 4. 3. Thus they shall be great blessings to the people (v. 2): A man, that man, that king that reigns in righteousness, shall be as a hiding-place. When princes are as they should be, people are as they would be. (1.) They are sheltered and protected from many mischiefs. This good magistrate is a covert to the subject from the tempest of injury and violence; he defends the poor and fatherless, that they be not made a prey of by the mighty. Whether should oppressed innocence flee, when blasted by reproach or borne down by violence, but to the magistrate as its hiding-place? To him it appeals, and by him it is righted. (2.) They are refreshed and comforted with many blessings. This good magistrate gives such countenance to those that are poor and in distress, and such encouragement to every thing that is praiseworthy, that he is as rivers of water in a dry place, cooling and cherishing the earth and making it fruitful, and as the shadow of a great rock, under which a poor traveller may shelter himself from the scorching heat of the sun in a weary land. It is a great reviving to a good man, who makes conscience of doing his duty, in the midst of contempt and contradiction, at length to be backed, and favoured, and smiled upon in it by a good magistrate. All this, and much more, the man Christ Jesus is to all the

willing faithful subjects of his kingdom. When the greatest evils befall us, not only the wind, but the tempest, when storms of guilt and wrath beset us and beat upon us, they drive us to Christ, and in him we are not only safe, but satisfied that we are so; in him we find rivers of water for those that hunger and thirst after righteousness, all the refreshment and comfort that a needy soul can desire, and the shadow, not of a tree, which sun or rain may beat through, but of a rock, of a great rock, which reaches a great way for the shelter of the traveller. Some observe here that as the covert, and the hiding-place, and the rock, do themselves receive the battering of the wind and storm, to save those from it that take shelter in them, so Christ bore the storm himself to keep it off from us.

II. That subjects should do their duty in their places.

1. They shall be willing to be taught, and to understand things aright. They shall lay aside their prejudices against their rulers and teachers, and submit to the light and power of truth, v. 3. When this blessed work of reformation is set on foot, and men do their parts towards it, God will not be wanting to do his: Then the eyes of those that see, of the prophets, the seers, shall not be dim; but God will bless them with visions, to be by them communicated to the people; and those that read the word written shall no longer have a veil upon their hearts, but shall see things clearly. Then the ears of those that hear the word preached shall hearken diligently and readily receive what they hear, and not be so dull of hearing as they have been. This shall be done by the grace of God, especially gospel-grace; for the hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord has made, has new-made, even both of them.

2. There shall be a wonderful change wrought in them by that which is taught them, v. 4. (1.) They shall have a clear head, and be able to discern things that differ, and distinguish concerning them. The heart of those that were hasty and rash, and could not take time to digest and consider things, shall now be cured of their precipitation, and shall understand knowledge; for the Spirit of God will open their understanding. This blessed work Christ wrought in his disciples after his resurrection (Luke xxiv. 45), as a specimen of what he would do for all his people, in giving them an understanding, 1 John v. 20. The pious designs of good princes are likely to take effect when their subjects allow themselves liberty to consider, and to think, so freely as to take things right. (2.) They shall have a ready utterance: The tongue of the stammerers; that used to blunder whenever they spoke of the things of God, shall now be ready to speak plainly, as those that understand what they speak of, that believe,

and therefore speak. There shall be a great increase of such clear, distinct, and methodical knowledge in the things of God, that those from whom one would not have expected it shall speak intelligently of these things, very much to the honour of God and the edification of others. Their hearts being full of this good matter, their tongues shall be as the pen of a ready writer, Ps. xlv. 1.

3. The differences between good and evil, virtue and vice, shall be kept up, and no more confounded by those who put darkness for light and light for darkness (v. 5): The vile shall no more be called liberal.

(1.) Bad men shall no more be preferred by the prince. When a king reigns in justice he will not put those in places of honour and power that are ill-natured, and of base and sordid spirits, and care not what injury or mischief they do so they may but compass their own ends. Such are vile persons (as Antiochus is called, Dan. xi. 21); when they are advanced they are called liberal and bountiful; they are called benefactors (Luke xxii. 25): but it shall not always be thus; when the world grows wiser men shall be preferred according to their merit, and honour (which was never thought seemly for a fool, Prov. xxvi. 1) shall no longer be thrown away upon such.

(2.) Bad men shall be no more had in reputation among the people, nor vice disguised with the colours of virtue. It shall no more be said to Nabal, Thou art Nadiab (so the words are); such a covetous muck-worm as Nabal was, a fool but for his money, shall not be complimented with the title of a gentleman or a prince; nor shall they call a churl, that minds none but himself, does no good with what he has, but is an unprofitable burden of the earth, My lord; or, rather, they shall not say of him, He is rich; for so the word signifies. Those only are to be reckoned rich that are rich in good works; not those that have abundance, but those that use it well. In short, it is well with a people when men are generally valued by their virtue, and usefulness, and beneficence to mankind, and not by their wealth or titles of honour. Whether this was fulfilled in the reign of Hezekiah, and how far it refers to the kingdom of Christ (in which we are sure men are judged of by what they are, not by what they have, nor is any man's character mistaken), we will not say; but it prescribes an excellent rule both to prince and people, to respect men according to their personal merit. To enforce this rule, here is a description both of the vile person and of the liberal; and by it we shall see such a vast difference between them that we must quite forget ourselves if we pay that respect to the vile person and the churl which is due only to the liberal.

[1.] A vile person and a churl will do mischief, and the more if he be preferred and have power in his hand; his honour

will make him worse and not better, *v. 6, 7.* See the character of these base ill-conditioned men. *First,* They are always plotting some unjust thing or other, designing ill either to particular persons or to the public, and contriving how to bring it about; and so many silly piques they have to gratify, and mean revenges, that there appears not in them the least spark of generosity. Their hearts will be still working some iniquity or other. Observe, There is the work of the heart, as well as the work of the hands. As thoughts are words to God, so designs are works in his account. See what pains sinners take in sin. They labour at it; their hearts are intent upon it, and with a great deal of art and application they *work iniquity.* They *devise wicked devices* with all the subtlety of the old serpent and a great deal of deliberation, which makes the sin exceedingly sinful; and the more there is of plot and management in a sin the more there is of Satan in it. *Secondly,* They carry on their plots by trick and dissimulation. When they are meditating iniquity, they *practise hypocrisy*, feign themselves just men, Luke xi. 20. The most abominable mischiefs shall be disguised with the most plausible pretences of devotion to God, regard to man, and concern for some common good. Those are the vilest of men that intend the worst mischiefs when they speak fair. *Thirdly,* They *spread villany.* When they are in a passion you will see what they are by the base ill language they give to those about them, which no way becomes men of rank and honour; or, in giving verdict or judgment, they villanously put false colours upon things, to pervert justice. *Fourthly,* They affront God, who is a righteous God and loves righteousness: They *utter error against the Lord*, and therein they practise profaneness; for so the word which we translate *hypocrisy* signifies. They give an unjust sentence, and then profanely make use of the name of God for the ratification of it; as if, because the *judgment is God's* (Deut. i. 17), therefore their false and unjust judgment was his. This is *uttering error against the Lord*, under pretence of uttering truth and justice for him; and nothing can be more impudently done against God than to use his name to patronise wickedness. *Fifthly,* They abuse mankind, those particularly whom they are bound to protect and relieve. 1. Instead of supplying the wants of the poor, they impoverish them, they *make empty the souls of the hungry*; either taking away the food they have, or, which is almost equivalent, denying the supply which they want and which they have to give. And they *cause the drink of the thirsty to fail*; they cut off the relief they used to have, though they need it as much as ever. Those are vile persons indeed that rob the spital. 2. Instead of righting the poor, when they appeal to their judgment, they contrive to

destroy the poor, to ruin them in their courts of judicature with lying words in favour of the rich, to whom they are plainly partial; yea, though the needy speak right, though the evidence be ever so full for them to make out the equity of their cause, it is the bribe that governs them, not the right. *Sixthly,* These churls and vile persons have always bad instruments about them, that are ready to serve their villanous purposes: *All their servants are wicked.* There is no design so palpably unjust but there may be found those that would be employed as tools to put it in execution. *The instruments of the churl are evil*, and one cannot expect otherwise; but this is our comfort, that they can do no more mischief than God permits them.

[2.] One that is truly liberal, and deserves the honour of being called so, makes it his business to do good to every body according as his sphere is, *v. 8.* Observe, *First,* The care he takes, and the contrivances he has, to do good. He *devises liberal things.* As much as the churl or niggard projects how to save and lay up what he has for himself only, so much the good charitable man projects how to use and lay out what he has in the best manner for the good of others. Charity must be directed by wisdom, and liberal things done prudently and with device, that the good intention of them may be answered, that it may not be charity misplaced. The liberal man, when he has done all the liberal things that are in his own power, devises liberal things for others to do according to their power, and puts them upon doing them. *Secondly,* the comfort he takes, and the advantage he has, in doing good: *By liberal things he shall stand, or be established.* The providence of God will reward him for his liberality with a settled prosperity and an established reputation. The grace of God will give him abundance of satisfaction and confirmed peace in his own bosom. What disquiets others shall not disturb him; his heart is fixed. This is the recompence of charity, Ps. cxii. 5, 6. Some read it, *The prince, or honourable man, will take honourable courses; and by such honourable or ingenuous courses he shall stand or be established.* It is well with a land when the honourable of it are indeed men of honour and scorn to do a base thing, when its king is thus the son of nobles.

9 Rise up, ye women that are at ease; hear my voice, ye careless daughters; give ear unto my speech. 10 Many days and years shall ye be troubled, ye careless women: for the vintage shall fail, the gathering shall not come. 11 Tremble, ye women that are at ease; be troubled, ye careless ones: strip you, and make you

bare, and gird *sackcloth* upon *your* loins. 12 They shall lament for the teats, for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine. 13 Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city: 14 Because the palaces shall be forsaken; the multitude of the city shall be left; the forts and towers shall be for dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks; 15 Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. 16 Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. 17 And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. 18 And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places; 19 When it shall hail, coming down on the forest; and the city shall be low in a low place. 20 Blessed *are* ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth *thither* the feet of the ox and the ass.

In these verses we have God rising up to judgment against the vile persons, to punish them for their villany; but at length returning in mercy to the liberal, to reward them for their liberality.

I. When there was so great a corruption of manners, and so much provocation given to the holy God, bad times might well be expected, and here is a warning given of such times coming. The alarm is sounded to the *women that were at ease* (v. 9) and the *careless daughters*, to feed whose pride, vanity, and luxury, their husbands and fathers were tempted to starve the poor. Let them hear what the prophet has to say to them in God's name: "*Rise up, and hear with reverence and attention.*"

1. Let them know that God was about to bring wasting desolating judgments upon the land in which they lived in *pleasure and were wanton*. This seems to refer primarily to the desolations made by Sennacherib's army when he seized all the fenced cities of Judah: but then those words, *many days and years*, must be rendered (as the margin reads them) *days above a year*, that is, something above a year shall this havock be in the making: so long it was from the first entrance of that army into the land of Judah to the overthrow of it. But it is applicable

to the wretched disappointment which those will certainly meet with, first or last, that set their hearts upon the world and place their happiness in it: *You shall be troubled, you careless women*. It will not secure us from trouble to cast away care when we are at ease; nay, to those who affect to live carelessly even little troubles will be great vexations and press hard upon them. They were careless and at ease because they had money enough and mirth enough; but the prophet here tells them, (1.) That the country whence they had their rents and dainties should shortly be laid waste: "*The vintage shall fail*; and then what will you do for wine to make merry with? *The gathering of fruit shall not come*, for there shall be none to be gathered, and you will find the want of them, v. 10. You will want *the teats*, the good milk from the cows, *the pleasant fields* and their productions;" the useful fields that are serviceable to human life are the pleasant ones. "You will want the fruitful vine, and the grapes it used to yield you." The abuse of plenty is justly punished with scarcity; and those deserve to be deprived of the supports of life who make them the food and fuel of lust and prepare them for Baal. (2.) That the cities too, the cities of Judah, where they lived at ease, spent their rents, and made themselves merry with their dainties, should be laid waste (v. 13, 14). *Briers and thorns*, the fruits of sin and the curse, *shall come up*, not only upon *the land of my people*, which shall lie uncultivated, but upon *all the houses of joy*—the play-houses, the gaming-houses, the taverns—in *the joyous cities*. When a foreign army was ravaging the country the houses of joy, no doubt, became houses of mourning; then the palaces, or noblemen's houses, were forsaken by their owners, who perhaps fled to Egypt for refuge; the multitude of the city were left by their leaders to shift for themselves. Then the stately houses *shall be for dens for ever*, which had been as forts and towers for strength and magnificence. They shall be abandoned; the owners shall never return to them; every body shall look upon them to be like Jericho, an anathema; so that, even when peace returns, they shall not be rebuilt, but shall be thrown to the waste: *A joy of wild asses and a pasture of flocks*. Thus is many a house brought to ruin by sin. *Jam seges est ubi Troja fuit*—Corn grows on the site of Troy.

2. In the foresight of this let them tremble and be troubled, *strip themselves, and gird sackcloth upon their loins*, v. 11. This intimates not only that when the calamity comes they shall thus be made to tremble and be forced to strip themselves, that then God's judgments would strip them and make them bare, but, (1.) That the best prevention of the trouble would be to repent and humble themselves for their sin, and lie in the dust

before God in true remorse and godly sorrow, which would be the lengthening out of their tranquillity. This is meeting God in the way of his judgments, and saving a correction by correcting our own mistakes. Those only shall break that will not bend. (2.) That the best preparation for the trouble would be to deny themselves and live a life of mortification, and to sit loose to all the delights of sense. Those that have already by a holy contempt of this world stripped themselves can easily bear to be stripped when trouble and death come.

II. While there was still a remnant that kept their integrity they had reason to hope for good times at length and such times the prophet here gives them a pleasant prospect of. Such times they saw in the latter end of the reign of Hezekiah; but the prophecy may well be supposed to look further, to the days of the Messiah, who is *King of righteousness and King of peace*, and to whom all the prophets bear witness. Now observe,

1. How those blessed times shall be introduced—by the *pouring out of the Spirit from on high* (v. 15), which speaks not only of the good-will of God towards us, but the good work of God in us; for then, and not till then, there will be good times, when God by his grace gives men good hearts; and therefore God's *giving his Holy Spirit to those that ask him* is in effect his giving them all good things, as appears by comparing Luke xi. 13 with Matt. vii. 11. This is the great thing that God's people comfort themselves with the hopes of, that the *Spirit shall be poured out upon them*, that there shall be a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit of grace than formerly, according as the necessity of the church, in its desolate estate, calls for. This comes from on high, and therefore they look up to their Father in heaven for it. When God designs favours for his church he pours out his Spirit, both to prepare his people to receive his favours and to qualify and give success to those whom he designs to employ as instruments of his favour; for their endeavours to repair the desolations of the church are all fruitless until the *Spirit be poured out upon them*, and then the work is done suddenly. The kingdom of the Messiah was brought in, and set up, by the pouring out of the Spirit (Acts ii.), and so it is still kept up, and will be to the end.

2. What a wonderfully happy change shall then be made. That which was a *wilderness*, dry and barren, shall become a *fruitful field*, and that which we now reckon a *fruitful field*, in comparison with what it shall be then, shall be counted for a *forest*. Then shall the earth yield her increase. It is promised that in the days of the Messiah the *fruit of the earth shall shake like Lebanon*, Ps. lxxii. 16. Some apply this to the admission of the Gentiles into the gospel church (which made the wilderness a fruitful field),

and the rejection and exclusion of the Jews, which made that a forest which had been a fruitful field. On the Gentiles was poured out a spirit of life, but on the Jews a spirit of slumber. See what is the evidence and effect of the pouring out of the Spirit upon any soul; it is thereby made fruitful, and has its fruit unto holiness. Three things go to make these times happy:—

(1.) Judgment and righteousness, v. 16. When the Spirit is poured out upon a land, then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness and turn it into a fruitful field, and righteousness shall remain in the fruitful field and make it yet more fruitful. Ministers shall expound the law and magistrates execute it, and both so judiciously and faithfully that by both the bad shall be made good and the good made better. Among all sorts of people, the poor and low and unlearned, that are neglected as the wilderness, and the rich and great and learned, that are valued as the fruitful field, there shall be right thoughts of things, good principles commanding, and conscience made of good and evil, sin and duty. Or in all parts of the land, both champaign and enclosed, country and city, the ruder parts and those that are more cultivated and refined, justice shall be duly administered. The law of Christ introduces a judgment or rule by which we must be governed, and the gospel of Christ a righteousness by which we must be saved; and, wherever the Spirit is poured out, both these dwell and remain as an everlasting righteousness.

(2.) Peace and quietness, v. 17, 18. The peace here promised is of two kinds:—

[1.] Inward peace, v. 17. This follows upon the indwelling of righteousness, v. 16. Those in whom that work is wrought shall experience this blessed product of it. It is itself peace, and the effect of it is *quietness and assurance for ever*, that is, a holy serenity and security of mind, by which the soul enjoys itself and enjoys its God, and it is not in the power of this world to disturb it in those enjoyments. Note, Peace, and quietness, and everlasting assurance may be expected, and shall be found, in the way and work of righteousness. True satisfaction is to be had only in true religion, and there it is to be had without fail. Those are the quiet and peaceable lives that are spent in all godliness and honesty, 1 Tim. ii. 2. *First, Even the work of righteousness shall be peace.* In the doing of our duty we shall find abundance of true pleasure, a present great reward of obedience in obedience. Though the work of righteousness may be toilsome and costly, and expose us to contempt, yet it is peace, such peace as is sufficient to bear our charges. *Secondly, The effect of righteousness shall be quietness and assurance*, not only to the end of time, of our time, and in the end, but to the endless ages of eternity. Real holiness is real happiness now and shall

be perfect happiness, that is, perfect holiness, for ever.

[2.] Outward peace, v. 18. It is a great mercy when those who by the grace of God have quiet and peaceable spirits are by the providence of God made to *dwell in quiet and peaceable habitations*, not disturbed in their houses or solemn assemblies. When the terror of Sennacherib's invasion was over, the people, no doubt, were more sensible than ever of the mercy of a quiet habitation, not disturbed with the alarms of war. Let every family study to keep itself quiet from strifes and jars within, not two against three and three against two in the house, and then put itself under God's protection to dwell safely, and to be *quiet from the fear of evil without*. Jerusalem shall be a peaceable habitation; compare *ch.* xxxiii. 20. *Even when it shall hail*, and there shall be a violent battering storm *coming down on the forest* that lies bleak, then shall Jerusalem be a *quiet resting-place, for the city shall be low in a low place*, under the wind, not exposed (as those cities are that stand high) to the fury of the storm, but sheltered by the mountains that are round about Jerusalem, Ps. cxv. 2. *The high forts and towers are brought down* (v. 14), but the city that lies low shall be a quiet resting-place. Those are most safe, and may dwell most at ease, that are humble, and are willing to dwell low, v. 19. Those that would dwell in a peaceable habitation must be willing to dwell low, and in a low place. Some think here is an allusion to the preservation of the land of Goshen from the plague of hail, which made great destruction in the land of Egypt.

(3.) Plenty and abundance. There shall be such good crops gathered in every where, and every year, that the husbandmen shall be commended, and thought happy, who *sow beside all waters* (v. 20), who sow all the grounds that are fit for seedness, who *cast their bread*, or bread-corn, *upon the waters*, Eccl. xi. 1. God will give the increase, but then the husbandman must be industrious, and mind his business, and sow beside all waters; and, if he do this, the corn shall come up so thick and rank that he shall turn in his cattle, even the ox and the ass, to eat the tops of it and keep it under. This is applicable, [1.] To the preaching of the word. Some think it points at the ministry of the apostles, who, as husbandmen, went forth to sow their seed (Matt. xiii. 3); they sowed beside all waters; they preached the gospel wherever they came. Waters signify people, and they preached to multitudes. Wherever they found men's hearts softened, and moistened, and disposed to receive the word, they cast in the good seed. And whereas, by the law of Moses, the Jews were forbidden to *plough with an ox and an ass together* (Deut. xxii. 10), which intimated that Jews and Gentiles should not intermix, now that distinction

shall be taken away, and both the ox and the ass, both Jews and Gentiles, shall be employed in, and enjoy the benefit of, the gospel husbandry. [2.] To works of charity. When God sends these happy times blessed are those that improve them in doing good with what they have, that sow 'beside all waters, that embrace all opportunities of relieving the necessitous; for in due season they shall reap.

CHAP. XXXIII.

This chapter relates to the same events as the foregoing chapter, the distress of Judah and Jerusalem by Sennacherib's invasion and their deliverance out of that distress by the destruction of the Assyrian army. These are intermixed in the prophecy, in the way of a Pindaric. Observe, I. The great distress that Judah and Jerusalem should then be brought into, ver. 7—9. II. The particular frights which the sinners in Zion should then be in, ver. 13, 14. III. The prayers of good people to God in this distress, v. 2. IV. The holy security which they should enjoy in the midst of this trouble, ver. 15, 16. V. The destruction of the army of the Assyrians (ver. 1—3), in which God would be greatly glorified, ver. 5, 10—12. VI. The enriching of the Jews with the spoil of the Assyrian camp, ver. 4, 23, 24. VII. The happy settlement of Jerusalem, and the Jewish state, upon this. Religion shall be uppermost (ver. 6), and their civil state shall flourish, ver. 17—20. This was soon fulfilled, but is written for our learning.

WOE to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! When thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee. 2 O LORD, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee: be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble. 3 At the noise of the tumult the people fled; at the lifting up of thyself the nations were scattered. 4 And your spoil shall be gathered like the gathering of the caterpillar: as the running to and fro of locusts shall he run upon them. 5 The LORD is exalted; for he dwelleth on high: he hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness. 6 And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the LORD is his treasure. 7 Behold, their valiant ones shall cry without: the ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly. 8 The highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceaseth; he hath broken the covenant, he hath despised the cities, he regardeth not man. 9 The earth mourneth and languisheth: Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down: Sharon is like a wilderness; and Bashan and Carmel shake off their fruits. 10 Now will

I rise, saith the LORD; now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself. 11 Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble: your breath, as fire, shall devour you. 12 And the people shall be as the burnings of lime: as thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire.

Here we have,

I. The proud and false Assyrian justly reckoned for all his fraud and violence, and laid under a woe, v. 1. Observe, 1. The sin which the enemy had been guilty of. He had spoiled the people of God, and made a prey of them, and herein had broken his treaty of peace with them, and dealt treacherously. Truth and mercy are two such sacred things, and have so much of God in them, that those cannot but be under the wrath of God that make conscience of neither, but are perfectly lost to both, that care not what mischief they do, what spoil they make, what dissimulations they are guilty of, nor what solemn engagements they violate, to compass their own wicked designs. Bloody and deceitful men are the worst of men. 2. The aggravation of this sin. He spoiled those that had never done him any injury and that he had no pretence to quarrel with, and dealt treacherously with those that had always dealt faithfully with him. Note, The less provocation we have from men to do a wrong thing the more provocation we give to God by doing it. 3. The punishment he should fall under for this sin. He that spoiled the cities of Judah shall have his own army destroyed by an angel and his camp plundered by those whom he had made a prey of. The Chaldeans shall deal treacherously with the Assyrians and revolt from them. Two of Sennacherib's own sons shall deal treacherously with him and basely murder him at his devotions. Note, The righteous God often pays sinners in their own coin. *He that leads into captivity shall go into captivity*, Rev. xiii. 10; xviii. 6. 4. The time when he shall be thus dealt with. When he shall make an end to spoil, and to deal treacherously, not by repentance and reformation, which might prevent his ruin (Dan. iv. 27), but when he shall have done his worst, when he shall have gone as far as God would permit him to go, to the utmost of his tether, then the cup of trembling shall be put into his hand. When he shall have arrived at his full stature in impiety, shall have filled up the measure of his iniquity, then all shall be called over again. When he has done God will begin, for his day is coming.

II. The praying people of God earnest at the throne of grace for mercy for the land now in its distress (v. 2): "*O Lord! be merciful to us.*" Men are cruel; be thou gracious. We have deserved thy wrath, but

we entreat thy favour; and, if we may find thee propitious to us, we are happy; the trouble we are in cannot hurt us, shall not ruin us. It is in vain to expect relief from creatures; we have no confidence in the Egyptians, but *we have waited for thee only*, resolving to submit to thee, whatever the issue of the trouble be, and hoping that it shall be a comfortable issue." Those that by faith humbly wait for God shall certainly find him gracious to them. They prayed,

1. For those that were employed in military services for them; "*Be thou their arm every morning.*" Hezekiah, and his princes, and all the men of war, need continual supplies of strength and courage from thee; supply their need therefore, and be to them a God all-sufficient. Every morning, when they go forth upon the business of the day, and perhaps have new work to do and new difficulties to encounter, let them be afresh animated and invigorated, and, *as the day, so let the strength be.*" In our spiritual warfare our own hands are not sufficient for us, nor can we bring any thing to pass unless God not only strengthen our arms (Gen. xlix. 24), but be himself our arm; so entirely do we depend upon him as our arm every morning, so constantly do we depend upon his power, as well as his compassions, which are new every morning, Lam. iii. 23. If God leaves us to ourselves any morning, we are undone; we must therefore every morning commit ourselves to him, and go forth in his strength to do the work of the day in its day. 2. For the body of the people: "*Be thou our salvation also in the time of trouble,* ours who sit still, and do not venture into the high places of the field." They depend upon God not only as their Saviour, to work deliverance for them, but as their salvation itself; for, whatever becomes of their secular interests, they will reckon themselves safe and saved if they have him for their God. If he undertake to be their Saviour, he will be their salvation; for *as for God his work is perfect.* Some read it thus: "*Thou who wast their arm every morning*, who wast the continual strength and help of our fathers before us, *be thou our salvation also in time of trouble.*" Help us as thou helpedst them; *they looked unto thee and were lightened* (Ps. xxxiv. 5); let us then not walk in darkness."

III. The Assyrian army ruined and their camp made a rich but cheap and easy prey to Judah and Jerusalem. No sooner is the prayer made (v. 2) than it is answered (v. 3), nay, it is outdone. They prayed that God would save them from their enemies; but he did more than that; he gave them victory over their enemies and abundant cause to triumph; for, 1. The strength of the Assyrian camp was broken (v. 3) when the destroying angel slew so many thousands of them: *At the noise of the tumult*, of the shrieks of the dying men (who, we may suppose, did not die silently), the rest of the

people fled, and shifted every one for his own safety. When God did thus lift up himself the several nations, or clans, of which the army was composed, were scattered. It was time to stir when such an unprecedented plague broke out among them. When God arises his enemies are scattered, Ps. lxxviii. 1. 2. The spoil of the Assyrian camp is seized, by way of reprisal, for all the desolations of the defended cities of Judah (v. 4). *Your spoil shall be gathered by the inhabitants of Jerusalem, like the gathering of the caterpillar, and as the running to and fro of locusts*, that is, the spoilers shall as easily and as quickly make themselves masters of the riches of the Assyrians as a host of caterpillars, or locusts, make a field, or a tree, bare. Thus *the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just* and Israel is enriched with the spoil of the Egyptians. Some make the Assyrians to be the caterpillars and locusts, which, when they are killed, are gathered together in heaps, as the frogs of Egypt, and are run upon and trodden to dirt.

IV. God and his Israel glorified and exalted hereby. When the spoil of the enemy is thus gathered, 1. God will have the praise of it (v. 5): *The Lord is exalted*. It is his honour thus to abase proud men, and hide them in the dust, together; thus he magnifies his own name, and his people give him the glory of it, as Israel when the Egyptians were drowned, Exod. xv. 1, 2, &c. He is exalted as one that dwells on high, out of the reach of their blasphemies, and that has an over-ruling power over them, and wherein they deal proudly delights to show himself above them—that does what he will, and they cannot resist him. 2. His people will have the blessing of it. When God lifts up himself to scatter the nations that are in confederacy against Jerusalem (v. 3) then, as a preparative for that, or as the fruit and product of it, *he has filled Zion with judgment and righteousness*, not only with a sense of justice, but with a zeal for it and a universal care that it be duly administered. It shall again be called, *The city of righteousness*, ch. i. 26. In this the grace of God is exalted, as much as his providence was in the destruction of the Assyrian army. We may conclude God has mercy in store for a people when he fills them with judgment and righteousness, when all sorts of people, and all their actions and affairs, are governed by them, and they are so full of them that no other considerations can crowd in to sway them against these. Hezekiah and his people are encouraged (v. 6) with an assurance that God would stand by them in their distress. Here is, (1.) A gracious promise of God for them to stay themselves upon: *Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation*. Here is a desirable end proposed, and that is *the stability of our times*, that things

be not disturbed and unhinged at home, and the strength of salvation, deliverance from, and success against, enemies abroad. The salvation that God ordains for his people has strength in it; it is a horn of salvation. And here are the way and means for obtaining this end—*wisdom and knowledge*, not only piety, but prudence. That is it which, by the blessing of God, will be the *stability of our times and the strength of salvation*; that wisdom which is first pure, then peaceable, and which sacrifices private interests to a public good; such prudence as thus will establish truth and peace, and fortify the bulwarks in defence of them. (2.) A pious maxim of state for Hezekiah and his people to govern themselves by: *The fear of the Lord is his treasure*. It is God's treasure in the world, from which he receives his tribute; or, rather, it is the prince's treasure. A good prince accounts it so (that wisdom is better than gold) and he shall find it so. Note, True religion is the true treasure of any prince or people; it denominates them rich. Those places that have plenty of Bibles, and ministers, and serious good people, are really rich, and it contributes to that which makes a nation rich in this world. It is therefore the interest of a people to support religion among them and to take heed of every thing that threatens to hinder it.

V. The great distress that Jerusalem was brought into described, that those who believed the prophet might know beforehand what troubles were coming and might provide accordingly, and that when the foregoing promise of their deliverance should have its accomplishment the remembrance of the extremity of their case might help to magnify God in it and make them the more thankful, v. 7—9. It is here foretold, 1. That the enemy would be very insolent and abusive and there would be no dealing with him, either by treaties of peace (for *he has broken the covenant* without any hesitation, as if it were below him to be a servant in his word), or by the preparations of war, for *he has despised the cities*; he scorns to take notice either of their appeals to justice or of their petitions for mercy. He makes himself master of them so easily (though they are called *fenced cities*), and meets with so little resistance, that he despises them, and has no relents when he puts all to the sword; for he regards no man, has no pity or concern, no, not for those that he is under particular obligations to. He neither fears God nor regards man, but is haughty and imperious to every one. There are those that take a pride in trampling upon all mankind, and have neither veneration for the honourable nor compassion for the miserable. 2. That therefore he would not be brought to any terms of reconciliation: *The valiant ones of Jerusalem*, being unable to make their parts

od with him, must be contentedly run
own with noise and insolence, which will
ake them cry without, because they can-
t serve their country as they might have
ne against a fair adversary. *The ambas-
dors* sent by Hezekiah to treat of peace,
nding him so haughty and unmanageable,
all weep bitterly for vexation at the dis-
pointment they had met with in their
ociations; they shall weep like children,
despairing to find out any expedient to
cify him. 3. That the country should be
ade quite desolate for a time by his army.
(1.) No man durst travel the roads; so
at a stop was put to trade and commerce,
nd (which was worse) no man could safely
o up to Jerusalem, to keep the solemn
asts: *The highways lie waste*. While the
lds lie waste, trodden like the highways,
e highways lie waste, untrodden like the
lds, for the traveller ceases. (2.) No man
nd any profit from the grounds, v. 9. The
rth used to rejoice in its own productions
r the service of God's Israel, but now the
emies of Israel eat them up, or tread them
own: it *mourns and languishes*; the country
oks melancholy and the country people
ve misery in their countenances, wanting
ecessary food for themselves and their
milies; the wonted joy of harvest is turned
to lamentation, so withering and uncertain
re all worldly joys. The desolation is
iversal. That part of the country which
longed to the ten tribes was already laid
aste: "*Lebanon famed for cedars, Sharon
r roses, Bashan for cattle, Carmel for corn,*
l very fruitful, have now become like
ildernesses, are ashamed to be called by
eir old names, they are so unlike what
ey were. They *shake off their fruits* be-
ore their time into the hand of the spoiler,
hich used to be gathered seasonably by
ie hand of the owner."

VI. God appearing, at length, in his
lory against this proud invader, v. 10—12.
When things are brought thus to the last
xtremity, 1. God will magnify himself.
le had seemed to sit by as an unconcerned
pectator. "*But now will I arise, saith the
ord*; now will I appear and act, and
herein I will be not only evidenced, but
xalted." He will not only demonstrate
at there is a God that judges in the earth,
ut that he is God over all, and higher than
he highest. "*Now will I lift up myself,*
ill prepare for action, will act vigorously,
nd will be glorified in it." God's time to
appear for his people is when their affairs
re reduced to the lowest ebb, *when their
trength is gone and there is none shut up
or left*, Deut. xxxii. 36. When all other
elpers fail, then is God's time to help. 2.
He will bring down the Assyrian: "You,
O Assyrians! are big with hopes that you
shall have all the wealth of Jerusalem for
your own, and are in pain till it be so; but
all your hopes shall come to nothing: You

shall conceive chaff, and bring forth stubble,
which is not only worthless and good for
nothing, but combustible and proper fuel
for the fire, which it cannot escape, when
your own breath as fire shall devour you,
that is, the breath of God's wrath, provoked
against you by the breath of your sins—
your malignant breath, the threatenings and
slaughter you breathe out against the people
of God, this shall devour you, and your
blasphemous breath against God and his
name." God would make their own tongues
to fall upon them, and their own breath to
blow the fire that should consume them;
and then no wonder that the people are as
the burnings of lime in a lime-kiln, all on
fire together, and as thorns cut up, which
are dried and withered, and therefore easily
take fire and are soon burnt up. Such was
the destruction of the Assyrian army; it
was like the burning up of thorns, which
can well be spared, or the burning of lime,
which makes it good for something. The
burning of that army enlightened the world
with the knowledge of God's power and
made his name shine brightly.

13 Hear, ye *that are* far off, what
I have done; and, ye *that are* near,
acknowledge my might. 14 The sin-
ners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness
hath surprised the hypocrites. Who
among us shall dwell with the de-
vouring fire? Who among us shall
dwell with everlasting burnings? 15
He that walketh righteously, and
speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth
the gain of oppressions, that shaketh
his hands from holding of bribes,
that stoppeth his ears from hearing
of blood, and shutteth his eyes from
seeing evil; 16 He shall dwell on
high: his place of defence *shall be*
the munitions of rocks: bread shall
be given him; his waters *shall be*
sure. 17 Thine eyes shall see the
king in his beauty: they shall be-
hold the land that is very far off.
18 Thine heart shall meditate terror.
Where *is* the scribe? Where *is* the
receiver? Where *is* he that counted
the towers? 19 Thou shalt not see
a fierce people, a people of deeper
speech than thou canst perceive; of
a stammering tongue, *that thou canst*
not understand. 20 Look upon Zion,
the city of our solemnities: thine
eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habi-
tation, a tabernacle *that shall not be*
taken down; not one of the stakes

thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. 21 But there the glorious LORD will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. 22 For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us. 23 Thy tacklings are loosed; they could not well strengthen their mast, they could not spread the sail: then is the prey of a great spoil divided; the lame take the prey. 24 And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.

Here is a preface that commands attention; and it is fit that all should attend, both near and afar off, to what God says and does (v. 13): *Hear, you that are afar off*, whether in place or time. Let distant regions and future ages hear what God has done. They do so; they will do so from the scripture, with as much assurance as those that were near, the neighbouring nations and those that lived at that time. But whoever hears what God has done, whether near or afar off, let them acknowledge his might, that it is irresistible, and that he can do every thing. Those are very stupid who hear what God has done and yet will not acknowledge his might. Now what is it that God has done which we must take notice of, and in which we must acknowledge his might?

I. He has struck a terror upon the sinners in Zion (v. 14): *Fearfulness has surprised the hypocrites*. There are sinners in Zion, hypocrites, that enjoy Zion's privileges and concur in Zion's services, but their hearts are not right in the sight of God; they keep up secret haunts of sin under the cloak of a visible profession, which convicts them of hypocrisy. Sinners in Zion will have a great deal to answer for above other sinners; and their place in Zion will be so far from being their security that it will aggravate both their sin and their punishment. Now those sinners in Zion, though always subject to secret frights and terrors, were struck with a more than ordinary consternation from the convictions of their own consciences. 1. When they saw the Assyrian army besieging Jerusalem, and ready to set fire to it and lay it in ashes, and burn the wasps in the nest. Finding they could not make their escape to Egypt, as some had done, and distrusting the promises God had made by his prophets that he would deliver them, they were at their wits' end, and ran about like men distracted, crying, "*Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire?*" Let us therefore abandon

the city, and shift for ourselves elsewhere one had as good live in everlasting burning as live here." *Who will stand up for against this devouring fire?* so some read. See here how the sinners in Zion are affected when the judgments of God are abroad; while they were only threatened they slighted them and made nothing of them; but, when they come to be executed they run into the other extreme, then they magnify them, and make the worst of them; they call them *devouring fire* and *everlasting burnings*, and despair of relief and succour. Those that rebel against the commands of God's word cannot take the comforts of it in a time of need. Or, rather, 2. When they saw the Assyrian army destroyed; for the destruction of that is the fire spoken of immediately before, v. 11, 12. When the sinners in Zion saw what dreadful execution the wrath of God made they were in a great fright, being conscious to themselves that they had provoked this God by their secretly worshipping other gods; and therefore they cry out, *Who among us shall dwell with this devouring fire, before which so vast an army is consumed?* *Who among us shall dwell with these everlasting burnings, which have made the Assyrians as the burnings of lime?* v. 1. Thus they said, or should have said. Not God's judgments upon the enemies of Zion should strike a terror upon the sinners in Zion, nay, David himself trembles at them (Ps. cxix. 120). God himself is this devouring fire, Heb. xii. 29. Who is able to stand before him? 1 Sam. vi. 20. His wrath will burn those everlastingly that have made themselves fuel for it. It is a fire that shall never be quenched, nor will ever go out of itself; for it is the wrath of an everlasting God preying upon the conscience of an immortal soul. Nor can the most daring sinners bear up against it, so as to bear either the execution of it or the fearful expectation of it. Let this awaken us all to flee from the wrath to come, and flee to Christ as our refuge.

II. He has graciously provided for the security of his people that trust in him: *He will deliver them, and acknowledge his power in making those that walk righteously, and speak uprightly, to dwell on high*, v. 15, 16. We have here,

1. The good man's character, which God preserves even in times of common iniquity in divers instances. (1.) He walks righteously. In the whole course of his conversation he acts by rules of equity, and makes conscience of rendering to all their due, to God his due, as well as to men theirs. He walks in righteousness itself; he would not for a world wilfully do an unjust thing. (2.) He speaks uprightly, *uprightnesses* (so the word is); he speaks what is true and right and with an honest intention. He cannot think one thing and speak another, nor look one way and row another. His word is

as sacred as his oath, and is not yeal-
 ous. (3.) He is so far from coveting
 gotten gain that he despises it. He thinks
 it mean and sordid thing, and unbecoming
 of honour, to enrich himself by any
 friendship put upon his neighbour. He scorns
 to do a wrong thing, nay, to do a severe
 thing, though he might get by it. He does
 not over-value gain itself, and therefore
 easily abhors the gain that is not honestly
 gotten by. (4.) If he have a bribe at any
 man's thrust into his hand, to pervert justice,
 he shakes his hands from holding it, with the
 most detestation, taking it as an affront to
 have it offered him. (5.) He stops his ears
 from hearing any thing that tends to cruelty
 and bloodshed, or any suggestions stirring him
 up to revenge, Job xxxi. 31. He turns a
 deaf ear to those that delight in war and en-
 deavour him to cast in his lot among them, Prov.
 14, 16. (6.) He shuts his eyes from seeing
 evil. He has such an abhorrence of sin
 that he cannot bear to see others commit it,
 and does himself watch against all the occa-
 sions of it. Those that would preserve the
 purity of their souls must keep a strict guard
 upon the senses of their bodies, must stop
 their ears to temptations, and turn away their
 eyes from beholding vanity.

2. The good man's comfort, which he
 may preserve even in times of common ca-
 lamity, v. 16. (1.) He shall be safe; he
 shall escape the devouring fire and the ever-
 lasting burnings; he shall have access to
 communion with, that God who is a de-
 vouring fire, but shall be to him a rejoicing
 sight. And, as to present troubles, he shall
 dwell on high, out of the reach of them, nay,
 out of the hearing of the noise of them; he
 shall not be really harmed by them, nay, he
 shall not be greatly frightened at them:
*the floods of great waters shall not come nigh
 him; or, if they should attack him, his
 place of defence shall be the munitions of
 rocks, strong and impregnable, fortified by
 nature as well as art. The divine power will
 keep him safe, and his faith in that power
 will keep him easy. God, the rock of ages, will
 be his high tower. (2.) He shall be supplied;
 he shall want nothing that is necessary for
 him: Bread shall be given him, even when
 the siege is straitest and provisions are cut
 off; and his waters shall be sure, that is, he
 shall be sure of the continuance of them, so
 that he shall not drink his water by mea-
 sure and with astonishment. Those that
 fear the Lord shall not want any thing that
 is good for them.*

III. He will protect Jerusalem, and deli-
 ver it out of the hands of the invaders. This
 storm that threatened them should blow
 over, and they should enjoy a prosperous state
 again. Many instances are here given of this
 prosperity.

1. Hezekiah shall put off his sackcloth
 and all the sadness of his countenance, and
 shall appear publicly in his beauty, in his

royal robes and with a pleasing aspect (v.
 17), to the great joy of all his loving sub-
 jects. Those that walk uprightly shall not
 only have bread given them, and their water
 sure, but they shall with an eye of faith see
 the King of kings in his beauty, the beauty of
 holiness, and that beauty shall be upon them.

2. The siege being raised, by which they
 were kept close within the walls of Jerusa-
 lem, they shall now be at liberty to go abroad
 upon business or pleasure without danger of
 falling into the enemies' hand: *They shall
 behold the land that is very far off*; they shall
 visit the utmost corners of the nation, and take
 a prospect of the adjacent countries, which
 will be the more pleasant after so long a con-
 finement. Thus believers behold the heavenly
 Canaan, that land that is very far off, and
 comfort themselves with the prospect of it in
 evil times.

3. The remembrance of the fright they
 were in shall add to the pleasure of their de-
 liverance (v. 18): *Thy heart shall meditate
 terror*, meditate it with pleasure when it is
 over. Thou shalt think thou still hearest
 the alarm in thy ears, when all the cry was,
 "Arm, arm, arm! every man to his post.
*Where is the scribe or secretary of war? Let
 him appear to draw up the muster-roll.
 Where is the receiver and pay-master of the
 army? Let him see what he has in bank,
 to defray the charge of a defence. Where is
 he that counted the towers? Let him bring
 in the account of them, that care may be
 taken to put a competent number of men in
 each."* Or these words may be taken as Je-
 rusalem's triumph over the vanquished army
 of the Assyrians, and the rather because the
 apostle alludes to them in his triumphs over
 the learning of this world, when it was
 baffled by the gospel of Christ, 1 Cor. i. 20.
 The virgin, the daughter of Zion, despises all
 their military preparations. Where is the
 scribe or muster-master of the Assyrian army?
 Where is their weigher (or treasurer), and
 where are their engineers that counted the
 towers? They are all either dead or fled.
 There is an end of them.

4. They shall no more be terrified with
 the sight of the Assyrians, who were a fierce
 people naturally, and were particularly fierce
 against the people of the Jews, and were of
 a strange language, that could understand
 neither their petitions nor their complaints,
 and therefore had a pretence for being deaf
 to them, nor could themselves be under-
 stood: "They are of a deeper speech than
 thou canst perceive, which will make them
 the more formidable, v. 19. Thy eyes shall
 no more see them thus fierce, but their
 countenances changed when they shall all
 become dead corpses."

5. They shall no more be under appre-
 hensions of the danger of Jerusalem—Zion,
 and the temple there (v. 20): "Look upon
 Zion, the city of our solemnities, the city where
 our solemn sacred feasts are kept, where we

used to meet to worship God in religious assemblies." The good people among them, in the time of their distress, were most in pain for Zion upon this account, that it was the city of their solemnities, that the conquerors would burn their temple and they should not have that to keep their solemn feasts in any more. In times of public danger our concern should be most about our religion, and the cities of our solemnities should be dearer to us than either our strong cities or our store-cities. It is with an eye to this that God will work deliverance for Jerusalem, because it is the city of religious solemnities: let those be conscientiously kept up, as the glory of a people, and we may depend upon God to create a defence upon that glory. Two things are here promised to Jerusalem:—(1.) A well-grounded security. It shall be a *quiet habitation* for the people of God; they shall not be molested and disturbed, as they have been, by the alarms of the sword either of war or persecution, *ch. xxix. 20.* It shall be a quiet habitation, as it is the city of our solemnities. It is desirable to be quiet in our own houses, but much more so to be quiet in God's house and have none to make us afraid there. Thus it shall be with Jerusalem; and *thy eyes shall see it*, which will be a great satisfaction to a good man, *Ps. cxviii. 5, 6.* "*Thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem, and peace upon Israel; thou shalt live to see it and share in it.*" (2.) An unmoved stability. Jerusalem, the city of our solemnities, is indeed but a *tabernacle*, in comparison with the New Jerusalem. The present manifestations of the divine glory and grace are nothing in comparison with those that are reserved for the future state. But it is such a tabernacle as *shall not be taken down*. After this trouble is over Jerusalem shall long enjoy a confirmed peace; and her sacred privileges, which are the stakes and cords of her tabernacle, shall not be removed from her, nor any disturbance given to the course and circle of her religious services. God's church on earth is a tabernacle, which, though it may be shifted from one place to another, shall not be taken down while the world stands; for in every age Christ will have a seed to serve him. The promises of the covenant are its stakes, which shall never be removed, and the ordinances and institutions of the gospel are its cords, which shall never be broken. They are things which cannot be shaken, though heaven and earth be, but shall remain.

6. God himself will be their protector and Saviour, *n. 21, 22.* This is the principal ground of their confidence: "He that is himself *the glorious Lord* will display his glory for us and be a glory to us, such as shall eclipse the rival-glory of the enemy. God, in being a gracious Lord, is a glorious Lord; for his goodness is his glory. God will be the Saviour of Jerusalem and her glorious

Lord, (1.) As a guard against their adversaries abroad. He will be a *place of broad rivers and streams*. Jerusalem had no considerable river running by it, as most great cities have; nothing but the brook Kidron, and so wanted one of the best natural fortifications, as well as one of the greatest advantages for trade and commerce, and upon this account their enemies despised them and doubted not but to make an easy prey of them; but the presence and power of God are sufficient at any time to make up to us the deficiency of the creature and of its strength and beauty. We have all in God, all we need or can desire. Many external advantages Jerusalem has not which other places have, but in God there is more than an equivalent. But, if there be broad rivers and streams about Jerusalem, may not these yield an easy access to the fleet of an invader? No, these are rivers and streams in which shall go no galley with oars, no man of war or gallant ship. If God himself be the river, it must needs be inaccessible to the enemy; they can neither find nor force their way by it. (2.) As a guide to their affairs at home. "*For the Lord is our Judge*, to whom we are accountable, to whose judgment we refer ourselves, by whose judgment we abide, and who therefore (we hope) will judge for us. *He is our lawgiver*; his word is a law to us, and to him every thought within us is brought into obedience. *He is our King*, whom we pay homage and tribute, and whose inviolable allegiance, and therefore *he will save us.*" For, as protection draws allegiance, so allegiance may expect protection, and shall have it with God. By faith we take Christ for our prince and Saviour, and as such depend upon him and devote ourselves to him. Observe with what an air of triumph, and with what an emphasis laid upon the glorious name of God, they comfort themselves with this: *Jehovah is our Judge, Jehovah is our Lawgiver, Jehovah is our King, who, being self-existent, is self-sufficient, and all-sufficient to us.*

7. The enemies shall be quite infatuated and all their powers and projects broken, like a ship at sea in stress of weather, that cannot ride out the storm, but having her tackle torn, her masts split, and nothing wherewith to repair them, is given up for a wreck, *v. 23.* *The tacklings of the Assyrian are loosed*; they are like a ship whose tacklings are loosed or forsaken by the ship's crew, when they give it over for lost, finding that they cannot strengthen the mast, but it will come down. They thought themselves sure of Jerusalem; but when they were just entering the port as it were, and thought all was their own, they were quite becalmed, and could not spread their sail, but lay wind-bound till God poured the fury of his wrath upon them. The enemies of God's church are often disarmed and unrigged when they think they have almost gained their point.

8. The wealth of their camp shall be a booty for the Jews: *Then is the prey of great spoil divided.* When the greater part were slain the rest fled in confusion, and with such precipitation that (like the Syrians) they left their tents as they were, so that all the treasure in them fell into the hands of the besieged; and even the lame take the prey. Those that tarried at home did divide the spoil. It was so easy to come that not only the strong man might make himself master of it, but even the lame man, whose hands were lame, that he could not fight, and his feet, that he could not pursue. The victory shall cost them no peril, so the prey shall cost them no toil. And there is such abundance of it that when those who were forward, and came first, had carried off as much as they would, even the lame, who came late, found sufficient. Thus God brought good out of evil, and not only delivered Jerusalem, but enriched it, and undantly recompensed the losses they had sustained. Thus comfortably and well do the frights and distresses of the people of God often end.

9. Both sickness and sin shall be taken away; and then sickness is taken away in mercy when this is all the fruit of it, and the recovery from it, even the taking away of sin. (1.) *The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick.* As the lame shall take the prey, so shall the sick, notwithstanding their weakness, make a shift to get to the abandoned camp and seize something for themselves; or there shall be such a universal transport of joy upon this occasion that even the sick shall, for the present, forget their sickness and the sorrows of it, and join with the public in its rejoicings; the deliverance of their city shall be their cure. Or it intimates that, whereas infectious diseases are commonly the effect of long sieges, it shall not be so with Jerusalem, but the inhabitants of it with their victory and peace shall have health also, and there shall be no complaining upon the account of sickness within their gates. Or those that are sick shall bear their sickness without complaining as long as they see it goes well with Jerusalem. Our sense of private grievances should be drowned in our thanksgivings for public mercies. (2.) *The people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity,* not only the body of the nation forgiven their national guilt in the removing of the national judgment, but particular persons, that dwell therein, shall repent, and reform, and have their sins pardoned. And this is promised as that which shall be at the bottom of all other favours; he will do so and so for them, *for he will be merciful to their unrighteousness,* Heb. viii. 12. Sin is the sickness of the soul. When God pardons the sin he heals the disease; and, when the diseases of sin are healed by pardoning mercy, the sting of bodily sickness is taken out and the cause of it removed;

so that either the inhabitant shall not be sick or at least shall not say, *I am sick.* If iniquity be taken away, we have little reason to complain of outward affliction. *Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee.*

CHAP. XXXIV.

In this chapter we have the fatal doom of all the nations that are enemies to God's church and people, though Edom only is mentioned, because of the old enmity of Esau to Jacob, which was typical, as much as that more ancient enmity of Cain to Abel, and flowed from the original enmity of the serpent to the seed of the woman. It is probable that this prophecy had its accomplishment in the great desolations made by the Assyrian army first, or rather by Nebuchadnezzar's army some time after, among those nations that were neighbours to Israel and had been in some way or other injurious to them. That mighty conqueror took a pride in shedding blood, and laying countries waste, and therein, quite beyond his design, he was fulfilling what God here threatened against his and his people's enemies. But we have reason to think it is intended as a denunciation of the wrath of God against all those who fight against the interests of his kingdom among men, that it has its frequent accomplishment in the havoc made by the wars of the nations and other desolating judgments, and will have its full accomplishment in the final dissolution of all things at the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. Here is, I. A demand of universal attention, ver. 1. II. A dreadful scene of blood and confusion presented, ver. 2-7. III. The reason given for these judgments, ver. 8. IV. The continuance of this desolation, the country being made like the lake of Sodom (ver. 9, 10), and the cities abandoned to wild beasts and melancholy fowls, ver. 11. —15. V. The solemn ratification of all this, ver. 16, 17. Let us hear, and fear.

COME near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it. 2 For the indignation of the LORD is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter. 3 Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcases, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood. 4 And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig-tree. 5 For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment. 6 The sword of the LORD is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, and with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams: for the LORD hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea. 7 And the unicorns shall come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls; and their land shall be soaked with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness. 8 For it is the day of the LORD's vengeance, and

the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion.

Here we have a prophecy, as elsewhere we have a history, of the wars of the Lord, which we are sure are all both righteous and successful. This world, as it is his creature, he does good to; but as it is in the interest of Satan, who is called *the god of this world*, he fights against it.

I. Here is the trumpet sounded and the war proclaimed, v. 1. All nations must hear and hearken, not only because what God is about to do is well worthy their remark (as *ch. xxxiii. 13*), but because they are all concerned in it; it is with them that God has a quarrel; it is against them that God is coming forth in wrath. Let them all take notice that the great God is angry with them; his indignation is upon all nations, and therefore let all nations come near to hear. *The trumpet is blown in the city* (Amos iii. 6), *and the watchmen on the walls cry, Harken to the sound of the trumpet*, Jer. vi. 17. *Let the earth hear, and the fulness thereof, for it is the Lord's* (Ps. xxiv. 1) and ought to hearken to its Maker and Master. The world must hear, and all things that come forth of it, the children of men, that are of the earth earthy, come out of it, and must return to it; or the inanimate products of the earth are called to, as more likely to hearken than sinners, whose hearts are hardened against the calls of God. *Hear, O you mountains! the Lord's controversy*, Micah vi. 2. It is so just a controversy that all the world may be safely appealed to concerning the equity of it.

II. Here is the manifesto published, setting forth,

1. Whom he makes war against (v. 2): *The indignation of the Lord is upon all nations*; they are all in confederacy against God and religion, all in the interests of the devil, and therefore he is angry with them all, even with all the nations that forget him. He has long suffered all nations to walk in their own ways (Acts xiv. 16), but now he will no longer keep silence. As they have all had the benefit of his patience, so they must all expect now to feel his resentments. *His fury is in a special manner upon all their armies*, (1.) Because with them they have done mischief to the people of God; those are they that have made bloody work with them, and therefore they must be sure to have blood given them to drink. (2.) Because with them they hope to make their part good against the justice and power of God; they trust to them as their defence, and therefore on them, in the first place, God's fury will come. Armies before God's fury are but as dry stubble before a consuming fire, though ever so numerous and courageous.

2. Whom he makes war for, and what are the grounds and reasons of the war

(v. 8): *It is the day of the Lord's vengeance*, and he it is to whom vengeance belongs, and who is never unrighteous in taking vengeance. Rom. iii. 5. As there is a day of the Lord's patience, so there will be a day of his vengeance; for, though he bear long, he will not bear always. *It is the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion*. Zion is the holy city, the city of our solemnities, a type and figure of the church of God in the world. Zion has a just quarrel with her neighbours for the wrongs they have done her, for all their treacherous and barbarous usage of her, profaning her holy things, laying waste her palaces, and slaying her sons. She has left it to God to plead her cause, and he will do so when the time, even the set time, to favour Zion shall have come, then he will recompense to her persecutors and oppressors all the mischiefs they have done her. The controversy will be decided, that Zion has been wronged, and therefore Zion's God has been himself abused. Judgment will be given upon this decision, an execution done. Note, There is a time prefixed in the divine counsels for the deliverance of the church and the destruction of her enemies, a year of the redeemed, which will come, *a year of recompences for the controversy of Zion*; and we must patiently wait till then, and judge nothing before the time.

III. Here are the operations of the war, and the methods of it, settled, with an infallible assurance of success. 1. The sword of the Lord is bathed in heaven; this is the preparation here made for the war, v. 1. It may probably allude to some custom they had then of bathing their swords in some liquor or other, to harden them or brighten them; it is the same with the furbishing of it, that it may glitter, Ezek. xxi. 9—11. God's sword is bathed in heaven, in his counsel and decree, in his justice and power, and then there is no standing before it. *It shall come down*. What he has determined shall without fail be put in execution. It shall come down from heaven, and the higher the place is, whence it comes, the heavier will it fall. *It will come down upon Idumea, the people of God's curse*, the people that lie under his curse and are by it doomed to destruction. Miserable, for ever miserable, are those that have by their sins made themselves the people of God's curse; for the sword of the Lord will infallibly attend the curse of the Lord and execute the sentences of it; and those whom he curses are cursed indeed. *It shall come down upon judgment*, to execute judgment upon sinners. Note, God's sword of war is always a sword of justice. It is observed of him out of whose mouth goeth the sharp sword that *righteousness he doth judge and make war*. Rev. xix. 11, 15. 3. The nations and the armies shall be given up to the sword (v. 2). *God has delivered them to the slaughter*, and then they cannot deliver themselves, nor

an all the friends they have deliver them from it. Those only are slain whom God delivers to the slaughter, for the keys of death are in his hand; and, in delivering them to the slaughter, he has utterly destroyed them: their destruction is as sure, when God has doomed them to it, as if they were destroyed already, utterly destroyed. God has, in effect, delivered all the cruel enemies of his church to the slaughter by that word (Rev. xiii. 10), *He that kills with the sword must be killed by the sword*, for the Lord is righteous. 4. Pursuant to the sentence, a terrible slaughter shall be made among them (v. 6): *The sword of the Lord*, when it comes down with commission, does vast execution; it is filled, satiated, surfeited, *with blood*, the blood of the slain, and made fat with their fatness. When the day of God's abused mercy and patience is over the sword of his justice gives no quarter, spares none. Men have by sin lost the honour of the human nature and made themselves like the beasts that perish; they are therefore justly denied the compassion and respect that are owing to the human nature and killed as beasts, and no more is made of slaying an army of men than of butchering a flock of lambs or goats and feeding on the fat of the kidneys of rams. Nay, the sword of the Lord shall not only dispatch the lambs and goats, the infantry of their armies, the poor common soldiers, but (v. 7) *the unicorns too shall be made to come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls*, though they are ever so proud, and strong, and fierce (*the great men, and the mighty men, and the chief captains* Lev. vi. 15), the sword of the Lord will make as easy a prey of as of the lambs and the goats. The greatest of men are nothing before the wrath of the great God. See what bloody work will be made: *The land shall be soaked with blood*, as with the rain that comes often upon it and in great abundance; and *their dust*, their dry and barren land, shall be made fat with the fatness of men slain in their full strength, as with manure. Nay even the mountains, which are hard and rocky, shall be melted with their blood, v. 3. These expressions are hyperbolical (as St. John's vision of blood to be horse-bridles, Rev. xiv. 20), and are made use of because they sound very dreadful to sense (it makes us even shiver to think of such abundance of human gore), and are therefore proper to express the terror of God's wrath, which is dreadful beyond conception and expression. See what work sin and wrath make even in this world, and think how much more terrible the wrath to come is, which will bring down the unicorns themselves to the bars of the pit. 5. This great slaughter will be a great sacrifice to the justice of God (v. 6): *The Lord has a sacrifice in Bazarah*; there it is that the great Redeemer has his garments dyed with

blood, ch. lxiii. 1. Sacrifices were intended for the honour of God, to make it appear that he hates sin and demands satisfaction for it, and that nothing but blood will make atonement; and for these ends the slaughter is made, that in it the wrath of God may be revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, especially their ungodly unrighteous enmity to his people, which was the sin that the Edomites were notoriously guilty of. In great sacrifices abundance of beasts were killed, hecatombs offered, and their blood poured out before the altar; and so will it be in this day of the Lord's vengeance. And thus would the whole earth have been soaked with the blood of sinners if Jesus Christ, the great propitiation, had not shed his blood for us; but those who reject him, and will not make a covenant with God by that sacrifice, will themselves fall as victims to divine wrath. Damned sinners are everlasting sacrifices, Mark ix. 48, 49. Those that sacrifice not (which is the character of the ungodly, Eccl. ix. 2) must be sacrificed. 6. These slain shall be detestable to mankind, and shall be as much their loathing as ever they were their terror (v. 3): *They shall be cast out*, and none shall pay them the respect of a decent burial; but *their stink shall come up out of their carcases*, that all people by the odious smell, as well as by the ghastly sight, may be made to conceive an indignation against sin and a dread of the wrath of God. They lie unburied, that they may remain monuments of divine justice. 7. The effect and consequence of this slaughter shall be universal confusion and desolation, as if the whole frame of nature were dissolved and melted down (v. 4): *All the host of heaven shall pine and waste away* (so the word is); the sun shall be darkened, and the moon look black, or be turned into blood; *the heavens themselves shall be rolled together as a scroll of parchment* when we have done with it, and lay it by, or as when it is shrivelled up by the heat of the fire. The stars shall fall as the leaves in autumn; all the beauty, joy, and comfort, of the vanquished nation shall be lost and done away, magistracy and government shall be abolished, and all dominion and rule, but that of the sword of war, shall fall. Conquerors, in those times, affected to lay waste the countries they conquered; and such a complete desolation is here described by such figurative expressions as will yet have a literal and full accomplishment in the dissolution of all things at the end of time, of which last day of judgment the judgments which God does now sometimes remarkably execute on sinful nations are figures, earnest, and fore-runners; and by these we should be awakened to think of that, for which reason these expressions are used here and Rev. vi. 12, 13. But they are used without a metaphor, 2 Pet. iii. 10, where we are told that the

heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the earth shall be burnt up.

9 And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. 10 It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever. 11 But the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it; the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it: and he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness. 12 They shall call the nobles thereof to the kingdom, but none shall be there, and all her princes shall be nothing. 13 And thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof: and it shall be a habitation of dragons, and a court for owls. 14 The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the wild beasts of the island, and the satyr shall cry to his fellow; the screech-owl also shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest. 15 There shall the great owl make her nest, and lay, and hatch, and gather under her shadow: there shall the vultures also be gathered, every one with her mate. 16 Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them. 17 And he hath cast the lot for them, and his hand hath divided it unto them by line: they shall possess it for ever, from generation to generation shall they dwell therein.

This prophecy looks very black, but surely it looks so further than upon Edom and Bozrah. 1. It describes the melancholy changes that are often made by the divine Providence, in countries, cities, palaces, and families. Places that have flourished and been much frequented strangely go to decay. We know not where to find the places where many great towns, celebrated in history, once stood. Fruitful countries, in process of time, are turned into barrenness, and pompous populous cities into ruinous heaps. Old decayed castles look frightful, and their ruins are almost as much dreaded as ever their garrisons were. 2. It describes the

destroying judgments which are the effect of God's wrath and the just punishment of those that are enemies to his people, which God will inflict when the year of the reckoning shall have come, and the year of recompence for the controversy of Zion. Those that aim to ruin the church can never do that, but will infallibly ruin themselves. 3. It describes the final desolation of this wicked world, which is reserved unto fire at the day of judgment, 2 Pet. iii. 7. The earth itself, when it, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up, will (for aught I know) be turned into a hell to all those that sow their affections only on earthly things. However, this prophecy shows us what will be the lot of the generation of God's curse.

I. The country shall become like the lake of Sodom, v. 9, 10. *The streams thereof that both watered the land and pleased and refreshed the inhabitants, shall now be turned into pitch, shall be congealed, shall look black, and shall move slowly, or not at all. Their floods to lazy streams of pitch shall turn;* so Sir R. Blackmore. *The dust thereof shall be turned into brimstone;* so combustible has sin made their land that it shall take fire at the first spark of God's wrath struck upon it; and, when it has taken fire, it shall become burning pitch; the fire shall be universal, not a house, or town, or fire, but a whole country; and it shall not be the power of any to suppress or extinguish it. It shall burn continually, burn perpetually, and shall not be quenched night nor day. The torment of those in hell, or that have hell within them in their own conscience, is without interruption; the smoke of the fire goes up for ever. As long as there are provoking sinners on earth, from one generation to another, an increase of sinful men, augment the fierce anger of the Lord (Num. xxxii. 14), there will be a righteous God in heaven to punish them for it. And as long as a people keep up a succession of sinners, God will have a succession of plagues for them; nor will any that fall under the wrath of God be ever able to recover themselves. It will be found, how light soever men make of it, that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. If the land be doomed to destruction, none shall pass through it, but travellers will choose rather to go a great way about than come within the smell of it.

II. The cities shall become like old decayed houses, which, being deserted by the owners, look very frightful, being commonly possessed by beasts of prey or birds of prey. See how dismally the palaces of the enemy look; the description is peculiarly elegant and fine. 1. God shall mark them for ruin and destruction. *He shall stretch out upon Bozrah the line of confusion with the stones or plummets of emptiness, v. 11* This intimates the equity of the sentence passed upon it; it is given according to the

rules of justice and the exact agreeableness of the execution with the sentence; the destruction is not wrought at random, but by line and level. The confusion and emptiness that shall overspread the face of the whole country shall be like that of the whole earth when it was *Tohu and Bohu* (the very words here used)—*without form and void*. Gen. i. 2. Sin will soon turn a paradise into a chaos, and sully the beauty of the whole creation. When there is confusion here will soon be emptiness; but both are appointed by the governor of the world, and in exact proportions. 2. Their great men shall be all cut off, and none of them shall dare to appear (v. 12): *They shall call the nobles of the kingdom to take care of the arduous affairs which lie before them, but none shall be there to take this ruin under their hand, and all her princes, having the sad tidings brought them, shall be nothing, shall be at their wits' end, and not be able to stand them in stead, to shelter them from destruction.*

III. Even the houses of state, and those of strength, shall become as wildernesses (v. 13); not only grass shall grow, but *thorns shall come up, in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof*, and here shall be none to cut them up or tread them down. We sometimes see ruined buildings thus overgrown with rubbish. It intimates that the place shall not only be uninhabited and unfrequented where a full court used to be kept, but that it shall be under the curse of God; for thorns and brambles were the production of the curse, Gen. iii. 18.

IV. They shall become the residence and rendezvous of fearful frightful beasts and birds, which usually frequent such melancholy places, because there they may be undisturbed, and, when they are frightened thither, they help to frighten men thence. This circumstance of the desolation, being apt to strike a horror upon the mind, is much enlarged upon here, v. 11. *The corv'ant shall possess it, or the pelican, which affects to be solitary* (Ps. cii. 6); and *the bittern, which makes a hideous noise, the owl, a melancholy bird, the raven, a bird of prey, invited by the dead carcasses, shall dwell there (with all the ill-boding monsters of the air, Sir R. B.), all the unclean birds, which were not for the service of man, v. 13. It shall be a habitation for dragons, which are poisonous and hurtful.*

And in their lofty rooms of state,
Where cringing sycophants did wait,
Dragons shall hiss and hungry wolves shall howl:
In courts before by mighty lords possess'd
The serpent shall erect his speckled crest,
Or fold his circling spires to rest.

SIR R. BLACKMORE.

That which was a court for princes shall now be a court for owls or ostriches, v. 14. *The wild beasts of the desert, the dry and*

sandy country, shall meet, as it were by appointment, with the wild beasts of the island, the wet marshy country, and shall regale themselves with such a perfect desolation as they shall find there.

Leopards, and all the rav'n'ing brotherhoods
That range the plains, or lurk in woods,
Each other shall invite to come,
And make this wilder place their home.
Fierce beasts of every frightful shape and size
Shall settle here their bloody colonies.

SIR R. BLACKMORE.

The satyr shall cry to his fellow to go with him to this desert place, or, being there, they shall please themselves that they have found such an agreeable habitation. There shall the *screech-owl rest*, a night-bird and an ominous one. *The great owl shall there make her nest* (v. 15) and lay and hatch; the breed of them shall be kept up to provide heirs for this desolate place. *The vultures, which feast on carcasses, shall be gathered there, every one with his mate.* Now observe, 1. How the places which men have deserted, and keep at a distance from, are proper receptacles for other animals, which the providence of God takes care of, and will not neglect. 2. Whom those resemble that are morose, unsociable, and unconvertible, and affect a melancholy retirement; they are like these solitary creatures that take delight in desolations. 3. What a dismal change sin makes; it turns a fruitful land into barrenness, a frequented city into a wilderness.

V. Here is an assurance given of the full accomplishment of this prediction, even to the most minute circumstance of it (v. 16, 17): "*Seek you out of the book of the Lord and read.* When this destruction comes compare the event with the prediction, and you will find it to answer exactly." Note, The book of the prophets is the book of the Lord, and we ought to consult it and converse with it as of divine origin and authority. We must not only read it, but seek out of it, search into it, turn first to one text and then to another and compare them together. Abundance of useful knowledge might thus be extracted, by a diligent search, out of the scriptures, which cannot be got by a superficial reading of them. When you have read the prediction out of the book of the Lord then observe, 1. That according to what you have read so you see; *not one of these shall fail*, either beast or fowl: and, it being foretold that they shall possess it *from generation to generation*, in order to that, that the species may be propagated, *none shall want her mate*; these marks of desolation shall be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the land. 2. That God's mouth having commanded this dreadful muster *his Spirit shall gather them*, as the creatures by instinct were gathered to Adam to be named and to Noah to be housed. What God's word has appointed his Spirit will effect and bring about, for no word of

God shall fall to the ground. The word of God's promise shall in like manner be accomplished by the operations of the Spirit. 3. That there is an exact order and proportion observed in the accomplishment of this threatening: *He has cast the lot* for these birds and beasts, so that each one shall know his place as readily as if it were marked by line. See the like, Joel ii. 7, 8, *They shall not break their ranks, neither shall one thrust another.* The soothsayers among the heathen foretold events by the flight of birds, as if the fate of men depended on them. But here we find that the flight of birds is under the direction of the God of Israel: *he has cast the lot for them.* 4. That the desolation shall be perpetual: *They shall possess it for ever.* God's Jerusalem may be laid in ruins; but Jerusalem of old recovered itself out of its ruins, till it gave place to the gospel Jerusalem, which may be brought low, but shall be rebuilt, and shall continue till it give place to the heavenly Jerusalem. But the enemies of the church shall be for ever desolate, shall be punished with an everlasting destruction.

CHAP. XXXV.

As after a prediction of God's judgments upon the world (ch. xxiv.) follows a promise of great mercy to be had in store for his church (chap. xxv.), so here after a black and dreadful scene of confusion in the foregoing chapter we have, in this, a bright and pleasant one, which, though it foretel the flourishing estate of Hezekiah's kingdom in the latter part of his reign, yet surely looks as far beyond that as the prophecy in the foregoing chapter does beyond the destruction of the Edomites; both were typical, and it concerns us most to look at those things which they were typical of, the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of heaven. When the world, which lies in wickedness, shall be laid in ruins, and the Jewish church, which persisted in infidelity, shall become a desolation, then the gospel church shall be set up and made to flourish. I. The Gentiles shall be brought into it, ver. 1, 2, 7. II. The well-wishers to it, who were weak and timorous, shall be encouraged, ver. 3, 4. III. Miracles shall be wrought both on the souls and on the bodies of men, ver. 5, 6. IV. The gospel church shall be conducted in the way of holiness, ver. 8, 9. V. It shall be brought at last to endless joys, ver. 10. Thus do we find more of Christ and heaven in this chapter than one would have expected in the Old Testament.

THE wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. 2 It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God. 3 Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. 4 Say to them *that are* of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come *with* vengeance, *even* God *with* a recompence; he will come and save you.

In these verses we have,

I. The desert land blooming. In the foregoing chapter we had a populous and fruitful country turned into a horrid wilderness; here we have, in lieu of that, a wil-

derness turned into a good land. When the land of Judah was freed from the Assyrian army, those parts of the country that had been made as a wilderness by the ravages and outrages they committed began to recover themselves, and to look pleasantly again, and to blossom as the rose. When the Gentile nations, that had been long as a wilderness, bringing forth no fruit to God received the gospel, joy came with it to them, Ps. lxvii. 3, 4; xcvi. 11, 12. When Christ was preached in Samaria there was *great joy in that city* (Acts viii. 8); those that sat in darkness saw a great and joyful light, and then they blossomed, that is, gave hopes of abundance of fruit; for that was which the preachers of the gospel aimed at (John xv. 16), to go and bring forth fruit. Rom. i. 13; Col. i. 6. Though blossoms are not fruit, and often miscarry and come to nothing, yet they are in order to fruit. Converting grace makes the soul that was a wilderness to rejoice with joy and singing, and to blossom abundantly. This flourishing desert shall have all the glory of Lebanon given to it, which consisted in the strength and stateliness of its cedars, together with the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, which consisted in corn and cattle. Whatever is valuable in any institution is brought into the gospel. All the beauty of the Jewish church was admitted into the Christian church, and appeared in its perfection, as the apostle shows at large in his epistle to the Hebrews. Whatever was excellent and desirable in the Mosaic economy is translated into the evangelical institutes.

II. The glory of God shining forth: *They shall see the glory of the Lord.* God will manifest himself more than ever in his grace and love to mankind (for that is his glory and excellency), and he shall give them eyes to see it, and hearts to be duly affected with it. This is that which will make the desert blossom. The more we see by faith of the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God the more joyful and the more fruitful shall we be.

III. The feeble and faint-hearted encouraged, v. 3, 4. God's prophets and ministers are in a special manner charged, by virtue of their office, to *strengthen the weak hands*, to comfort those who could not yet recover the fright they had been put into by the Assyrian army with an assurance that God would now return in mercy to them. This is the design of the gospel, 1. To strengthen those that are weak and to confirm them—the weak hands, which are unable either to work or fight, and can hardly be lifted up in prayer, and the feeble knees which are unable either to stand or walk and unfit for the race set before us. The gospel furnishes us with strengthening considerations, and shows us where strength is laid up for us. Among true Christians there are many that have weak hands and

ble knees, that are yet but babes in Christ; it is our duty to strengthen our brethren (Luke xxii. 32), not only to bear with the weak, but to do what we can to confirm them, Rom. xv. 1; 1 Thess. v. 14. It is our duty also to strengthen ourselves, to *lift up the hands which hang down* (Heb. ii. 12), improving the strength God has given us, and exerting it. 2. To animate those that are timorous and discouraged: *say to those that are of a fearful heart*, because of their own weakness and the strength of their enemies, that are *hasty* (so the word), that are for betaking themselves to flight upon the first alarm, and giving up the cause, that say, in their haste, "We are cut off and undone" (Ps. xxxi. 22), there is enough in the gospel to silence these fears; it says to them, and let them say it to themselves and one to another, *Be strong, fear not*. Fear is weakening; the more we strive against it the stronger we are both for doing and suffering; and, for our encouragement to strive, he that says to us, *Be strong* has aid help for us upon one that is mighty.

IV. Assurance given of the approach of a Saviour: "*Your God will come with vengeance*. God will appear for you against your enemies, will recompense both their injuries and your losses." The Messiah will come, in the fulness of time, to take vengeance on the powers of darkness, to spoil them, and make a show of them openly, to recompense those that mourn in Zion with abundant comforts. *He will come and save us*. With the hopes of this the Old Testament saints strengthened their weak hands. He will come again at the end of time, will come in flaming fire, to recompense tribulation to those who have troubled his people, and, to those who were troubled, rest, such a rest as will be not only a final period to, but a full reward of, all their troubles, 2 Thess. i. 6, 7. Those whose *hearts tremble for the ark of God*, and who are under a concern for his church in the world, may silence their fears with this, God will take the work into his own hands. Your God will come, who pleads your cause and owns your interest, even God himself, who is God alone.

5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. 6 Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. 7 And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, *shall be grass with reeds and rushes*. 8 And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall

be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it *shall be* for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err *therein*. 9 No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk *there*: 10 And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

"Then, when your God shall come, ever Christ, to set up his kingdom in the world, to which all the prophets bore witness, especially towards the conclusion of their prophecies of the temporal deliverances of the church, and this evangelical prophet especially—then look for great things."

I. Wonders shall be wrought in the kingdoms both of nature and grace, wonders of mercy wrought upon the children of men, sufficient to evince that it is no less than a God that comes to us. 1. Wonders shall be wrought on men's bodies (v. 5, 6): *The eyes of the blind shall be opened*; this was often done by our Lord Jesus when he was here upon earth, with a word's speaking, and one he gave sight to that was born blind, Matt. ix. 27; xii. 22; xx. 30; John ix. 6. By his power the ears of the deaf also were unstopped, with one word, *Ephphatha—Be opened*, Mark vii. 34. Many that were lame had the use of their limbs restored so perfectly that they could not only go, but leap, and with so much joy to them that they could not forbear leaping for joy, as that impotent man, Acts iii. 8. The dumb also were enabled to speak, and then no marvel that they were disposed to sing for joy, Matt. ix. 32, 33. These miracles Christ wrought to prove that he was sent of God (John iii. 2), nay, working them by his own power and in his own name, he proved that he was God, the same who at first made man's mouth, the hearing ear, and the seeing eye. When he would prove to John's disciples his divine mission he did it by miracles of this kind, in which this scripture was fulfilled. 2. Wonders, greater wonders, shall be wrought on men's souls. By the word and Spirit of Christ those that were spiritually blind were enlightened (Acts xxvi. 18), those that were deaf to the calls of God were made to hear them readily, as Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened, so that she attended, Acts xvi. 14. Those that were impotent to every thing that is good by divine grace are made, not only able for it, but active in it, and run the way of God's commandments. Those also that were dumb, and knew not how to speak of God or to God, having their understandings opened to know him, shall

be able on thy part to set riders upon them. 9 How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? 10 And am I now come up without the LORD against this land to destroy it? The LORD said unto me, Go up against this land and destroy it.

We shall here only observe some practical lessons. 1. A people may be in the way of their duty and yet meet with trouble and distress. Hezekiah was reforming, and his people were in some measure reformed; and yet their country is at that time invaded and a great part of it laid waste. Perhaps they began to grow remiss and cool in the work of reformation, were doing it by halves, and ready to sit down short of a thorough reformation; and then God visited them with this judgment, to put life into them and that good cause. We must not wonder if, when we are doing well, God sends afflictions to quicken us to do better, to do our best, and to press forward towards perfection. 2. That we must never be secure of the continuance of our peace in this world, nor think our mountain stands so strong that it cannot be moved. Hezekiah was not only a pious king, but prudent, both in his administration at home and in his treaties abroad. His affairs were in a good posture, and he seemed particularly to be upon good terms with the king of Assyria, for he had lately made his peace with him by a rich present (2 Kings xviii. 14), and yet that perfidious prince pours an army into his country all of a sudden and lays it waste. It is good for us therefore always to keep up an expectation of trouble, that, when it comes, it may be no surprise to us, and then it will be the less a terror. 3. God sometimes permits the enemies of his people, even those that are most impious and treacherous, to prevail far against them. The king of Assyria took all, or most, of the defended cities of Judah, and then the country would of course be an easy prey to him. Wickedness may prosper awhile, but cannot prosper always. 4. Proud men love to talk big, to boast of what they are, and have, and have done, nay and of what they will do, to insult over others, and set all mankind at defiance, though thereby they render themselves ridiculous to all wise men and obnoxious to the wrath of that God who resists the proud. But thus they think to make themselves feared, though they make themselves hated, and to carry their point by *great swelling words of vanity*, Jude 16. 5. The enemies of God's people endeavour to conquer them by frightening them, especially by frightening them from their confidence in God.

Thus Rabshakeh here, with noise and banting runs down Hezekiah as utterly unable to cope with his master, or in the least to make head against him. It concerns us therefore that we may keep our ground against the enemies of our souls, to keep up our spirit by keeping up our hope in God. 6. It is acknowledged, on all hands, that those who forsake God's service forfeit his protection. If that had been true which Rabshakeh alleged, that Hezekiah had thrown down God's altars, he might justly infer that he could not with any assurance trust in him for succour and relief, v. 7. We may say thus of presuming sinners, who say that they trust in the Lord and in his mercy. Is not this he whose commandments they have lived in the contempt of, whose name they have dishonoured, and whose ordinance they have slighted? How then can they expect to find favour with him? 7. It is an easy thing, and very common, for those that persecute the church and people of God to pretend a commission from him for so doing. Rabshakeh could say, *Have I not come up without the Lord?* when really he had come up against the Lord, ch. xxxvii. 2. Those that kill the servants of the Lord think they do him service and say, *Let the Lord be glorified*. But, sooner or later, this will be made to know their error to their cost to their confusion.

11 Then said Eliakim and Shebna and Joah unto Rabshakeh, Speak, and pray thee, unto thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand it: and speak not to us in the Jewish language, in the ears of the people that are on the wall. 12 But Rabshakeh said, Hath my master sent me to thy master and to thee to speak these words? *Hath he not sent me to the men that sit upon the wall, that they may eat their own dung, and drink their own piss with you?* 13 Then Rabshakeh stood, and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and said, Hear ye the words of the great king, the king of Assyria. 14 Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you. 15 Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD saying, The LORD will surely deliver us: this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria. 16 Harken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me: and eat ye ever

one of his vine, and every one of his fig-tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his own cistern; 17 Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards. 18 *Beware* lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, The LORD will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? 19 Where *are* the gods of Hamath and Arphad? where *are* the gods of Sepharvaim? and have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? 20 Who *are they* among all the gods of these lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand? 21 But they held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not. 22 Then came Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, that *was* over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joab, the son of Asaph, the recorder, to Hezekiah with *their* clothes rent, and told him the words of Rabshakeh.

We may hence learn these lessons:—1. That, while princes and counsellors have public matters under debate, it is not fair to appeal to the people. It was a reasonable notion which Hezekiah's plenipotentiaries made, that this parley should be held in a language which the people did not understand (v. 11), because reasons of state are secret things and ought to be kept secret, the vulgar being incompetent judges of them. It is therefore an unfair practice, and not doing as men would be done by, to incense subjects against their rulers by base insinuations. 2. Proud and haughty scorers, the fairer they are spoken to, commonly speak the fouler. Nothing could be said more mildly and respectfully than that which Hezekiah's agents said to Rabshakeh. Besides that the thing itself was just which they desired, they called themselves his *servants*, they petitioned for it: *Speak, we pray thee*; but this made him the more spiteful and imperious. To give rough answers to those who give us soft answers is one way of rendering evil for good; and those are wicked indeed, and it is to be feared incurable, with whom that which usually turns away wrath does but make bad worse. 3. When Satan would tempt men from trusting in God, and cleaving to him, he does so by insinuating that in yielding to him they may

better their condition; but it is a false suggestion, and grossly absurd, and therefore to be rejected with the utmost abhorrence. When the world and the flesh say to us, "*Make an agreement with us and come out to us*, submit to our dominion and come into our interests, and *you shall eat every one of his own vine*," they do but deceive us, promising liberty when they would lead us into the basest captivity and slavery. One might as well take Rabshakeh's word as theirs for kind usage and fair quarter; therefore, *when they speak fair, believe them not*. Let them say what they will, there is no land like the land of promise, the holy land. 4. Nothing can be more absurd in itself, nor a greater affront to the true and living God, than to compare him with the gods of the heathen; as if he could do no more for the protection of his worshippers than they can for the protection of theirs, and as if the God of Israel could as easily be mastered as the gods of Hamath and Arphad, whereas they are vanity and a lie. They are nothing; he is the great *I AM*: they are the creatures of men's fancy and the works of men's hands; he is the Creator of all things. 5. Presumptuous sinners are ready to think that, because they have been too hard for their fellow-creatures, they are therefore a match for their Creator. This and the other nation they have subdued, and therefore the Lord himself shall not deliver Jerusalem out of their hand. But, though the potsherds may strive with the potsherds of the earth, let them not strive with the potter. 6. It is sometimes prudent not to *answer a fool according to his folly*. Hezekiah's command was, "*Answer him not*"; it will but provoke him to rail and blaspheme yet more and more; leave it to God to stop his mouth, for you cannot." They had reason enough on their side, but it would be hard to speak it to such an unreasonable adversary without a mixture of passion; and, if they should fall a railing like him, Rabshakeh would be much too hard for them at that weapon. 7. It becomes the people of God to lay to heart the dishonour done to God by the blasphemies of wicked men, though they do not think it prudent to reply to those blasphemies. Though they *answered him not a word*, yet they rent their clothes, in a holy zeal for the glory of God's name and a holy indignation at the contempt put upon it. They tore their garments when they heard blasphemy, as taking no pleasure in their own ornaments when God's honour suffered.

CHAP. XXXVII.

In this chapter we have a further repetition of the story which we had before in the book of Kings concerning Sennacherib. In the foregoing chapter we had him conquering and threatening to conquer. In this chapter we have him falling, and at last fallen, in answer to prayer, and in fulfilment of many of the prophecies which we have met with in the foregoing chapters. Here we have, I. Hezekiah's pious reception of Rabshakeh's impious discourse, ver. 1. II. The gracious message he sent to Isaiah to declare his prayers, ver. 2—5. III. The encouraging answer which Isaiah sent to him from God, assuring him that God would plead his cause against the king of Assyria, ver. 6, 7. IV. An abusive

letter which the king of Assyria sent to Hezekiah, to the same purport with Rabshakeh's speech, ver. 8-13. V. Hezekiah's humble prayer to God upon the receipt of this letter, ver. 14-20. VI. The further full answer which God sent him by Isaiah, promising him that his affairs should shortly take a happy turn, that the storm should blow over and every thing should appear bright and serene, ver. 21-35. VII. The immediate accomplishment of this prophecy in the ruin of his army (ver. 36) and the murder of himself, ver. 37, 38. All this was largely opened, 2 Kings xix.

AND it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard *it*, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD. 2 And he sent Eliakim, who *was* over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests covered with sackcloth, unto Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz. 3 And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and *there is* not strength to bring forth. 4 It may be the LORD thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God, and will reprove the words which the LORD thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up *thy* prayer for the remnant that is left. 5 So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah. 6 And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say unto your master, Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. 7 Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

We may observe here, 1. That the best way to baffle the malicious designs of our enemies against us is to be driven by them to God and to our duty and so to fetch meat out of the eater. Rabshakeh intended to frighten Hezekiah from the Lord, but it proves that he frightens him to the Lord. The wind, instead of forcing the traveller's coat from him, makes him wrap it the closer about him. The more Rabshakeh reproaches God the more Hezekiah studies to honour him, *rending* his clothes for the dishonour done to him and attending in his sanctuary to know his mind. 2. That it well becomes great men to desire the prayers of good men and good ministers. Hezekiah sent messengers, and honourable ones, those of the first rank, to Isaiah, to desire his prayers, remembering how much his pro-

phesies of late had plainly looked toward the events of the present day, in dependence upon which, it is probable, he doubted not but that the issue would be comfortable, yet he would have it to be so in answer to prayer: *This is a day of trouble*, therefore let it be a day of prayer. 3. When we are most at a plunge we should be most earnest in prayer: Now that the children are brought to the birth, but *there is not strength to bring forth*, now let prayer come, and help at dead lift. When pains are most strong let prayers be most lively; and, when we meet with the greatest difficulties, then is a time to stir up not ourselves only, but others also to take hold on God. Prayer is the midwife of mercy, that helps to bring it forth. 4. It is an encouragement to pray though we have but some hopes of mercy (v. 4): *It may be the Lord thy God will hear*; who knows but he will return and repent? The *it* may be of the prospect of the haven of blessings should quicken us with double diligence to ply the oar of prayer. 5. When there is a remnant left, and but a remnant it concerns us to lift up a prayer for the remnant, v. 4. The prayer that reaches heaven must be lifted up by a strong faith, earnest desires, and a direct intention to the glory of God, all which should be quickened when we come to the last stake. 6. Those that have made God their enemy we have no reason to be afraid of, for they are marked for ruin; and, though they may hiss, they cannot hurt. Rabshakeh has blasphemed God, and therefore let not Hezekiah be afraid of him, v. 6. He has made God his party to the cause by his invectives, and therefore judgment will certainly be given against him. God will certainly plead his own cause. 7. Sinners' fears are but prefaces to their falls. He shall *hear the rumour* of the slaughter of his army, which shall oblige him to retire to his own land, and there he shall be slain, v. 7. The terror that pursue him shall bring him at last to the *king of terrors*, Job xviii. 11, 14. The curse that come upon sinners shall overtake them.

8 So Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah: for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish. 9 And he heard say concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, He is come forth to make war with thee. And when he heard *it*, he sent messenger to Hezekiah, saying, 10 Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God, in whom thou trustest, deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. 11 Behold, thou hast heard what the king

Assyria have done to all lands by destroying them utterly; and shalt thou be delivered? 12 Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed, as Bozan, and Haran, and Rezech, and the children of Eden which *were* in Belassar? 13 Where *is* the king of Hamath, and the king of Arphad, and the king of the city of Sepharaim, Hena, and Ivah? 14 And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD. 15 And Hezekiah prayed unto the LORD, saying, 16 O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest *between* the cherubims, thou *art* the God, *even* thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth. 17 Incline thine ear, O LORD, and hear; open thine eyes, O LORD, and see: and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God. 18 Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations, and their countries, 19 And have cast their gods into the fire, for they *were* no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them. 20 Now therefore, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou *art* the LORD, *even* thou only.

We may observe here, 1. That, if God give us inward satisfaction in his promise, this may confirm us in our silently bearing reproaches. God answered Hezekiah, but it does not appear that he, after deliberation, sent any answer to Rabshakeh; but, God having taken the work into his own hands, he quietly left the matter with him. *So Rabshakeh returned* to the king his master for fresh instructions. 2. Those that delight in war shall have enough of it. Sennacherib, without provocation given to him or warning given by him, went forth to war against Judah; and now with as little ceremony the king of Ethiopia goes forth to war against him, *v.* 9. Those that are quarrelsome may expect to be quarrelled with; and God sometimes checks the rage of his enemies by giving it a powerful diversion. 3. It is bad to talk proudly and profanely, but it is worse to write so, for this argues more deliberation and design, and what is written

spreads further, lasts longer, and does the more mischief. Atheism and irreligion, written, will certainly be reckoned for another day. 4. Great successes often harden sinners' hearts in their sinful ways and make them the more daring. Because the kings of Assyria have destroyed all lands (though, in fact, they were but a few that fell within their reach), therefore they doubt not but to destroy God's land; because the gods of the nations were unable to help they conclude the God of Israel is so; because the idolatrous kings of Hamath and Arphad became an easy prey to them therefore the religious reforming king of Judah must needs be so too. Thus is this proud man ripened for ruin by the sunshine of prosperity. 5. Liberty of access to the throne of grace, and liberty of speech there, are the unspeakable privilege of the Lord's people at all times, especially in times of distress and danger. Hezekiah took Sennacherib's letter, and spread it before the Lord, not designing to make any complaints against him but those grounded upon his own handwriting. Let the thing speak itself; here it is in black and white: *Open thy eyes, O Lord! and see.* God allows his praying people to be humbly free with him, to utter all their words, as Jephthah did, before him, to spread the letter, whether of a friend or an enemy, before him, and leave the contents, the concern of it, with him. 6. The great and fundamental principles of our religion, applied by faith and improved in prayer, will be of sovereign use to us in our particular exigencies and distresses, whatever they are; to them therefore we must have recourse, and abide by them; so Hezekiah did here. He encouraged himself with this, that the God of Israel is *the Lord of hosts*, of all hosts, of the hosts of Israel, to animate them, of the hosts of their enemies, to dispirit and restrain them,—that he is *God alone*, and there is none that can stand in competition with him,—that he is *the God of all the kingdoms of the earth*, and disposes of them all as he pleases; for he made heaven and earth, and therefore both can do any thing and does every thing. 7. When we are afraid of men that are great destroyers we may with humble boldness appeal to God as the great Saviour. They have indeed destroyed the nations, who had thrown themselves out of the protection of the true God by worshipping false gods, but the Lord, the God alone, is our God, our King, our lawgiver, and he will save us, who is *the Saviour of those that believe*. 8. We have enough to take hold of, in our wrestling with God by prayer, if we can but plead that his glory is interested in our case, that his name will be profaned if we are run down and glorified if we are relieved. Hence therefore will our most prevailing pleas be drawn: "Do it for thy glory's sake."

21 Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent unto Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria: 22 This is the word which the LORD hath spoken concerning him; The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee. 23 Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? Even against the Holy One of Israel. 24 By thy servants hast thou reproached the LORD, and hast said, By the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon; and I will cut down the tall cedars thereof, and the choice fir-trees thereof: and I will enter into the height of his border, and the forest of his Carmel. 25 I have digged, and drunk water; and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of the besieged places. 26 Hast thou not heard long ago, how I have done it; and of ancient times, that I have formed it? Now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldest be to lay waste defended cities into ruinous heaps. 27 Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded: they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb, as the grass on the house-tops, and as corn blasted before it be grown up. 28 But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me. 29 Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest. 30 And this shall be a sign unto thee, Ye shall eat this year such as groweth of itself; and the second year that which springeth of the same: and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit

thereof. 31 And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Juda shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward. 32 For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this. 33 Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it. 34 By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the LORD. 35 For I will defend this city to save it for mine own sake, and for the servant David's sake. 36 Then the angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrian a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses. 37 So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh. 38 And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroc his god, that Adrammelech and Sharizer his sons smote him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Armenia: and Esar-haddon his son reigned in his stead.

We may here observe, 1. That those who receive messages of terror from men with patience, and send messages of faith to God by prayer, may expect messages of grace and peace from God for their comfort, even when they are most cast down. Isaiah sent a long answer to Hezekiah's prayer in God's name, sent it in writing (for it was too long to be sent by word of mouth), and sent by way of return to his prayer, relation being thereunto had: "Whereas thou hast prayed to me, know, for thy comfort, that thy prayer is heard." Isaiah might have referred him to the prophecies he had delivered (particularly that ch. x.) and bid him pick out an answer from thence; but that he might have abundant consolation, a message is sent him on purpose. The correspondence between earth and heaven never let fall on God's side. 2. Those who magnify themselves, especially who magnify themselves against God and his people, do really vilify themselves, and make themselves contemptible, in the eyes of all wise men. "The virgin, the daughter of Zion, has despised

Sennacherib, and all his impotent malice and menaces; she knows that, while she preserves her integrity, she is sure of the divine protection, and that though the enemy may bark he cannot bite. All his threats are a jest; it is all but *brutum fulmen—a mere flash.* Those who abuse the people of God affront God himself; and he takes what is said and done against them as said and done against himself: "*Whom hast thou reproached? Even the Holy One of Israel, whom thou hast therefore reproached because he is a Holy One.*" And it aggravated the indignity Sennacherib did to God that he not only reproached him himself, but set his servants on to do the same: *By thy servants, the abjects, thou hast reproached me.* 4. Those who boast of themselves and their own achievements reflect upon God and his providence: "*Thou hast said, I have digged, and drunk water; I have done mighty feats, and will do more; and wilt not own that I have done it,*" v. 24—26. The most active men are no more than God makes them, and God makes them no more than of old he designed to make them: "*What I have formed of ancient times, in an eternal counsel, now have I brought to pass*" (for God does all according to the counsel of his will), "*that thou shouldst be to lay waste defended cities; it is therefore intolerable arrogance to make it thy own doing.*" 5. All the malice, and all the notions and projects, of the church's enemies, are under the cognizance and check of the church's God. Sennacherib was active and quick, here, and there, and every where, but God knew his going out and coming in, and had always an eye upon him, v. 28. And that was not all; he had a hand upon him too, a strict hand, a strong hand, *a hook in his nose and a bridle in his lips*, with which, though he was very headstrong and unruly, he could and would *turn him back by the way which he came*, v. 29. *Hitherto he shall come and no further.* God had signed Sennacherib's commission against Judah (ch. x. 6); here he supersedes it. He has frightened them, but he must not hurt them, and therefore is discharged from going any further; nay, his commitment is here signed, by which he is clapped up, to answer for what he had done beyond his commission. 6. God is his people's bountiful benefactor, as well as their powerful protector, both a sun and a shield to those that trust in him. Jerusalem shall be defended (v. 35), the besiegers shall not come unto it, no, nor come before it with any regular attack, but they shall be routed before they begin the siege, v. 33. But this is not all; God will return in mercy to his people, and will do them good. Their land shall be more than ordinarily fruitful, so that their losses shall be abundantly repaired; they shall not feel any of the ill effects either of the enemies' wasting the

country or of their own being taken off from husbandry. But the earth, as at first, shall bring forth of itself, and they shall live and live plentifully upon its spontaneous productions. The blessing of the Lord can, when he pleases, make rich without the hand of the diligent. And let them not think that the desolations of their country would excuse them from observing the sabbatical year, which happened (as it should seem) the year after, and when they were not to plough or sow; no, though they had not now their usual stock beforehand for that year, yet they must religiously observe it, and depend upon God to provide for them. God must be trusted in the way of duty. 7. There is no standing before the judgments of God when they come with commission. (1.) The greatest numbers cannot stand before them: one angel shall, in one night, lay a vast army of men dead upon the spot, when God commissions him so to do, v. 36. Here are 185,000 brave soldiers in an instant turned into so many dead corpses. Many think the 76th Psalm was penned upon occasion of this defeat, where, from *the spoiling of the stout-hearted*, and sending them to sleep their long sleep (v. 5), it is inferred that God is *more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey* (v. 4), and that *he, even he, is to be feared*, v. 7. Angels are employed, more than we are aware of, as ministers of God's justice, to punish the pride and break the power of wicked men. (2.) The greatest men cannot stand before them: *The great king, the king of Assyria*, looks very little when he is forced to return, not only with shame, because he cannot accomplish what he had projected with so much assurance, but with terror and fear, lest the angel that had destroyed his army should destroy him; yet he is made to look less when his own sons, who should have guarded him, sacrificed him to his idol, whose protection he sought, v. 37, 38. God can quickly stop their breath who *breathe out threatnings and slaughter* against his people, and will do it when they have filled up the measure of their iniquity; and *the Lord is known by these judgments which he executes*, known to be a God that resists the proud. Many prophecies were fulfilled in this providence, which should encourage us, as far as they look further, and are designed as common and general assurances of the safety of the church and of all that trust in God, to depend upon God for the accomplishment of them. He that has delivered does and will deliver. *Lord, forgive our enemies; but, so let all thy enemies perish, O Lord!*

CHAP. XXXVIII.

This chapter proceeds in the history of Hezekiah. Here is, I. His sickness, and the sentence of death he received within himself, ver. 1. II. His prayer in his sickness, ver. 2, 3. III. The answer of peace which God gave to that prayer, assuring him that he should recover, that he should live fifteen years yet, that Jerusalem should be delivered from the king of Assyria, and that, for

a sign to confirm his faith herein, the sun should go back ten degrees, ver. 4-8. And this we read and opened before, 2 Kings xx. 1, &c. But, IV. Here is Hezekiah's thanksgiving for his recovery, which we had not before, ver. 9-20. To which are added the means used (ver. 21), and the end the good man aimed at in desiring to recover, ver. 22. This is a chapter which will enter into the thoughts, direct the devotions, and encourage the faith and hopes of those that are confined by bodily distempers; it visits those that are visited with sickness.

IN those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live. 2 Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, 3 And said, Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done *that which is good* in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore. 4 Then came the word of the LORD to Isaiah, saying, 5 Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years. 6 And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city. 7 And this *shall be* a sign unto thee from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that he hath spoken; 8 Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun-dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down.

We may hence observe, among others, these good lessons:—1. That neither men's greatness nor their goodness will exempt them from the arrests of sickness and death. Hezekiah, a mighty potentate on earth and a mighty favourite of Heaven, is struck with a disease, which, without a miracle, will certainly be mortal; and this in the midst of his days, his comforts, and usefulness. *Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.* It should seem, this sickness seized him when he was in the midst of his triumphs over the ruined army of the Assyrians, to teach us always to rejoice with trembling. 2. It concerns us to prepare when we see death approaching: “*Set thy house in order, and thy heart especially; put both thy affections and thy affairs into the best posture thou canst, that, when thy Lord comes, thou mayest be found of him in peace with God, with thy own conscience, and with all men,*

and mayest have nothing else to do but to die.” Our being ready for death will make it come never the sooner, but much the easier: and those that are fit to die are most fit to live. 3. Is any afflicted with sickness? *Let him pray*, James v. 13. Prayer is a salve for every sore, personal or public. When Hezekiah was distressed by his enemies he prayed; now that he was sick he prayed. Whither should the child go, when any thing ails him, but to his Father? Afflictions are sent to bring us to our Bibles and to our knees. When Hezekiah was in health he *went up to the house of the Lord* to pray, for that was then the house of prayer. When he was sick in bed he *turned his face towards the wall*, probably towards the temple, which was a type of Christ, to whom we must look by faith in every prayer. 4. The testimony of our consciences for us that by the grace of God we have lived a good life, and have walked closely and humbly with God, will be a great support and comfort to us when we come to look death in the face. And though we may not depend upon it as our righteousness, by which to be justified before God, yet we may humbly plead it as an evidence of our interest in the righteousness of the Mediator. Hezekiah does not demand a reward from God for his good services, but modestly begs that God would remember, not how he had reformed the kingdom, taken away the high places, cleansed the temple, and revived neglected ordinances, but, which was *better than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices*, how he had approved himself to God with a single eye and an honest heart, not only in these eminent performances, but in an even regular course of holy living: *I have walked before thee in truth and sincerity, and with a perfect, that is, an upright heart; for uprightness is our gospel perfection.* 5. God has a gracious ear open to the prayers of his afflicted people. The same prophet that was sent to Hezekiah with warning to prepare for death is sent to him with a promise that he shall not only recover, but be restored to a confirmed state of health and live fifteen years yet. As Jerusalem was distressed, so Hezekiah was diseased, that God might have the glory of the deliverance of both, and that prayer too might have the honour of being instrumental in the deliverance. When we pray in our sickness, though God send not to us such an answer as he here sent to Hezekiah, yet, if by his Spirit he bids us be of good cheer, assures us that our sins are forgiven us, that his grace shall be sufficient for us, and that, whether we live or die, we shall be his, we have no reason to say that we pray in vain. God answers us if he *strengthens us with strength in our souls*, though not with bodily strength, Ps. cxxviii. 3. 6. A good man cannot take much comfort in his own health and prosperity unless withal he see

the welfare and prosperity of the church of God. Therefore God, knowing what lay near Hezekiah's heart, promised him not only that he should live, but that he should see the good of Jerusalem all the days of his life (Ps. cxxviii. 5), otherwise he cannot live comfortably. Jerusalem, which is now delivered, shall still be defended from the Assyrians, who perhaps threatened to rally again and renew the attack. Thus does God graciously provide to make Hezekiah upon all accounts easy. 7. God is willing to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, that they may have an unshaken faith in it, and therewith a strong consolation. God had given Hezekiah repeated assurances of his favour; and yet, as if all were thought too little, that he might expect from him uncommon favours, a sign is given him, an uncommon sign. None that we know of having had an absolute promise of living a certain number of years to come, as Hezekiah had, God thought fit to confirm this unprecedented favour with a miracle. The sign was the going back of the shadow upon the sun-dial. The sun is a faithful measurer of time, and rejoices as a strong man to run a race; but he that set that clock a going can set it back when he pleases, and make it to return; for the Father of all lights is the director of them.

9 The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness: 10 I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years. 11 I said, I shall not see the LORD, even the LORD, in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world. 12 Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent: I have cut off like a weaver my life: he will cut me off with pining sickness: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me. 13 I reckoned till morning, that, as a lion, so will he break all my bones: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me. 14 Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward: O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me. 15 What shall I say? He hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it: I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul. 16 O LORD, by these things

men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live. 17 Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast, in love to my soul, delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back. 18 For the grave cannot praise thee, death can not celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. 19 The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth. 20 The LORD was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the LORD. 21 For Isaiah had said, Let them take a lump of figs, and lay it for a plaster upon the boil, and he shall recover. 22 Hezekiah also had said, What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the LORD?

We have here Hezekiah's thanksgiving-song, which he penned, by divine direction, after his recovery. He might have taken some of the psalms of his father David, and made use of them for his purpose; he might have found many very pertinent ones. He appointed the Levites to praise the Lord with the words of David, 2 Chron. xxix. 30. But the occasion here was extraordinary, and, his heart being full of devout affections, he would not confine himself to the compositions he had, though of divine inspiration, but would offer up his affections in his own words, which is most natural and genuine. He put this thanksgiving in writing, that he might review it himself afterwards, for the reviving of the good impressions made upon him by the providence, and that it might be recommended to others also for their use upon the like occasion. Note, There are writings which it is proper for us to draw up after we have been sick and have recovered. It is good to write a memorial of the affliction, and of the frame of our hearts under it,—to keep a record of the thoughts we had of things when we were sick, the affections that were then working in us,—to write a memorial of the mercies of a sick bed, and of our release from it, that they may never be forgotten,—to write a thanksgiving to God, write a sure covenant with him, and seal it,—to give it under our hands that we will never return again to folly. It is an excellent writing which Hezekiah here left, upon his recovery; and yet we find (2 Chron. xxxii. 25) that he rendered not again accord-

ing to the benefit done to him. The impressions, one would think, should never have worn off, and yet, it seems, they did. Thanksgiving is good, but thanksgiving is better. Now in this writing he preserves upon record,

1. The deplorable condition he was in when his disease prevailed, and his despair of recovery, v. 10—13.

1. He tells us what his thoughts were of himself when he was at the worst; and these he keeps in remembrance, (1.) As blaming himself for his despondency, and that he gave up himself for gone; whereas while there is life there is hope, and room for our prayer and God's mercy. Though it is good to consider sickness as a summons to the grave, so as thereby to be quickened in our preparations for another world, yet we ought not to make the worst of our case, nor to think that every sick man must needs be a dead man presently. He that brings low can raise up. Or, (2.) As reminding himself of the apprehensions he had of death approaching, that he might always know and consider his own frailty and mortality, and that, though he had a reprieve for fifteen years, it was but a reprieve, and the fatal stroke he had now such a dread of would certainly come at last. Or, (3.) As magnifying the power of God in restoring him when his case was desperate, and his goodness in being so much better to him than his own fears. Thus David sometimes, when he was delivered out of trouble, reflected upon the black and melancholy conclusions he had made upon his own case when he was in trouble, and what he had then said in his haste, as Ps. xxxi. 22; lxxvii. 7—9.

2. Let us see what Hezekiah's thoughts of himself were.

(1.) He reckoned that the number of his months was cut off in the midst. He was now about thirty-nine or forty years of age, and when he had a fair prospect of many years and happy ones, very happy, very many, before him. This distemper that suddenly seized him he concluded would be the cutting off of his days, that he should now be deprived of the residue of his years, which in a course of nature he might have lived (not which he could command as a debt due to him, but which he had reason to expect, considering the strength of his constitution), and with them he should be deprived not only of the comforts of life, but of all the opportunities he had of serving God and his generation. To the same purport (v. 12), "*My age has departed and gone, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent, out of which I am forcibly dislodged by the pulling of it down in an instant.*" Our present residence is but like that of a shepherd in his tent, a poor, mean, and cold lodging, where we are upon duty, and with a trust committed to our charge, as the shepherd has, of which we must give an account, and which will easily be taken down by the drawing of one pin or

two. But observe, it is not the final period of our age, but only the removal of it to another world, where the tents of Kedar are taken down, coarse, black, and weather-beaten, shall be set up again in the New Jerusalem, *comely as the curtains of Solomon*. He adds another similitude: *I have cut off like a weaver, my life.* Not that he did but any act of his own cut off the thread of life; but, being told that he must needs die, he was forced to cut off all his designs and projects, his purposes were broken off, even the thoughts of his heart, as Job's were, ch. xvi.

11. Our days are compared to the weaver's shuttle (Job vii. 6), passing and repassing very swiftly, every throw leaving a thread behind it; and, when they are finished, the thread is cut off, and the piece taken out of the loom, and shown to our Master, to be judged of whether it be well woven or no, that we may receive according to the thing done in the body. But as the weaver, when he has cut off his threads, has done his work and the toil is over, so a good man, when his life is cut off, his cares and fatigues are cut off with it, and he rests from his labour. "*But did I say, I have cut off my life?*" No, my times are not in my own hand; they are in God's hand, and it is he that will cut me off from the thrum (so the margin reads it) he has appointed what shall be the length of the piece, and, when it comes to that length he will cut it off."

(2.) He reckoned that he should go to the gates of the grave—to the grave, the gates of which are always open; for it is still crying, *Give, give.* The grave is here put not only for the sepulchre of his fathers, in which his body would be deposited with great deal of pomp and magnificence (for he was buried in the chief of the sepulchres of the kings, and all Judah did him honour at his death, 2 Chron. xxxii. 33), which yet he himself took no care of, nor gave any order about, when he was sick; but for the state of the dead, that is, the *sheol*, the *hades*, the invisible world, to which he saw his soul going.

(3.) He reckoned that he was deprived of all the opportunities he might have had of worshipping God and doing good in this world (v. 11): "*I said,*" [1.] "*I shall not see the Lord,*" as he manifests himself in his temple, in his oracles and ordinances, even the Lord here in the land of the living. He hopes to see him on the other side death, but he despairs of seeing him any more on this side death, as he had seen him in the sanctuary, Ps. lxiii. 2. He shall no more see (that is, serve) the Lord in the land of the living, the land of conflict between his kingdom and the kingdom of Satan, this seat of war. He dwells much upon this: *I shall no more see the Lord, even the Lord;* for a good man wishes not to live for any other end than that he may serve God and have communion with him. [2.] "*I shall see man no more.*"

He shall see his subjects no more, whom he may protect and administer justice to, shall see no more objects of charity, whom he may relieve, shall see his friends no more, who were often sharpened by his countenance, as iron is by iron. Death puts an end to conversation, and removes our acquaintance into darkness, Ps. lxxxviii. 18.

(4.) He reckoned that the agonies of death would be very sharp and severe: "*He will cut me off with pining sickness, which will waste me, and wear me off, quickly.*" The distemper increased so fast, without intermission or remission, either day or night, morning or evening, that he concluded it would soon come to a crisis and make an end of him—that God, whose servants all diseases are, would by them, as a lion, break all his bones with grinding pain, v. 13. He thought that next morning was the utmost he could expect to live in such pain and misery; when he had outlived the first day's illness the second day he repeated his fears, and concluded that this must needs be his last night: *From day even to night will thou make an end of me.* When we are sick we are very apt to be thus calculating our time, and, after all, we are still at uncertainty. It should be more our care how we shall get safely to another world than how long we are likely to live in this world.

II. The complaints he made in this condition (v. 14): "*Like a crane, or swallow, so did I chatter; I made a noise as those birds do when they are frightened.*" See what a change sickness makes in a little time; he that, but the other day, spoke with so much freedom and majesty, now, through the extremity of pain or deficiency of spirits, *chatters like a crane or a swallow.* Some think he refers to his praying in his affliction; it was so broken and interrupted with groanings which could not be uttered that it was more like the chattering of a crane or a swallow than what it used to be. Such mean thoughts had he of his own prayers, which yet were acceptable to God, and successful. *He mourned like a dove,* sadly, but silently and patiently. He had found God so ready to answer his prayers at other times that he could not but look upwards, in expectation of some relief now, but in vain: *his eyes failed,* and he saw no hopeful symptom, nor felt any abatement of his distemper; and therefore he prays, "*I am oppressed, quite overpowered and ready to sink; Lord, undertake for me; bail me out of the hands of the serjeant that has arrested me; be surety for thy servant for good,* Ps. cxix. 122. Come between me and the gates of the grave, to which I am ready to be hurried." When we recover from sickness, the divine pity does, as it were, beg a day for us, and undertakes we shall be forthcoming another time and answer the debt in full. And, when we receive the sentence of death within ourselves, we are undone if the divine

grace do not undertake for us to carry us through the valley of the shadow of death, and to preserve us blameless to the heavenly kingdom on the other side of it—if Christ do not undertake for us, to bring us off in judgment, and present us to his Father, and to do all that for us which we need, and cannot do for ourselves. *I am oppressed, ease me* (so some read it); for, when we are agitated by a sense of guilt and the fear of wrath, nothing will make us easy but Christ's undertaking for us.

III. The grateful acknowledgment he makes of God's goodness to him in his recovery. He begins this part of the writing as one at a stand how to express himself (v. 15): "*What shall I say?*" Why should I say so much by way of complaint when this is enough to silence all my complaints—*He has spoken unto me; he has sent his prophet to tell me that I shall recover and live fifteen years yet; and he himself has done it: it is as sure to be done as if it were done already.* What God has spoken he will himself do, for no word of his shall fall to the ground." God having spoken it, he is sure of it (v. 16): "*Thou wilt restore me, and make me to live; not only restore me from this illness, but make me to live through the years assigned me.*" And, having this hope,

1. He promises himself always to retain the impressions of his affliction (v. 15): "*I will go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul,* as one in sorrow for my sinful distrusts and murmurings under my affliction, as one in care to make suitable returns for God's favour to me and to make it appear that I have got good by the providences I have been under. *I will go softly,* gravely and considerately, and with thought and deliberation, not as many, who, when they have recovered, live as carelessly and as much at large as ever." Or, "*I will go pleasantly*" (so some understand it); "when God has delivered me I will walk cheerfully with him in all holy conversation, as having tasted that he is gracious." Or, "*I will go softly,*" that is, "*mournfully,* in the bitterness of my soul for my sins." Or, "*I will go softly, even after the bitterness of my soul*" (so it may be read); "when the trouble is over I will endeavour to retain the impression of it, and to have the same thoughts of things that I had then."

2. He will encourage himself and others with the experiences he had had of the goodness of God (v. 16): "*By these things which thou hast done for me they live,* the kingdom lives" (for the life of such a king was the life of the kingdom); "all that hear of it shall live and be comforted; by the same power and goodness that have restored me all men have their souls held in life, and they ought to acknowledge it. *In all these things is the life of my spirit,* my spiritual life, that is supported and maintained by what God has done for the preservation of

my natural life." The more we taste of the loving-kindness of God in every providence the more will our hearts be enlarged to love him and live to him, and that will be the life of our spirit. Thus our souls live, and they shall praise him.

3. He magnifies the mercy of his recovery, on several accounts.

(1.) That he was raised up from great extremity (v. 17): *Behold, for peace I had great bitterness.* When, upon the defeat of Sennacherib, he expected nothing but an uninterrupted peace to himself and his government, he was suddenly seized with sickness, which embittered all his comforts to him, and went to such a height that it seemed to be the bitterness of death itself—*bitterness, bitterness*, nothing but gall and wormwood. This was his condition when God sent him seasonable relief.

(2.) That it came from the love of God, from love to his soul. Some are spared and reprieved in wrath, that they may be reserved for some greater judgment when they have filled up the measure of their iniquities; but temporal mercies are sweet indeed to us when we can taste the love of God in them. *He delivered me because he delighted in me* (Ps. xviii. 19); and the word here signifies a very affectionate love: *Thou hast loved my soul from the pit of corruption*; so it runs in the original. God's love is sufficient to bring a soul from the pit of corruption. This is applicable to our redemption by Christ; it was in love to our souls, our poor perishing souls, that he delivered them from the bottomless pit, snatched them as brands out of everlasting burnings. *In his love and in his pity he redeemed us.* And the preservation of our bodies, as well as the provision made for them, is doubly comfortable when it is in love to our souls—when God repairs the house because he has a kindness for the inhabitant.

(3.) That it was the effect of the pardon of sin: "*For thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back, and thereby hast delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, in love to it.*" Note, [1.] When God pardons sin he casts it behind his back, as not designing to look upon it with an eye of justice and jealousy. He remembers it no more, to visit for it. The pardon does not make the sin not to have been, or not to have been sin, but not to be punished as it deserves. When we cast our sins behind our back, and take no care to repent of them, God sets them before his face, and is ready to reckon for them; but when we set them before our face in true repentance, as David did when his sin was ever before him, God casts them behind his back. [2.] When God pardons sins he pardons all, casts them all behind his back, though they have been as scarlet and crimson. [3.] The pardoning of the sin is the delivering of the soul from the pit of corruption. [4.] It is pleasant indeed to think

of our recoveries from sickness when we see them flowing from the remission of sin: then the cause is removed, and then it is in love to the soul.

(4.) That it was the lengthening out of his opportunity to glorify God in this world which he made the business, and pleasure and end of life. [1.] If this sickness had been his death, it would have put a period to that course of service for the glory of God and the good of the church which he was now pursuing, v. 18. Heaven indeed praises God, and the souls of the faithful, when a death they remove thither, do that work of heaven as the angels, and with the angels there; but what is this world the better for that? What does that contribute to the support and advancement of God's kingdom among men in this state of struggle? *The grave cannot praise God*, nor the dead bodies that lie there. *Death cannot celebrate him*, cannot proclaim his perfections and favours to invite others into his service. *Those who go down to the pit*, being no longer in a state of probation, nor living by faith in his promises, cannot give him honour by hoping for his truth. Those that lie rotting in the grave, as they are not capable of receiving any further mercy from God, so neither are they capable of offering any more praises to him, till they shall be raised at the last day, and then they shall both receive and give glory. [2.] Having recovered from it, he resolves not only to proceed, but to abound in praising and serving God (v. 19): *The living, the living, he shall praise thee.* The living may do it; they have an opportunity of praising God, and that is the main thing that makes life valuable and desirable to a good man. Hezekiah was therefore glad to live, not that he might continue to enjoy his royal dignity and the honour and pleasure of his late successes, but that he might continue to praise God. The living must praise God; they live in vain if they do not. Those that have been dying and yet are living, whose life is from the dead, are in a special manner obliged to praise God, a being most sensibly affected with his goodness. Hezekiah, for his part, having recovered from this sickness, will make it his business to praise God: "*I do it this day*, let others do it in like manner." Those that give good exhortations should set good examples, and do themselves what they expect from others. "For my part," says Hezekiah, "*the Lord was ready to save me*; he not only did save me, but he was ready to do it just then when I was in the greatest extremity; his help came in seasonably; he showed himself willing and forward to save me. *The Lord was to save me*, was at hand to do it, saved me at the first word; and therefore," *First*, "I will publish and proclaim his praises. I and my family, I and my friends, I and my people, will have a concert of praise to his glory: *We will sing*

by songs to the stringed instruments, that others may attend to them, and be affected with them, when they are in the most devout and serious frame in the house of the Lord."

is for the honour of God, and the edification of his church, that special mercies should be acknowledged in public praises, especially mercies to public persons, Ps. cxvi. 8, 19. *Secondly*, "I will proceed and persevere in his praises." We should do so all the days of our life, because every day of our life is itself a fresh mercy and brings many fresh mercies along with it; and, as renewed mercies call for renewed praises, so former eminent mercies call for repeated praises. It is by the mercy of God that we live, and therefore, as long as we live, we must continue to praise him, while we have breath, day, while we have being. *Thirdly*, "I will propagate and perpetuate his praises." We should not only praise him all the days of our life, but *the father to the children should make known his truth*, that the ages to come may give God the glory of his truth by trusting to it. It is the duty of parents to possess their children with a confidence in the truth of God, which will go far towards keeping them close to the ways of God. Hezekiah, doubtless, did this himself, and yet Manasseh his son walked not in his steps. Parents may give their children many good things, good instructions, good examples, good books, but they cannot give them grace.

IV. In the last two verses of this chapter we have two passages relating to this story which were omitted in the narrative of it here, but which we had 2 Kings xx., and therefore shall here only observe two lessons from them:—1. That God's promises are intended not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage, the use of means. Hezekiah is sure to recover, and yet he must *take a lump of figs and lay it on the boil*, v. 21. We do not trust God, but tempt him, if, when we pray to him for help, we do not second our prayers with our endeavours. We must not put physicians, or physic, in the place of God, but make use of them in subordination to God and to his providence; help thyself and God will help thee. 2. That the chief end we should aim at, in desiring life and health, is that we may glorify God, and do good, and improve ourselves in knowledge, and grace, and meekness for heaven. Hezekiah, when he meant, *What is the sign that I shall recover?* asked, *What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the Lord*, there to honour God, to keep up acquaintance and communion with him, and to encourage others to serve him? v. 22. It is taken for granted that if God would restore him to health he would immediately go up to the temple with his thank-offerings. Where Christ found the impotent man whom he had healed, John v. 14. The exercises of religion are so much the business and de-

light of a good man that to be restrained from them is the greatest grievance of his afflictions, and to be restored to them is the greatest comfort of his deliverances. *Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee.*

CHAP. XXXIX.

The story of this chapter likewise we had before, 2 Kings xx. 12, &c. It is here repeated, not only as a very memorable and improvable passage, but because it concludes with a prophecy of the captivity in Babylon; and as the former part of the prophecy of this book frequently referred to Sennacherib's invasion and the defeat of that, to which therefore the history of that was very fitly subjoined, so the latter part of this book speaks much of the Jews' captivity in Babylon and their deliverance out of that, to which therefore the first prediction of it, with the occasion thereof, is very fitly prefixed. We have here, I. The pride and folly of Hezekiah, in showing his treasures to the king of Babylon's ambassadors that were sent to congratulate him on his recovery, ver. 1, 2. II. Isaiah's examination of him concerning it, in God's name, and his confession of it, ver. 3, 4. III. The sentence passed upon him for it, that all his treasures should, in process of time, be carried to Babylon, ver. 5—7. IV. Hezekiah's penitent and patient submission to this sentence, ver. 8.

AT that time Merodach-baladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah: for he had heard that he had been sick, and was recovered. 2 And Hezekiah was glad of them, and showed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah showed them not. 3 Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country unto me, *even* from Babylon. 4 Then said he, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All that *is* in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not showed them.

Hence we may learn these lessons:—1. That humanity and common civility teach us to rejoice with our friends and neighbours when they rejoice, and to congratulate them on their deliverances, and particularly their recoveries from sickness. The king of Babylon, having heard that Hezekiah had been sick, and had recovered, sent to compliment him upon the occasion. If Christians be unneighbourly, heathens will shame them. 2. It becomes us to give honour to those whom our God puts honour upon. The sun was the Babylonians' god; and when they understood that it was with a respect to Hezekiah that the sun, to their great surprise, went back ten degrees, on such a day, they thought themselves obliged

to do Hezekiah all the honour they could. Will all people thus walk in the name of their God, and shall not we? 3. Those that do not value good men for their goodness may yet be brought to pay them great respect by other inducements, and for the sake of their secular interests. The king of Babylon made his court to Hezekiah, not because he was pious, but because he was prosperous, as the Philistines coveted an alliance with Isaac because they saw the Lord was with him, Gen. xxvi. 28. The king of Babylon was an enemy to the king of Assyria, and therefore was fond of Hezekiah, because the Assyrians were so much weakened by the power of his God. 4. It is a hard matter to keep the spirit low in the midst of great advancements. Hezekiah is an instance of it: he was a wise and good man, but, when one miracle after another was wrought in his favour, he found it hard to keep his heart from being lifted up, nay, a little thing then drew him into the snare of pride. Blessed Paul himself needed a thorn in the flesh, to keep him from being *lifted up with the abundance of revelations*. 5. We have need to watch over our own spirits when we are showing our friends our possessions, what we have done and what we have got, that we be not proud of them, as if our merit or our merit had purchased and procured us this wealth. When we look upon our enjoyments, and have occasion to speak of them, it must be with humble acknowledgments of our own unworthiness and thankful acknowledgments of God's goodness, with a just value for the achievements of others and with an expectation of losses and changes, not dreaming that our mountain stands so strong but that it may soon be moved. 6. It is a great weakness for good men to value themselves much upon the civil respects that are paid them (yea, though there be something particular and uncommon in them) by the children of this world, and to be fond of their acquaintance. What a poor thing was it for Hezekiah, whom God had so dignified, to be thus over proud of the respect paid him by a heathen prince as if that added any thing to him! We ought to return the courtesies of such with interest, but not to be proud of them. 7. We must expect to be called to an account for the workings of our pride, though they are secret, and in such instances as we thought there was no harm in; and therefore we ought to call ourselves to an account for them; and when we have had company with us that have paid us respect, and been pleased with their entertainment, and commended every thing, we ought to be jealous over ourselves with a godly jealousy lest our hearts have been lifted up. As far as we see cause to suspect that this sly and subtle sin of pride has insinuated itself into our breasts, and mingled itself with our conversation, let us be ashamed of it, and, as Hezekiah here,

ingenuously confess it and take shame ourselves for it.

5 Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah Hear the word of the LORD of hosts 6 Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD. 7 And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. 8 Then said Hezekiah to Isaiah, Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. He said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days.

Hence let us observe, 1. That, if God love us, he will humble us, and will find some way or other to pull down our spirits when they are lifted up above measure. A mortifying message is sent to Hezekiah, that he might be humbled for the pride of his heart, and be convinced of the folly of it; for though God may suffer his people to fall into sin, as he did Hezekiah here, to *prove him, that he might know all that was in his heart*, yet he will not suffer them to lie still in it. 2. It is just with God to take that from us which we make the matter of our pride, and on which we build a carnal confidence. When David was proud of the numbers of his people God took a course to make them fewer; and when Hezekiah boasts of his treasures, and looks upon them with too great a complacency, he is told that he is like the foolish traveller who shows his money and gold to one that proves a thief, and is thereby tempted to rob him. 3. We could but see things that will be, we should be ashamed of our thoughts of things that are. If Hezekiah had known that he and his seed and successors of this king of Babylon would hereafter be the ruin of his family and kingdom, he would not have complimented his ambassadors as he did; and, when the prophet told him that it would be so, we may well imagine how he was vexed at himself for what he had done. We cannot certainly foresee what will be, but are told, in general, *All is vanity*, and therefore it is vanity for us to take complacency and put confidence in any thing that goes under that character. 4. Those that are fond of an acquaintance or alliance with irreligious men will first or last have enough of it, and will have cause to repent it. Hezekiah thought himself very happy in the friendship of Babylon, though it was the mother of harlots and idolatries; but Babylon, who now courted Jerusalem, in process of time conquered her, and carried her captive. Leagues with sin

ners, and leagues with sin too, will end thus ; it is therefore our wisdom to keep at a distance from them. 5. Those that truly repent of their sins will take it well to be reproved for them and will be willing to be old of their faults. Hezekiah reckoned that word of the Lord good which discovered sin to him, and made him sensible that he had done amiss, which before he was not aware of. The language of true penitents is, *Let the righteous smite me ; it shall be a kindness ; and the law is therefore good*, because, being spiritual, in it sin appears sin, and exceedingly sinful. 6. True penitents will quietly submit, not only to the reproofs of the word, but to the rebukes of Providence for their sins. When Hezekiah was told of the punishment of his iniquity he said, *Good is the word of the Lord*, not only the mitigation of the sentence, but the sentence itself ; he has nothing to object against the equity of it, but says *Amen* to the threatening. Those that see the evil of sin, and what it deserves, will justify God in all that is brought upon them for it, and own that he punishes them less than their iniquities deserve. 7. Though we must not be regardless of those that come after us, yet we must reckon ourselves well one by if there be *peace and truth in our days*, and better than we had reason to expect. If a storm be coming, we must reckon a favour to get into the harbour before it comes, and be gathered to the grave in peace ; yet we can never be secure of this, it must prepare for changes in our own time, that we may stand complete in all the will of God, and bid it welcome whatever it is.

CHAP. XL.

this chapter begins the latter part of the prophecy of this book, which is not only divided from the former by the historical chapters that come between, but seems to be distinguished from it in the scope and style of it. In the former part the name of the prophet was frequently prefixed to the particular sermons, besides the general title (as ch. ii. 1 ; vii. 3 ; xlii. 1) ; but this is all one continued discourse, and the prophet not so much as once named. That consisted of many burdens, many woes ; this consists of many blessings. There the distress which the people of God were in by the Assyrian, and their deliverance out of that, were chiefly prophesied of ; but that is here spoken of as a thing past (ch. lii. 4) ; and the captivity in Babylon, and their deliverance out of that, which were much greater events, of more extensive and abiding concern, are here largely foretold. *Before God sent his people into captivity he furnished them with precious promises for their support and comfort in their trouble ; and we may well imagine of what great use to them the glorious, gracious, light of this prophecy was, in that cloudy and dark day, and how much it helped to dry up their tears at the stress of Babylon.* But it looks further yet, and to greater things ; much of Christ and gospel grace we meet with in the foregoing part of this book, but in this latter part we shall find much more ; and, as if it were designed for a prophetic summary of the New Testament, it begins with that which begins the gospels, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness" (ch. xl. 3), and concludes with that which concludes the book of the Revelation, "The new heavens and the new earth," (ch. lvi. 22). Even Mr. White acknowledges that, as all the mercies of God to the Jewish nation bore some resemblance to those glorious things performed by our Saviour for man's redemption, so they are by the Spirit of God expressed in such terms as show plainly that while the prophet is speaking of the redemption of the Jews he had in his thoughts a more glorious deliverance. And we need not look for any further accomplishment of these prophecies yet to come ; for if Jesus be, and his kingdom be it, that should come, we are to look for no other, but the carrying on and completing of the same blessed work which was begun in the first preaching and planting of Christianity in the world.

this chapter we have, I. Orders given to preach and publish the glad tidings of redemption, ver. 1, 2. II. These glad tidings introduced by a voice in the wilderness, which gives assurance that all obstructions shall be removed (ver. 3-5), and that, though all

creatures fall and fade, the word of God shall be established and accomplished, ver. 6-8. III. A joyful prospect given to the people of God of the happiness which this redemption should bring along with it, ver. 9-11. IV. The sovereignty and power of that God engaged who undertakes to work out this redemption, ver. 12-17. V. Those therefore who undertake to work out this redemption, ver. 18-25. VI. A reproof given to the people of God for their fears and dependencies, and enough said, in a few words, to silence those fears, ver. 27-31. And we, through patience and comfort of this scripture, may have hope.

COMFORT ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. 2 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned : for she hath received of the LORD's hand double for all her sins.

We have here the commission and instructions given, not to this prophet only, but, with him, to all the Lord's prophets, nay, and to all Christ's ministers, to proclaim comfort to God's people. 1. This did not only warrant, but enjoin, this prophet himself to encourage the good people who lived in his own time, who could not but have very melancholy apprehensions of things when they saw Judah and Jerusalem by their daring impieties ripening apace for ruin, and God in his providence hastening ruin upon them. Let them be sure that, notwithstanding all this, God had mercy in store for them. 2. It was especially a direction to the prophets that should live in the time of the captivity, when Jerusalem was in ruins ; they must encourage the captives to hope for enlargement in due time. 3. Gospel ministers, being employed by the blessed Spirit as comforters, and as helpers of the joy of Christians, are here put in mind of their business. Here we have,

I. Comfortable words directed to God's people in general, v. 1. The prophets have instructions from their God (for he is the Lord God of the holy prophets, Rev. xxii. 6) to comfort the people of God ; and the charge is doubled, *Comfort you, comfort you*—not because the prophets are unwilling to do it (no, it is the most pleasant part of their work), but because sometimes the souls of God's people refuse to be comforted, and their comforters must repeat things again and again, ere they can fasten any thing upon them. Observe here, 1. There are a people in the world that are God's people. 2. It is the will of God that his people should be a comforted people, even in the worst of times. 3. It is the work and business of ministers to do what they can for the comfort of God's people. 4. Words of conviction, such as we had in the former part of this book, must be followed with words of comfort, such as we have here ; for he that has torn will heal us.

II. Comfortable words directed to Jerusalem in particular : "Speak to the heart of Jerusalem (v. 2) ; speak that which will revive her heart, and be a cordial to her and

to all that belong to her and wish her well. Do not whisper it, but cry unto her: cry aloud, to show saints their comforts as well as to show sinners their transgressions; make her hear it:" 1. "That the days of her trouble are numbered and finished: *Her warfare is accomplished*, the set time of her servitude; the campaign is now at an end, and she shall retire into quarters of refreshment." Human life is a warfare (Job vii. 1); the Christian life much more. But the struggle will not last always; the warfare will be accomplished, and then the good soldiers shall not only enter into rest, but be sure of their pay. 2. "That the cause of her trouble is removed, and, when that is taken away, the effect will cease. Tell her that *her iniquity is pardoned*, God is reconciled to her, and she shall no longer be treated as one guilty before him." Nothing can be spoken more comfortably than this, *Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee*. Troubles are then removed in love when sin is pardoned. 3. "That the end of her trouble is answered: *She has received of the Lord double for the cure of all her sins*, sufficient, and more than sufficient, to separate between her and her idols," the worship of which was the great sin for which God had a controversy with them, and from which he designed to reclaim them by their captivity in Babylon: and it had that effect upon them; it begat in them a rooted antipathy to idolatry, and was physic doubly strong for the purging out of that iniquity. Or it may be taken as the language of the divine compassion: *His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel* (Judges x. 16), and, like a tender father, *since he spoke against them he earnestly remembered them* (Jer. xxxi. 20), and was ready to say that he had given them too much correction. They, being very penitent, acknowledged that God had *punished them less than their iniquities deserved*; but he, being very pitiful, owned, in a manner, that he had punished them more than they deserved. True penitents have indeed, in Christ and his sufferings, *received of the Lord's hand double for all their sins*; for the satisfaction Christ made by his death was of such an infinite value that it was more than double to the demerits of sin; *for God spared not his own Son*.

3 The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 4 Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: 5 And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the

LORD hath spoken it. 6 The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: 7 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the Spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. 8 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

The time to favour Zion, yea, the set time having come, the people of God must be prepared, by repentance and faith, for the favours designed them; and, in order to call them to both these, we have here *the voice of one crying in the wilderness*, which may be applied to those prophets who were with the captives in their wilderness-state and who, when they saw the day of their deliverance dawn, called earnestly upon them to prepare for it, and assured them that all the difficulties which stood in the way of their deliverance should be got over. It is a good sign that mercy is preparing for us, we find God's grace preparing us for it, Ps. x. 17. But it *must* be applied to John the Baptist; for, though God was the speaker, he was *the voice of one crying in the wilderness*, and his business was to *prepare the way of the Lord*, to dispose men's minds for the reception and entertainment of the gospel of Christ. The way of the Lord is prepared.

I. By repentance for sin; that was it which John Baptist preached to all Judaea and Jerusalem (Matt. iii. 2, 5), and thereby *made ready a people prepared for the Lord* Luke i. 17.

1. The alarm is given; let all take notice of it at their peril; God is coming in a way of mercy, and we must prepare for him, 3—5. If we apply it to their captivity, it may be taken as a promise that, whatever difficulties lie in their way, when they return they shall be removed. This voice in the wilderness (divine power going along with it) sets pioneers on work to level the roads. But it may be taken as a call to duty, and it is the same duty that we are called to, in preparation for Christ's entrance into our souls. (1.) We must get into such a frame of spirit as will dispose us to receive Christ and his gospel: "*Prepare you the way of the Lord*; prepare yourselves for him and let all that be suppressed which would be an obstruction to his entrance. Make room for Christ: *Make straight a highway for him*." If he prepare the end for us, we ought surely to prepare the way for him. Prepare for the Saviour; *lift up your heads O you gates!* Ps. xxiv. 7, 9. Prepare for the salvation, the great salvation, and other minor deliverances. Let us get to be fit for them, and then God will work them out. Let us not stand in our own light, nor put a bar in our own door but find, or make,

highway for him, even in that which was desert ground. This is that for which he waits to be gracious. (2.) We must get our hearts levelled by divine grace. Those that are hindered from comfort in Christ by their dejections and despondencies are the valleys that must be exalted. Those that are hindered from comfort in Christ by a proud conceit of their own merit and worth are the mountains and hills that must be made low. Those that have entertained prejudices against the word and ways of God, that are intractable, and disposed to thwart and contradict even that which is plain and easy because it agrees not with their corrupt inclinations and secular interests, are the crooked that must be made straight and the rough places that must be made plain. Let out the gospel of Christ have a fair hearing, and it cannot fail of acceptance. This prepares the way of the Lord; and thus God will by his grace prepare his own way in all the vessels of mercy, whose hearts he opens as he did Lydia's.

2. When this is done *the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, v. 5.* (1.) When the captives are prepared for deliverance Cyrus shall proclaim it, and those shall have the benefit of it, and those only, whose hearts the Lord shall stir up with courage and resolution to break through the discouragements that lay in their way, and to make nothing of the hills, and valleys, and all the rough places. (2.) When John Baptist has for some time preached repentance, mortification, and reformation, and so made ready a people prepared for the Lord (Luke i. 17), when the Messiah himself shall be revealed in his glory, working miracles, which John did not, and by his grace, which is his glory, binding up and healing with consolations those whom John had wounded with convictions. And this revelation of divine glory shall be a light to lighten the Gentiles. *All flesh shall see it together*, and not the Jews only; they shall see and admire it, see it and bid it welcome; as the return out of captivity was taken notice of by the neighbouring nations, Ps. cxxvi. 2. And it shall be the accomplishment of the word of God, not one iota or tittle of which shall fall to the ground: *The mouth of the Lord has spoken it, and therefore the hand of the Lord will effect it.*

II. By confidence in the word of the Lord, and not in any creature. *The mouth of the Lord having spoken it*, the voice has this further to cry (he that has ears to hear let him hear it), *The word of our God shall stand for ever, v. 8.*

1. By this accomplishment of the prophecies and promises of salvation, and the performance of them to the utmost in due time, it appears that the word of the Lord is sure and what may be safely relied on. Then we are prepared for deliverance when we depend entirely upon the word of God, build our hopes on that, with an assurance that it will

not make us ashamed: in a dependence upon this word we must be brought to own that *all flesh is grass*, withering and fading. (1.) The power of man, when it does appear against the deliverance, is not to be feared; for it shall be as grass before the word of the Lord: it shall wither and be trodden down. The insulting Babylonians, who promise themselves that the desolations of Jerusalem shall be perpetual, are but as grass which the Spirit of the Lord blows upon, makes nothing of, but blasts all its glory; for the word of the Lord, which promises their deliverance, shall stand for ever, and it is not in the power of their enemies to hinder the execution of it. (2.) The power of man, when it would appear for the deliverance, is not to be trusted to; for it is but as grass in comparison with the word of the Lord, which is the only firm foundation for us to build our hope upon. When God is about to work salvation for his people he will take them off from depending upon creatures, and looking for it from hills and mountains. They shall fail them, and their expectations from them shall be frustrated: *The Spirit of the Lord shall blow upon them*; for God will have no creature to be a rival with him for the hope and confidence of his people; and, as it is his word only that shall stand for ever, so in that word only our faith must stand. When we are brought to this, then, and not till then, we are fit for mercy.

2. The word of our God, that glory of the Lord which is now to be revealed, the gospel, and that grace which is brought with it to us and wrought by it in us, shall stand for ever; and this is the satisfaction of all believers, when they find all their creature-comforts withering and fading like grass. Thus the apostle applies it to the word which by the gospel is preached unto us, and which lives and abides for ever as the incorruptible seed by which we are born again, 1 Pet. i. 23—25. To prepare the way of the Lord we must be convinced, (1.) Of the vanity of the creature, that all flesh is grass, weak and withering. We ourselves are so, and therefore cannot save ourselves; all our friends are so, and therefore are unable to save us. All the beauty of the creature, which might render it amiable, is but as the flower of grass, soon blasted, and therefore cannot recommend us to God and to his acceptance. We are dying creatures; all our comforts in this world are dying comforts, and therefore cannot be the felicity of our immortal souls. We must look further for a salvation, look further for a portion. (2.) Of the validity of the promise of God. We must be convinced that the word of the Lord can do that for us which all flesh cannot—that, forasmuch as it stands for ever, it will furnish us with a happiness that will run parallel with the duration of our souls, which must live for ever; for the things that are not seen, but must be believed, are eternal.

9 O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! 10 Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. 11 He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

It was promised (v. 5) that the glory of the Lord shall be revealed; that is it with the hopes of which God's people must be comforted. Now here we are told,

I. How it shall be revealed, v. 9. 1. It shall be revealed to Zion and Jerusalem; notice shall be given of it to the remnant that are left in Zion and Jerusalem, the poor of the land, who were vine-dressers and husbandmen; it shall be told them that their brethren shall return to them. This shall be told also to the captives who belonged to Zion and Jerusalem, and retained their affection for them. Zion is said to dwell with the daughter of Babylon (Zech. ii. 7); and there she receives notice of Cyrus's gracious proclamation; and so the margin reads it, *O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, &c.*, meaning the persons who were employed in publishing that proclamation; let them do it with a good will, let them make the country ring of it, and let them tell it to the sons of Zion in their own language, saying to them, Behold your God. 2. It shall be published by Zion and Jerusalem (so the text reads it); those that remain there, or that have already returned, when they find the deliverance proceeding towards perfection, let them proclaim it in the most public places, whence they may be best heard by all the cities of Judah; let them proclaim it as loudly as they can: let them lift up their voice with strength, and not be afraid of overstraining themselves; let them not be afraid lest the enemy should hear it and quarrel with them, or lest it should not prove true, or not such good tidings as at first it appeared; let them say to the cities of Judah, and all the inhabitants of the country, Behold your God. When God is going on with the salvation of his people, let them industriously spread the news among their friends, let them tell them that it is God that has done it; whoever were the instruments, God was the author; it is their God, a God in covenant with them, and he does it as theirs, and they will reap the benefit and comfort of it. "Behold him, take

notice of his hand in it, and look above second causes; behold, the God you have long looked for has come at last (*ch. xxv. 9*): *This is our God, we have waited for him.*" This may refer to the invitation which was sent forth from Jerusalem to the cities of Judah, as soon as they had set up an altar, immediately upon their return out of captivity, to come and join with them in the sacrifices, Ezra iii. 2—4. "When the worship of God is set up again, send notice of it to all your brethren, that they may share with you in the comfort of it." But this was to have its full accomplishment in the apostles' public and undaunted preaching of the gospel to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. The voice crying in the wilderness gave notice that he was coming; but now notice is given that he has come. Behold the Lamb of God; take a full view of your Redeemer. Behold your King, behold your God.

II. What that glory is which shall be revealed. "Your God will come, will show himself."

1. "With the power and greatness of a prince (v. 10): He will come with strong hand, too strong to be obstructed, though it may be opposed. His strong hand shall subdue his people to himself, and shall restrain and conquer his and their enemies. He will come who is strong enough to break through all the difficulties that lie in his way." Our Lord Jesus was full of power, a mighty Saviour. Some read it, *He will come against the mighty one*, and overpower him, overcome him. Satan is the strong man armed; but our Lord Jesus is stronger than he, and he shall make it to appear that he is so, for, (1.) He shall reign in defiance of all opposition: *His arm shall rule*, shall overrule for him, for the fulfilling of his counsels, to his own glory; for he is his own end. (2.) He shall recompense to all according to their works, as a righteous Judge: *His reward is with him*; he brings along with him, as a returning prince, punishments for the rebels and preferments for his loyal subjects. (3.) He shall proceed and accomplish his purpose: *His work is before him*, that is, he knows perfectly well what he has to do, which way to go about it, and how to compass it. *He himself knows what he will do.*

2. "With the pity and tenderness of a shepherd," v. 11. God is the Shepherd of Israel (Ps. lxxx. 1); Christ is the good Shepherd, John x. 11. The same that rules with the strong hand of a prince leads and feeds with the kind hand of a shepherd. (1.) He takes care of all his flock, the little flock: *He shall feed his flock like a shepherd.* His word is food for his flock to feed on; his ordinances are fields for them to feed in; his ministers are under-shepherds that are appointed to attend them. (2.) He takes particular care of those that most need his care,

the lambs that are weak, and cannot help themselves, and are unaccustomed to hardship. and those that are with young, that are therefore heavy, and, if any harm be done them, are in danger of casting their young. He particularly takes care for a succession, that it may not fail or be cut off. The good shepherd has a tender care for children that are towardly and hopeful, for young converts, that are setting out in the way to heaven, for weak believers, and those that are of a sorrowful spirit. These are the lambs of his flock, that shall be sure to want nothing that their case requires. [1.] He will gather them in the arms of his power; his strength shall be made *perfect in their weakness*, 2 Cor. xii. 9. He will gather them in when they wander, gather them up when they fall, gather them together when they are dispersed, and gather them home to himself at last; and all this with his own arm, out of which none shall be able to pluck them, John x. 28. [2.] He will carry them in the bosom of his love and cherish them here. When they tire or are weary, are sick and faint, when they meet with foul rays, he will carry them on, and take care they be not left behind. [3.] He will gently lead them. By his word he requires no more service, and by his providence he inflicts no more trouble, than he will fit them for; for he considers their frame.

12 Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? 13 Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him? 14 With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and showed him the way of understanding? 15 Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. 16 And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering. 17 All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.

The scope of these verses is to show what great and glorious being the Lord Jehovah is, who is Israel's God and Saviour. It comes in here, 1. To encourage his people that were captives in Babylon to hope in him, and to depend upon him for deliver-

ance, though they were ever so weak and their oppressors ever so strong. 2. To engage them to cleave to him, and not to turn aside after other gods; for there are none to be compared with him. 3. To possess all those who receive the glad tidings of redemption by Christ with a holy awe and reverence of God. Though it was said (v. 9), *Behold your God*, and (v. 11) *He shall feed his flock like a shepherd*, yet these condescensions of his grace must not be thought of with any diminution to the transcendencies of his glory. Let us see how great our God is, and fear before him; for,

I. His power is unlimited, and what no creature can compare with, much less contend with, v. 12. 1. He has a vast reach. View the celestial globe, and you are astonished at the extent of it: but the great God *metes the heavens with a span*; to him they are but a hand-breadth, so large-handed is he. View the terraqueous globe, and he has the command of that too. All the waters in the world he can *measure in the hollow of his hand*, where we can hold but a little water; and the dry land he easily manages, for he *comprehends the dust of the earth in a measure*, or with his three fingers; it is no more to him than a *pugil*, or that which we take up between our thumb and two fingers. 2. He has a vast strength, and can as easily move mountains and hills as the tradesman heaves his goods into the scales and out of them again; he poises them with his hand as exactly as if he weighed them in a pair of balances. This may refer to the work of creation, when the heavens were stretched out as exactly as that which is spanned, and the earth and waters were put together in just proportions, as if they had been measured, and the mountains made of such a weight as to serve for ballast to the globe, and no more. Or it may refer to the work of providence (which is a continued creation) and the consistency of all the creatures with each other.

II. His wisdom is unsearchable, and what no creature can give either information or direction to, v. 13, 14. As none can do what God has done and does, so none can assist him in the doing of it or suggest any thing to him which he thought not of. When the LORD by his Spirit made the world (Job xxvi. 13) there was none that directed his Spirit, or gave him any advice, either what to do or how to do it. Nor does he need any counsellor to direct him in the government of the world, nor is there any with whom he consults, as the wisest kings do with those that *know law and judgment*, Esther i. 13. God needs not to be told what is done, for he knows it perfectly; nor needs he be advised concerning what is to be done, for he knows both the right end and the proper means. This is much insisted upon here, because the poor captives had no politicians among them to manage their concerns at

court or to put them in a way of gaining their liberty. "No matter," says the prophet; "you have a God to act for you, who needs not the assistance of statesmen." In the great work of our redemption by Christ matters were concerted *before the world was*, when there was none to *teach God in the path of judgment*, 1 Cor. ii. 7.

III. The nations of the world are nothing in comparison of him, v. 15, 17. Take them all together, all the great and mighty nations of the earth, kings the most pompous, kingdoms the most populous, both the most wealthy; take the isles, the multitude of them, the isles of the Gentiles: *Before him*, when they stand in competition with him or in opposition to him, they are *as a drop of the bucket* compared with the vast ocean, *or the small dust of the balance* (which does not serve to turn it, and therefore is not regarded, it is so small) in comparison with all the dust of the earth. *He takes them up*, and throws them away from him, *as a very little thing*, not worth speaking of. They are all in his eye *as nothing*, as if they had no being at all; for they add nothing to his perfection and all-sufficiency. *They are counted by him*, and are to be counted by us in comparison of him, *less than nothing, and vanity*. When he pleases, he can as easily bring them all into nothing as at first he brought them out of nothing. When God has work to do he values not either the assistance or the resistance of any creature. They are all *vanity*; the word that is used for the chaos (Gen. i. 2), to which they will at last be reduced. Let this beget in us high thoughts of God and low thoughts of this world, and engage us to make God, and not man, both our fear and our hope. This magnifies God's love to the world, that, though it is of such small account and value with him, yet, for the redemption of it, he gave his only-begotten Son, John iii. 16.

IV. The services of the church can make no addition to him nor do they bear any proportion to his infinite perfections (v. 16): *Lebanon is not sufficient to burn*; not the wood of it, to be for the fuel of the altar, though it be so well stocked with cedars; not the beasts of it, to be for sacrifices, though it be so well stocked with cattle, v. 16. Whatever we honour God with, it falls infinitely short of the merit of his perfection; for he is exalted *far above all blessing and praise*, all burnt-offerings and sacrifices.

18 To whom then will ye liken God? Or what likeness will ye compare unto him? 19 The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains. 20 He that *is* so impoverished that he hath no oblation, chooseth a tree *that* will not rot; he seeketh unto him a cun-

ning workman to prepare a grave image, *that* shall not be moved. 21 Have ye not known? Have ye not heard? Hath it not been told you from the beginning? Have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? 22 *It is* he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof *are* as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heaven as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in: 23 That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. 24 Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown: yea, the stock shall not take root in the earth, and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble. 25 To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. 26 Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that *he is* strong in power; no one faileth.

The prophet here reproves those, 1. Who represented God by creatures, and so changed his truth into a lie and his glory into shame, who made images and then said that they resembled God, and paid their homage to them accordingly. 2. Who put creatures in the place of God, who feared them more than God, as if they were a match for him, or loved them more than God, as if they were fit to be rivals with him. Twice the challenge is here made, *To whom will ye liken God?* v. 18, and again v. 25. The Holy One himself says, *To whom will ye liken me?* This shows the folly and absurdity, (1.) Of corporal idolatry, making visible images of him who is invisible, imagining the image to be animated by the deity, and the deity to be presented by the image, which as it was an instance of the corruption of the human nature, so it was an intolerable injury to the honour of the divine nature. (2.) Of spiritual idolatry, making creatures equal with God in our affections. Proud people make themselves equal with God; covetous people make their money equal with God; and whatever we esteem or love, fear, hope in, more than God, that creature is equal with God, which is the highest affront imaginable to him who is *God over all*. No

to show the absurdity of this, I. The prophet describes idols as despicable

able things, and worthy of the greatest contempt (v. 19, 20): "Look upon the better sort of them, which rich people set up, and worship; they are made of some base metal, cast into what shape the founder pleases, and that is gilded, or overlaid with plates of gold, that it may pass for a golden image. It is a creature; for the workman made it; *therefore it is not God*, Hos. viii. 6. It depended upon his will whether it should be a god at all, and of what shape it should be. It is a cheat; for it is gold on the outside, but within it is lead or copper, in this indeed representing the deities, that they were not what they seemed to be, and deceived their admirers. How despicable then are the worst sort of them—the poor men's gods! *He that is so impoverished that he has scarcely a sacrifice to offer to his god when he has made him will yet not be without an enshrined deity of his own; and, though he cannot procure one of brass or stone, he will have a wooden one rather than none, and for that purpose chooses a tree that will not soon rot, and of that he will have his graven image made.* Both agree to have their image well fastened, that they may not be robbed of it. The better sort have silver chains to fix theirs with; and, though it be but a wooden image, care is taken that it *shall not be moved.*" Let us pause a little and see, 1. How these idolaters shame themselves, and what a reproach they put upon their own reason, in dreaming that gods of their own making (*Nehushtans*, pieces of brass or logs of wood) should be able to do them any kindness. Thus vain were they in their imaginations; and how was their foolish heart darkened! 2. See how these idolaters shame us, who worship the only living and true God. They spared no cost upon their idols; we grudge that as waste which is spent in the service of our God. They took care that their idols should not be moved; we wilfully provoke our God to depart from us.

II. He describes God as infinitely great, and worthy of the highest veneration; so that between him and idols, whatever competition there may be, there is no comparison. To prove the greatness of God he appeals,

1. To what they had heard of him by the hearing of the ear, and the consent of all ages and nations concerning him (v. 21): "*Have you not known by the very light of nature? Has it not been told you by your fathers and teachers, according to the constant tradition received from their ancestors and predecessors, even from the beginning?*" (Those notices of God are as ancient as the world.) "*Have you not understood it as always acknowledged from the foundation of the earth, that God is a great God, and a great King above all gods?*" It has been a truth universally admitted that there is an infinite Being who is the fountain of all

being. This is understood not only ever since the beginning of the world, but from and by the origin of the universe. It is founded upon the foundation of the earth. The invisible things of God are *clearly seen from the creation of the world*, Rom. i. 20. Thou mayest not only ask thy father, and he shall tell thee this, and thy elders (Deut. xxxii. 7); but *ask those that go by the way* (Job xxi. 29), ask the first man you meet, and he will say the same. Some read it, *Will you not know? Will you not hear?* For those that are ignorant of this are willingly ignorant; the light shines in their faces, but they shut their eyes against it. Now that which is here said of God is, (1.) That he has the command of all the creatures. The heaven and the earth themselves are under his management: *He sits upon the circle, or globe, of the earth*, v. 22. He that has the special residence of his glory in the upper world maintains a dominion over this lower world, gives law to it, and directs all the motions of it to his own glory. He sits undisturbed upon the earth, and so establishes it. He is still stretching out the heavens, his power and providence keep them still stretched out, and will do so till the day comes that they shall be rolled together like a scroll. He spreads them out as easily as we draw a curtain to and fro, opening these curtains in the morning and drawing them close again at night. And the heaven is to this earth as a tent to dwell in; it is a canopy drawn over our heads, *et quod tegit omnia celum—and it encircles all.*—Ovid. See Ps. civ. 2. (2.) That the children of men, even the greatest and mightiest, are as nothing before him. The numerous inhabitants of this earth are in his eye as grasshoppers in ours, so little and inconsiderable, of such small value, of such little use, and so easily crushed. Proud men's lifting up themselves is but like the grasshopper's leap; in an instant they must stoop down to the earth again. If the spies thought themselves grasshoppers before the sons of Anak (Num. xiii. 33), what are we before the great God? Grasshoppers live but awhile, and live carelessly, not like the ant; so do the most of men. (3.) That those who appear and act against him, how formidable soever they may be to their fellow-creatures, will certainly be humbled and brought down by the mighty hand of God, v. 23, 24. Princes and judges, who have great authority, and abuse it to the support of oppression and injustice, make nothing of those about them; *as for all their enemies they puff at them* (Ps. x. 5; xii. 5); but, when the great God takes them to task, he brings them to nothing; he humbles them, and tames them, and makes them as vanity, little regarded, neither feared nor loved. He makes them utterly unable to stand before his judgments, which shall either, [1] Prevent their settlement in their authority: *They*

shall not be planted; they shall not be sown; and those are the two ways of propagating plants, either by seed or slips. Nay, if they should gain a little interest, and so be planted or sown, yet their stock shall not take root in the earth, they shall not continue long in power. Eliphaz saw the foolish taking root, but suddenly cursed their habitation. And then how soon is the fig-tree withered away! Or, [2.] He will blast them when they think they are settled. He does but blow upon them, and then they shall wither, and come to nothing, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble. For God's wrath, though it seem at first to blow slightly upon them, will soon become a mighty whirlwind. When God judges he will overcome. Those that will not bow before him cannot stand before him.

2. He appeals to what *their eyes saw of him* (v. 26): "*Lift up your eyes on high; be not always poring on this earth*" (*O curvæ in terras animæ et celestium inanes!*—*Degenerate minds, that can bend so towards the earth, having nothing celestial in them!*), "*but sometimes look up*" (*Os homini sublime dedit, cælumque tueri jussit*—*Heaven gave to man an erect countenance, and bade him gaze on the stars*); "*behold the glorious lights of heaven, consider who has created them. They neither made nor marshalled themselves; doubtless, therefore, there is a God that gave them their being, power, and motion.*" What we see of the creature should lead us to the Creator. The idolaters, when they lifted up their eyes and beheld the hosts of heaven, being wholly immersed in sense, looked no further, but worshipped them, Deut. iv. 19; Job xxxi. 26. Therefore the prophet here directs us to make use of our reason as well as our senses, and to consider who created them, and to pay our homage to him. Give him the glory of his sovereignty over them—*He brings out their host by number*, as a general draws out the squadrons and battalions of his army; of the knowledge he has of them—*He calls them all by names*, proper names, according as their place and influence are (Ps. cxlvii. 4); and of the use he makes of them; when he calls them out to any service, so obsequious are they that, *by the greatness of his might, not one of them fails*, but, as when the stars in their courses fought against Sisera, every one does that to which he is appointed. To make these creatures therefore rivals with God, which are such ready servants to him, is an injury to them as well as an affront to him.

27 Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? 28 Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator

of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? *There is no searching of his understanding.* 29 He giveth power to the faint; and to *them that have no might*, he increaseth strength. 30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: 31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint.

Here, I. The prophet reproves the people of God, who are now supposed to be captives in Babylon for their unbelief and distrust of God, and the dejections and despondencies of their spirit under their afflictions (v. 27): "*Why sayest thou, O Jacob! to thyself and to those about thee, My way is hidden from the Lord?*" Why dost thou make hard and melancholy conclusions concerning thyself and thy present case, as if the latter were desperate?" 1. The titles he bestows upon them were enough to shame them out of their distrusts: *O Jacob! O Israel!* Let them remember whence they took their names—from one who had found God faithful to him and kind in all his straits; and why they bore these names—as God's possessing people, a people in covenant with him. 2. The way of reproving them is by reasoning with them: "Why? Consider whether thou hast any ground to say so." Many of our foolish frets and foolish fears would vanish before a strict enquiry into the cause of them. 3. That which they are reproved for is an ill-natured, ill-favoured, word the spoke of God, as if he had cast them off. There seems to be an emphasis laid upon their saying it: *Why sayest thou and speakest thou?* It is bad to have evil thoughts rise in our mind, but it is worse to put an imprimatur—a sanction to them, and turn them into evil words. David reflects with regret upon what he said in his haste, when he was in distress. 4. The ill word they said was a word of despair concerning their present calamitous condition. They were ready to conclude, (1.) That God would not help them: "*My way is hidden from the Lord*" he takes no notice of our straits, nor concerns himself any more in our concernment. There are such difficulties in our case that even divine wisdom and power will be not plused." *A man whose way is hidden is one whom God has hedged in*, Job iii. 23. (2.) That God could not help them: "*My judgment is passed over from my God; my case is past relief*, so far past it that God himself cannot redress the grievances of it. *Our bones are dried.*" Ezek. xxxvii. 11.

II. He reminds them of that which, if duly considered, was sufficient to silence all

those fears and distrusts. For their conviction, as before for the conviction of idolaters (v. 21), he appeals to what they had known and what they had heard. Jacob and Israel were a knowing people, or might have been, and their knowledge came by hearing; for Wisdom cried in their chief places of concourse. Now, among other things, they had heard that *God had spoken once, twice, yea, many a time they had heard it, That power belongs unto God* (Ps. lxxii. 11). That is,

1. He is himself an almighty God. He must needs be so, for he is the *everlasting God, the Jehovah*. He was from eternity; he will be to eternity; and therefore with him there is no deficiency, no decay. He has his being of himself, and therefore all his perfections must needs be boundless. He is without beginning of days or end of life, and therefore with him there is no change. He is also the *Creator of the ends of the earth*, that is, of the whole earth and all that is in it from end to end. He therefore is the rightful owner and ruler of all, and must be concluded to have an absolute power over all and an all-sufficiency to help his people in their greatest straits. Doubtless he is still as able to save his church as he was at first to make the world. (1.) He has wisdom to contrive the salvation, and that wisdom is never at a loss: *There is no reaching out of his understanding*, so as to countermin the counsels of it and defeat its intentions; no, nor so as to determine what he will do, for he has ways by himself, ways like the sea. None can say, "Thus far God's wisdom can go, and no further;" for, when we know not what to do, he knows. (2.) He has power to bring about the salvation, and that power is never exhausted: *He faints not, nor is weary*; he upholds the whole creation, and governs all the creatures, and is neither tired nor toiled; and therefore, no doubt, he has power to relieve his church, when it is brought ever so low, without weakness or weariness.

2. He gives strength and power to his people, and helps them by enabling them to help themselves. He that is the strong God is the strength of Israel. (1.) He can help the weak, v. 29. Many a time *he gives power to the faint*, to those that are ready to faint away; and to those that have no might he not only gives, but *increases strength*, as there is more and more occasion for it. Many out of bodily weakness are wonderfully recovered, and made strong, by the providence of God: and many that are feeble in spirit, timorous and faint-hearted, unfit for services and sufferings, are yet strengthened by the grace of God *with all might in the inward man*. To those who are sensible of their weakness, and ready to acknowledge they have no might, God does in a special manner increase strength; for, *when we are weak in ourselves, then are we strong in the Lord*. (2.) He will help the willing, will help those who, in a humble dependence

upon him, help themselves, and will do well for those who do their best, v. 30, 31. Those who trust to their own sufficiency, and are so confident of it that they neither exert themselves to the utmost nor seek unto God for his grace, are the *youths and the young men*, who are strong, but are apt to think themselves stronger than they are. And they *shall faint and be weary*, yea, they *shall utterly fail* in their services, in their conflicts, and under their burdens; they shall soon be made to see the folly of trusting to themselves. But those that wait on the Lord, who make conscience of their duty to him, and by faith rely upon him and commit themselves to his guidance, shall find that God will not fail them. [1.] They shall have grace sufficient for them: *They shall renew their strength* as their work is renewed, as there is new occasion; they shall be anointed, and their lamps supplied, with fresh oil. God will be their *arm every morning*, ch. xxxiii. 2. If at any time they have been foiled and weakened they shall recover themselves, and renew their strength. Heb. *They shall change their strength*, as their work is changed—doing work, suffering work; they shall have strength to labour, strength to wrestle, strength to resist, strength to bear. As the day so shall the strength be. [2.] They shall use this grace for the best purposes. Being strengthened, First, They shall soar upward, upward towards God: *They shall mount up with wings like eagles*, so strongly, so swiftly, so high and heaven-ward. In the strength of divine grace, their souls shall ascend above the world, and even enter into the holiest. Pious and devout affections are the eagles' wings on which gracious souls mount up, Ps. xlv. 1. Secondly, They shall press forward, forward towards heaven. They shall walk, they shall run, the way of God's commandments, cheerfully and with alacrity (they *shall not be weary*), constantly and with perseverance (they *shall not faint*); and therefore in due season they shall reap. Let Jacob and Israel therefore, in their greatest distresses, continue waiting upon God, and not despair of timely and effectual relief and succour from him.

CHAP. XLI.

This chapter, as the former, is intended both for the conviction of idolaters and for the consolation of all God's faithful worshippers; for the Spirit is sent, and ministers are employed by him, both to convince and to comfort. And however this might be primarily intended for the conviction of Babylonians, and the comfort of Israelites, or for the conviction of those in Israel that were addicted to idolatry, as multitudes were, and the comfort of those that kept their integrity, doubtless it was intended both for admonition and encouragement to us, admonition to keep ourselves from idols and encouragement to trust in God. Here, 1. God by the prophet shows the folly of those that worshipped idols, especially that thought their idols able to contest with him and control him, ver. 1-9. 11. He encourages his faithful ones to trust in him, with an assurance that he would take their part against their enemies, make them victorious over them, and bring about a happy change of their affairs, ver. 10-20. 111. He challenges the idols, that were rivals with him for men's adoration, to vie with him either for knowledge or power, either to show things to come or to do good or evil, ver. 21-23. So that the chapter may be summed up in those words of Elijah, "If Jehovah be God, then follow him; but, if Baal be God, then follow him;" and in the

people's acknowledgment, upon the issue of the trial, "Jehovah he is the God, Jehovah he is the God."

KEEP silence before me, O islands; and let the people renew their strength: let them come near; then let them speak: let us come near together to judgment. 2 Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings? He gave them as the dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow. 3 He pursued them, and passed safely; even by the way that he had not gone with his feet. 4 Who hath wrought and one it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am he. 5 The isles saw it, and feared; the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near, and came. 6 They helped every one his neighbour; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage. 7 So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheneth with the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying, It is ready for the soldering: and he fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved. 8 But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. 9 Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.

That particular instance of God's care for his people Israel in raising up Cyrus to be their deliverer is here insisted upon as a great proof both of his sovereignty above all idols and of his power to protect his people. Here is,

I. A general challenge to the worshippers and admirers of idols to make good their pretensions, in competition with God and opposition to him, v. 1. It is renewed (v. 21): *Produce your cause*. The court is set, summonses are sent to the islands that lay most remote, but not out of God's jurisdiction, for he is the *Creator and possessor of the ends of the earth*, to make their appearance and give their attendance. Silence (as usual) is proclaimed while the cause is in trying: "Keep silence before me, and judge nothing before the time;" while the cause is in trying between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan it becomes all people silently to expect the issue, not to object

against God's proceedings, but to be confident that he will carry the day. The defenders of idolatry are called to say what they can in defence of it: "*Let them renew their strength*, in opposition to God, and so whether it be equal to the strength which those renew that wait upon him (ch. xl. 31) let them try their utmost efforts, whether by force of arms or force of argument. *Let them come near*; they shall not complain that God's dread makes them afraid (ch. xlii. 21), so that they cannot say what they have to say, in vindication and honour of their idols; no, *let them speak freely*: *Let us come near together to judgment*." Note, The cause of God and his kingdom is not afraid of a fair trial; if the case be but fairly stated, it will be surely carried in favour of religion. 2. The enemies of God's church and his holy religion may safely be challenged to say and do their worst for the support of their unrighteous cause. He that sits in heaven laughs at them, and the daughter of Zion despises them; for great is the truth and will prevail.

II. He particularly challenges the idols to do that for their worshippers, and again his, which he had done and would do for his worshippers, and against theirs. Different senses are given of v. 2, concerning the righteous man raised up from the east; and since we cannot determine which is the true we will make use of each as good.

1. That which is to be proved is, (1.) That the Lord is God alone, the first and with the last (v. 4), that he is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, that he governed the world from the beginning, and will to the end of time. He has reigned of old, and will reign for ever; the counsels of his kingdom were from eternity, and the continuance of it will be to eternity. (2.) That Israel is his servant (v. 8), whom he owns, and protects, and employs, and in whom he is and will be glorified. As there is a God in heaven, so there is a church on earth that is his particular care. Elijah prays (1 Kings xviii. 36) *Let it be known that thou art God, and that I am thy servant*. Now,

2. To prove he shows,

(1.) That it was he who called Abraham the father of this despised nation, out of an idolatrous country, and by many instances of his favour made his name great, Gen. xi. 2. He is the righteous man whom God raised up from the east. Of him the Chaldee paraphrast expressly understands it: *Who brought Abraham publicly from the east*? To maintain the honour of the people of Israel, was very proper to show what a figure this great ancestor of theirs made in his day, and v. 8 seems to be the explication of it, where God calls Israel the seed of Abraham my friend; and (v. 4) he calls the generation (namely, the generations of Israel) from the beginning. Also, to put contempt upon idolatry, and particularly the Chaldean idolatry

was proper to show how Abraham was aided from serving other gods (Josh. xxiv. 2, &c.) so that an early testimony was borne against that idolatry which boasted so much of its antiquity. Also, to encourage the natives in Babylon to hope that God would find a way for their return to their own land, it was proper to remind them how at last he brought their father Abraham out of the same country into this land, to give it him for an inheritance, Gen. xv. 7. Now observe what is here said concerning him. [1.] That he was a *righteous man*, or *righteousness*, a *man of righteousness*, that *believed God*, and it was *counted to him for righteousness*; and so he became the father of all those who by faith in Christ are made the *righteousness of God through him*, Rom. iv. 11; 2 Cor. v. 21. He was a great example of righteousness in his day, and *taught his household to do judgment and justice*, Gen. xiii. 19. [2.] That God *raised him up from the east*, from Ur first and afterwards from Haran, which lay east from Canaan. God would not let him settle in either of those places, but did by him as the eagle by her young, when she stirs up her nest: he raised him out of iniquity and made him righteous, out of obscurity and made him famous. [3.] He *called him to his foot*, to follow him with an implicit faith; for he *went out, not knowing whither he went*, but whom he followed, Heb. xi. 8. Those whom God effectually calls he calls to his foot, to be subject to him, to attend him, and *follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes*; and we must all either come to his foot or be made his footstool. [4.] He *gave nations before him*, the nations of Canaan, which he promised to make him master of, and thus far gave him an interest in that the Hittites acknowledged him a mighty prince among them, Gen. xxiii. 6. He *made him rule over those kings whom he conquered for the rescue of his brother Lot*, Gen. xiv. And when God *use them as dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow* (that is, made them an easy prey to his catechised servants), he then *persued them, and passed safely*, or in peace, under the divine protection, though it was in a way he was altogether unacquainted with; and so considerable was this victory that Melchizedec himself appeared to celebrate it. Now who did this but the great Jehovah? Can any of the gods of the heathen do so?

(2.) That it is he who will, ere long, raise up Cyrus from the east. It is spoken of according to the language of prophecy as a thing past, because as sure to be done in its season as if it were already done. *God will raise him up in righteousness* (so it may be read, ch. xlv. 13), *will call him to his foot*, make what use of him he pleases, and make him victorious over the nations that oppose his coming to the crown, and give him success in all his wars; and he shall be a type of

Christ, who is righteousness itself, the Lord our righteousness, whom God will, in the fulness of time, raise up and make victorious over the powers of darkness; so that he shall spoil them and make a show of them openly.

III. He exposes the folly of idolaters, who, notwithstanding the convincing proofs which the God of Israel had given of his being God alone, obstinately persisted in their idolatry, nay, were so much the more hardened in it (v. 5): *The isles of the Gentiles saw this*, not only what God did for Abraham himself, but what he did for his seed, for his sake, how he brought them out of Egypt, and made them *rule over kings*, and *they feared*, Exod. xv. 14—16. They were afraid, and, according to the summons (v. 1), *they drew near, and came*; they could not avoid taking notice of what God did for Abraham and his seed; but, instead of helping to reason one another out of their sottish idolatries, they helped to confirm one another in them, v. 6, 7. 1. They looked upon it as a dangerous design upon their religion, which they were jealous for the honour of, and were resolved, right or wrong, to adhere to, and therefore were alarmed to appear vigorously for the support of it, as the Ephesians for their Diana. When God, by his wonderful appearances on the behalf of his people, went about to wrest their idols from them, they held them so much the faster, and said one to another, "*Be of good courage*; let us unanimously agree to keep up the reputation of our gods. Though Dagon fall before the ark, he shall be set up again in his place." One tradesman encourages another to come into a confederacy for the keeping up of the noble craft of god-making. Thus men's convictions often exasperate their corruptions, and they are made worse both by the word and the works of God, which should make them better. 2. They looked upon it as a dangerous design upon themselves. They thought themselves in danger from the growing greatness both of Abraham that was a convert from idolatry, and of the people of Israel that were separatists from it; and therefore they not only had recourse to their old gods for protection, but made new ones, Deut. xxxii. 17. *So the carpenter, having done his part to the timber-work, encouraged the goldsmith to do his part in gilding or overlaying it*; and, when it came into the goldsmith's hand, *he that smooths with the hammer*, that polishes it, or beats it thin, quickened *him that smote the anvil*, bade him be expeditious, and told him it was *ready for the soldering*, which perhaps was the last operation about it, and then it is *fastened with nails*, and you have a god of it presently. Do sinners thus animate and quicken one another in the ways of sin? And shall not the servants of the living God both stir up one another to, and strengthen one another in, his service? Some read all this ironically, and by way of permission: *Let*

them help every one his neighbour; let the carpenter encourage the goldsmith: but all in vain; idols shall fall for all this.

IV. He encourages his own people to trust in him (v. 8, 9): "*But thou, Israel, art my servant. They know me not, but thou knowest me, and knowest better than to join with such ignorant besotted people as these*" (for it is intended for a warning to the people of God not to walk in the way of the heathen); "*they put themselves under the protection of these impotent deities, but thou art under my protection. Those that make them are like unto them, and so is every one that trusts in them; but thou, O Israel! art the servant of a better Master.*" Observe what is suggested here for the encouragement of God's people when they are threatened and insulted over. 1. They are God's servants, and he will not see them abused, especially for what they do in his service: *Thou art my servant* (v. 8), and (v. 9) "*I have said unto thee, Thou art my servant; and I will not go back from my word.*" 2. He has chosen them to be a peculiar people to himself. They were not forced upon him, but of his own good-will he set them apart. 3. They were the seed of Abraham his friend. It was the honour of Abraham that he was called the friend of God (James ii. 23), whom God covenanted and conversed with as a friend, and the man of his counsel; and this honour have all the saints, John xv. 15. And for the father's sake the people of Israel were beloved. God was pleased to look upon them as the posterity of an old friend of his, and therefore to be kind to them; for the covenant of friendship was made with Abraham and his seed. 4. He had sometimes, when they had been scattered among the heathen, fetched them from the ends of the earth and taken them out of the hands of the chief ones thereof, and therefore he would not now abandon them. Abraham their father was fetched from a place at a great distance, and they in his loins; and those who had been thus far-fetched and dear-bought he could not easily part with. 5. He had not yet cast them away, though they had often provoked him, and therefore he would not now abandon them. What God has done for his people, and what he has further engaged to do, should encourage them to trust in him at all times.

10 Fear thou not; for I *am* with thee: be not dismayed; for I *am* thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. 11 Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish. 12 Thou

shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, *even* them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought. 13 For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee. 14 Fear not, thou worm Jacob, *aye* men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel. 15 Behold I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. 16 Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them, and thou shalt rejoice in the LORD, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel. 17 When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. 18 I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. 19 I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah-tree, and the myrtle, and the oil-tree; I will set in the desert the fir-tree, and the pine, and the box-tree together: 20 That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.

The scope of these verses is to silence the fears, and encourage the faith, of the servants of God in their distresses. Perhaps it is intended, in the first place, for the support of God's Israel, in captivity; but all that faithfully serve God through patience and comfort of this scripture may have hope. And it is addressed to Israel as a single person, that it might the more easily and readily be accommodated and applied by every Israelite indeed to himself. That is a word of caution, counsel, and comfort, which is so often repeated, *Fear thou not*; and again (v. 13), *Fear not*; and (v. 14), "*Fear not, thou worm Jacob; fear not the threatenings of the enemy, doubt not the promises of thy God; fear not that thou shalt perish in thy affliction or that the promise of thy deliverance shall fail.*" It is against the mind of God that his people

should be a tumorous people. For the suppressing of fear he assures them,

I. That they may depend upon his presence with them as their God, and a God all-sufficient for them in the worst of times. Observe with what tenderness God speaks, and how willing he is to let the heirs of promise know the immutability of his counsel, and how desirous to make them easy: "*Fear thou not, for I am with thee, not only within call, but present with thee; be not dismayed at the power of those that are against thee, for I am thy God, and engaged for thee. Art thou weak? I will strengthen thee. Art thou destitute of friends? I will help thee in the time of need. Art thou ready to sink, ready to fall? I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness, that right hand which is full of righteousness, in dispensing rewards and punishments,"* Ps. xlviii. 10. And again (v. 13) it is promised, 1. That God will strengthen their hands, that is, will help them: "*I will hold thy right hand, go hand in hand with thee*" (so some); he will take us by the hand as our guide, to lead us in our way, will help us up when we are fallen or prevent our falls; when we are weak he will hold us up—waving, he will fix us—trembling, he will encourage us, and so *hold us by the right hand*, Ps. lxxiii. 23. 2. That he will silence their fears: *Saying unto thee, Fear not*. He has said it again and again in his word, and has there provided sovereign antidotes against fear: but he will go further; he will by his Spirit say it to their hearts, and make them to hear it, and so will help them.

II. That though their enemies be now very formidable, insolent, and severe, yet the day is coming when God will reckon with them and they shall triumph over them. There are those that are incensed against God's people, that *strive with them* (v. 11), that war against them (v. 12), that hate them, that seek their ruin, and are continually picking quarrels with them. But let not God's people be incensed at them, nor strive with them, nor render evil for evil; but wait God's time, and believe. 1. That they shall be convinced of the folly, at least, if not of the sin of striving with God's people; and, finding it to no purpose, *they shall be ashamed and confounded*, which might bring them to repentance, but will rather fill them with rage. 2. That they shall be quite ruined and undone (v. 11): *They shall be as nothing before the justice and power of God*. When God comes to deal with his proud enemies he makes nothing of them. Or they shall be brought to nothing, shall be as if they had never been. This is repeated (v. 12): *They shall be as nothing and as a thing of nought, or as that which is gone and has failed*. Those that were formidable shall become despicable; those that fancied they could do any

thing shall be able to bring nothing to pass; those that made a figure in the world, and a mighty noise, shall become mere ciphers and be buried in silence. They shall perish, not only be nothing, but be miserable: *Thou shalt seek them, shalt enquire what has become of them, that they do not appear as usual, but thou shalt not find them*, as David, Ps. xxxvii. 36. *I sought him, but he could not be found*.

III. That they themselves should become a terror to those who were now a terror to them, and victory should turn on their side, v. 14—16. See here, 1. How Jacob and Israel are reduced and brought very low. It is the *worm Jacob*, so little, so weak, and so defenceless, despised and trampled on by every body, forced to creep even into the earth for safety; and we must not wonder that Jacob has become a worm, when even Jacob's King calls himself a *worm and no man*, Ps. xxii. 6. God's people are sometimes as worms, in their humble thoughts of themselves and their enemies' haughty thoughts of them—worms, but not vipers, as their enemies are, not of the serpent's seed. God regards Jacob's low estate, and says, "*Fear not, thou worm Jacob; fear not that thou shalt be crushed; and you men of Israel*" (you few men, so some read it, you dead men, so others) "*do not give up yourselves for gone notwithstanding*." Note, The grace of God will silence fears even when there seems to be the greatest cause for them. *Perplexed but not in despair*. 2. How Jacob and Israel are advanced from this low estate, and made as formidable as ever they have been despicable. But by whom shall Jacob arise, for he is small? We are here told: *I will help thee, saith the Lord*; and it is the honour of God to help the weak. He will help them, for he is their Redeemer, who is wont to redeem them, who has undertaken to do it. Christ is the Redeemer, from him is our help found. He will help them, for he is the *Holy One of Israel*, worshipped among them in the beauty of holiness and engaged by promise to them. The Lord will help them by enabling them to help themselves and making Jacob to become a *threshing instrument*. Observe. He is but an instrument, a tool in God's hand, that he is pleased to make use of; and he is an instrument of God's making and is no more than God makes him. But, if God make him a *threshing instrument*, he will make use of him, and therefore will make him fit for use, *new and sharp, and having teeth*, or sharp spikes; and then, by divine direction and strength, *thou shalt thresh the mountains, the highest, and strongest, and most stubborn of thy enemies: thou shalt not only beat them, but beat them small*; they shall not be as corn threshed out, which is valuable, and is carefully preserved (such God's people are when they are under the flail,

ca. xxi. 10: *O my threshing! yet the corn of my floor, that shall not be lost*; but these are made as *chaff*, which is good for nothing, and which the husbandman is glad to get rid of. He pursues the metaphor, v. 16. Having threshed them, *thou shalt winnow them, and the wind shall scatter them*. This perhaps had its accomplishment, in part, in the victories of the Jews over their enemies in the times of the Maccabees; but it seems in general designed to read the final doom of all the implacable enemies of the church of God, and to have its accomplishment likewise in the triumphs of the cross of Christ, the gospel of Christ, and all the faithful followers of Christ, over the powers of darkness, which, first or last, shall all be dissipated, and in Christ all believers shall be more than conquerors, and *he that overcomes shall have power over the nations*, Rev. ii. 26.

IV. That, hereupon, they shall have abundance of comfort in God, and God shall have abundance of honour from them: *Thou shalt rejoice in the Lord*, v. 16. When we are freed from that which hindered our joy, and are blessed with that which is the matter of it, we ought to remember that God is our exceeding joy and in him all our joys must terminate. When we rejoice over our enemies we must rejoice in the Lord, for to him alone we owe our liberties and victories. "*Thou shalt also glory in the Holy One of Israel*, in thy interest in him and relation to him, and what he has done for thee." And, if thus we make God our praise and glory, we become to him for a praise and a glory.

V. That they shall have seasonable and suitable supplies of every thing that is proper for them in the time of need; and, if there be occasion, God will again do for them as he did for Israel in their march from Egypt to Canaan, v. 17—19. When the captives, either in Babylon or in their return thence, are in distress for want of water or shelter, God will take care of them, and, one way or other, make their journey, even through a wilderness, comfortable to them. But doubtless this promise has more than such a private interpretation. Their return out of Babylon was typical of our redemption by Christ; and so the contents of these promises, 1. Were provided by the gospel of Christ. That glorious discovery of his love has given full assurance to all those who hear this joyful sound that God has provided inestimable comforts for them, sufficient for the supply of all their wants, the balancing of all their griefs, and the answering of all their prayers. 2. They are applied by the grace and Spirit of Christ to all believers, that they may have strong consolation in their way and a complete happiness in their end. Our way to heaven is through the wilderness of this world.

Now (1.) It is here supposed that the

people of God, in their passage through this world, are often in straits: *The poor and needy seek water, and there is none; the poor in spirit hunger and thirst after righteousness*. The soul of man, finding itself empty and necessitous, seeks for satisfaction somewhere, but soon despairs of finding it in the world, that has nothing in it to make it easy: creatures are *broken cisterns, that can hold no water*; so that *their tongue fails for thirst*, they are weary of seeking that satisfaction in the world which is not to be had in it. Their sorrow makes them thirsty; so does their toil. (2.) It is here promised that, one way or other, all their grievances shall be redressed and they shall be made easy. [1.] God himself will be nigh unto them in all that which they call upon him for. Let all the praying people of God take notice of this, and take comfort of it; he has said, "*I the Lord will hear them, will answer them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them; I will be with them, as I have always been, in their distresses*." While we are in the wilderness of this world this promise is to us what the pillar of cloud and fire was to Israel, an assurance of God's gracious presence. [2.] They shall have a constant supply of fresh water, as Israel had in the wilderness, even where one would least expect it (v. 18): *I will open rivers in high places*, rivers of grace, rivers of pleasure, *rivers of living water*, which he spoke of the Spirit (John vii. 38, 39), that Spirit which should be poured out upon the Gentiles, who had been as high places, dry and barren, and lifted up in their own conceit above the necessity of that gift. And there shall be *fountains in the midst of the valleys*, the valleys of Baca (Ps. lxxxix. 6), that are sandy and wearisome; or among the Jews, who had been as fruitful valleys in comparison with the Gentile mountains. The preaching of the gospel to the world turned that wilderness into a pool of water, yielding fruit to the owner of it and relief to the travellers through it. [3.] They shall have a pleasant shade to screen them from the scorching heat of the sun, as Israel when they pitched at Elim, where they had not only wells of water, but palm-trees (Exod. xv. 27): "*I will plant in the wilderness the cedar*, v. 19. *I will turn the wilderness into an orchard or garden*, such as used to be planted with these pleasant trees, so that they shall pass through the wilderness with as much ease and delight as a man walks in his grove. These trees shall be to them what the pillar of cloud was to Israel in the wilderness, a shelter from the heat." Christ and his grace are so to believers, *as the shadow of a great rock*, ch. xxxii. 2. When God sets up his church in the Gentile wilderness there shall be as great a change made by it in men's characters as if thorns and briars were turned into cedars, and fir-trees, and myrtles; and by this a blessed

change is described, *ch. lv. 13.* [4.] They shall see and acknowledge the hand of God, his power and his favour, in this, *v. 20.* God will do these strange and surprising things on purpose to awaken them to a conviction and consideration of his hand in all: *That they may see this wonderful change, and knowing that it is above the ordinary course and power of nature may consider that therefore it comes from a superior power, and, comparing notes upon it, may understand together, and concur in the acknowledgment of it, that the hand of the Lord, that mighty hand of his which is stretched out for his people and stretched out to them, has done this, and the Holy One of Israel has created it, made it anew, made it out of nothing, made it for the comfort of his people.* Note, God does great things for his people, that he may be taken notice of.

21 Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. 22 Let them bring *them* forth, and show us what shall happen: let them show the former things, what they *be*, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. 23 Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye *are* gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold *it* together. 24 Behold, ye *are* of nothing, and your work of nought: an abomination *is* he that chooseth you. 25 I have raised up *one* from the north, and he shall come: from the rising of the sun shall he call upon my name: and he shall come upon princes as *upon* mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay. 26 Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know? and beforetime, that we may say, *He is* righteous? yea, *there is* none that sheweth, yea, *there is* none that declareth, yea, *there is* none that heareth your words. 27 The first *shall say* to Zion, Behold, behold them: and I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings. 28 For I beheld, and *there was* no man; even among them, and *there was* no counsellor, that, when I asked of them, could answer a word. 29 Behold, they *are* all vanity; their works *are* nothing: their molten images *are* wind and confusion.

The Lord, by the prophet, here repeats the challenge to idolaters to make out the

pretensions of their idols: "*Produce your cause (v. 21) and make your best of it; bring forth the strongest reasons you have to prove that your idols are gods, and worthy of your adoration.*" Note, There needs no more to show the absurdity of sin than to produce the reasons that are given in defence of it, for they carry with them their own confutation.

I. The idols are here challenged to bring proofs of their knowledge and power. Let us see what they can inform us of, and what they can do. Understanding and active power are the accomplishments of a man. Whoever pretends to be a god must have these in perfection; and have the idols made it to appear that they have? No;

1. "They can tell us nothing that we did not know before, so ignorant are they. We challenge them to inform us," (1.) "What has been formerly: *Let them show the former things, and raise them out of the oblivion in which they were buried*" (God inspired Moses to write such a history of the creation as the gods of the heathen could never have dictated to any of their enthusiasts); or "let the defenders of idols tell us what mighty achievements they can boast of as performed by their gods in former times. What did they ever do that was worth taking notice of? Let them specify any thing, and it shall be considered, its due weight shall be given it, and it shall be compared with the latter end of it; and if, in the issue, it prove to be as great as it pretended to be, they shall have the credit of it." (2.) "We challenge them to tell us what shall happen, to declare to us *things to come* (v. 22), and again (v. 23), *show the things that are to come hereafter.* Give this evidence of your omniscience, that nothing can be hidden from you, and of your sovereignty and dominion. Make it to appear that you have the doing of all, by letting us know beforehand what you design to do. Do this kindness to the world; let them know what is to come, that they may provide accordingly. Do this, and we will own that you are gods above us, and gods to us, and worthy of our adorations." No creature can foretel things to come, otherwise than by divine information, with any certainty.

2. "They can do nothing that we cannot do ourselves, so impotent are they." He challenges them to do either *good or evil*, good to their friends or evil to their enemies: "Let them do, if they can, any thing extraordinary, that people will admire and be affected with. Let them either bless or curse, with power. Let us see them either inflict such plagues as God brought on Egypt or bestow such blessings as God bestowed on Israel. Let them do some great thing, and we shall be amazed when we see it, and frightened into a veneration of them, as many have been into a veneration of the true God." That which is charged upon

these idols, and let them disprove it if they can, is that *they are of nothing*, v. 24. Their claims have no foundation at all, nor is there any ground or reason in the least for men's paying them the respect they do; there is nothing in them worthy our regard. "They are less than nothing, worse than nothing;" so some read it. "*The work they do is of nought*, and so is the ado that is made about them. There is no pretence or colour for it; it is all a jest; it is all a sham put upon the world; and therefore *he that chooses you, and so gives you your deity, and*" (as some read it) "*that delights in you, is an abomination to God and all wise and good men. He that chooses you chooses an abomination.*" so some take it. A servant is at liberty to choose his master, but a man is not at liberty to choose his God. He that chooses any other than the true God chooses an abomination; his choosing it makes it so.

II. God here produces proofs that he is the true God, and that there is none besides him. Let him produce his strong reasons.

1. He has an irresistible power. This he will shortly make to appear in the raising up of Cyrus and making him a type of Christ (v. 25): *He will raise him up from the north and from the rising of the sun.* Cyrus by his father was a Mede, by his mother a Persian; and his army consisted of Medes, whose country lay north, and Persians, whose country lay east, from Babylon: God will raise him up to great power, and he shall come against Babylon with ends of his own to serve. But, (1.) *He shall proclaim God's name*; so it may be read. He shall publish the honour of the God of Israel; so he did remarkably when, in his proclamation for the release of the Jews out of their captivity, he acknowledged that the Lord God of Israel was the Lord God of heaven, and *the God*: and he might be said to call on his name when he encouraged the building of his temple, and very probably did himself call upon him and pray to him, Ezra i. 2, 3. (2.) All opposition shall fall before him: *He shall come upon the princes of Babylon*, and all others that stood in his way, as mortar, and trample upon them as the potter treads clay, to serve his own purposes with it. Christ, as man, was raised up from the north, for Nazareth lay in the northern parts of Canaan; as the angel of the covenant, he ascends from the east. He maintained the honour of heaven (*he shall call upon my name*), and broke the powers of hell, came upon the prince of darkness as mortar and trod him down.

2. He has an infallible foresight. He would not only do this, but he did now, by his prophet, foretell it. Now the false gods not only could not do it, but they could not foresee it. (1.) He challenges them to produce any of their pretended deities, or their diviners, that had given notice of this, or could (v. 26): "*Who has declared from the*

beginning any thing of this kind, or has told it before-time? Tell us if there be any that you know of, for we know not any; if there be any, we will say, *He is righteous*, he is true, his cause is just, his claims are proved, and he is in the right in demanding to be worshipped." This agrees with v. 22, 23. (2.) He challenges to himself the sole honour of doing it and foretelling it (v. 27): *I am the first* (so it may be read) *that will say to Zion, Behold, behold them*, that will let the people of Israel know their deliverers are at hand (for there were those who understood by books, God's books, the approach of the time, Dan. ix. 2), and I am he that will give to Jerusalem one that brings good tidings, these good tidings of their enlargement. This is applicable to the work of redemption, in which the Lord showed himself much more than in the release of the Jews out of Babylon: he it was that contrived our salvation, and he brought it about, and he has given to us the glad tidings of reconciliation.

III. Judgment is here given upon this trial. 1. None of all the idols had foretold, or could foresee, this work of wonder. Other nations besides the Jews were released out of captivity in Babylon by Cyrus, or at least were greatly concerned in the revolution of the monarchy and the transferring of it to the Persians; and yet none of them had any intelligence given them of it beforehand, by any of their gods or prophets: "*There is none that shows* (v. 26), *none that declares*, none that gives the least intimation of it; *there is none of the nations that hears your words*, that can pretend to have heard from their gods such words as you, O Israelites! have heard from your God, by your prophets," Ps. cxlvii. 20. None of all the gods of the nations have shown their worshippers the way of salvation, which God will show by the Messiah. The good tidings which the Lord will send in the gospel is a mystery hidden from ages and generations, Rom. xvi. 25, 26. 2. None of those who pleaded for them could produce any instance of their knowledge or power that had in it any colour of proof that they were gods. All their advocates were struck dumb with this challenge (v. 28): "*I beheld, and there was no man that could give evidence for them*, even among those that were their most zealous admirers; *and there was no counsellor*, none that could offer any thing for the support of their cause. Even among the idols themselves there was none fit to give counsel in the most trivial matters, and yet there were those that asked counsel of them in the most important and difficult affairs. When I asked them what they had to say for themselves they stood mute; the case was so plain against them that there was none who could answer a word." Judgment must therefore be given against the defendant upon *Nihil dicit*—He

is mute. He has nothing to say for himself. He was speechless, Matt. xxii. 12. 3. Sentence is therefore given according to the charge exhibited against them (v. 24): "Behold, they are all vanity (v. 29); they are a lie and a cheat; they are not in themselves what they pretend to be, nor will their worshippers find that in them which they promise themselves. Their works are nothing, of no force, of no worth; their enemies need fear no hurt from them; their worshippers can hope for no good from them. Their molten images, and indeed all their images, are wind and confusion, vanity and vexation; those that worship them, will be deceived in them, and will reflect upon their own folly with the greatest bitterness. Therefore, dearly beloved, flee from idolatry," 1 Cor. x. 14.

CHAP. XLII.

The prophet seems here to launch out yet further into the prophecy of the Messiah and his kingdom under the type of Cyrus; and, having the great work of man's salvation by him yet more in view, he almost forgets the occasion that led him into it and drops the return out of Babylon; for indeed the prospect of this would be a greater comfort and support to the believing pious Jews, in their captivity, than the hope of that. And (as Mr. Gataker well observes) in this and similar prophecies of Christ, that are couched in types, as of David and Solomon, some passages agree to the type and not to the truth, others to the truth and not to the type, and many to the type in one sense and the truth in another. Here is, I. A prophecy of the Messiah's coming with meekness, and yet with power, to do the Redeemer's work, ver. 1-4. II. His commission opened, which he received from the Father, ver. 5-9. III. The joy and rejoicing with which the glad tidings of this should be received, ver. 10-12. IV. The wonderful success of the gospel, for the overthrow of the devil's kingdom, ver. 13-17. V. The rejection and ruin of the Jews for their unbelief, ver. 18-25.

BEHOOLD my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. 2 He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. 3 A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. 4 He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.

We are sure that these verses are to be understood of Christ, for the evangelist tells us expressly that in him this prophecy was fulfilled, Matt. xii. 17-21. Behold with an eye of faith, behold and observe, behold and admire, my servant, whom I uphold. Let the Old-Testament saints behold and expect him; let the New-Testament saints behold and remember him. Now what must we behold and consider concerning him?

I. The Father's concern for him and relation to him, the confidence he put and the complacency he took in him. This put an honour upon him, and made him remarkable, above any other circumstance, v. 1. 1. God owns him as one employed for him:

He is my servant. Though he was a Son, yet, as a Mediator, he took upon him the form of a servant, learned obedience to the will of God and practised it, and laid out himself to advance the interests of God's kingdom, and so he was God's servant. 2. As one chosen by him: He is my elect. He did not thrust himself into the service, but was called of God, and pitched upon as the fittest person for it. Infinite Wisdom made the choice and then avowed it. 3. As one he put a confidence in: He is my servant on whom I lean; so some read it. The Father put a confidence in him that he would go through with his undertaking, and, in that confidence, brought many sons to glory. It was a great trust which the Father reposed in the Son, but he knew him to be *par negotio*—equal to it, both able and faithful. 4. As one he took care of: He is my servant whom I uphold; so we read it. The Father bore him up, and bore him out, in his undertaking; both were included in his upholding him; he stood by him and strengthened him. 5. As one whom he took an entire complacency in: My elect, in whom my soul delights. His delight was in him from eternity, when he was by him as one brought up with him, Prov. viii. 30. He had a particular satisfaction in his undertaking: he declared himself well pleased in him (Matt. iii. 17; xvii. 5), and therefore loved him, because he laid down his life for the sheep. Let our souls delight in Christ, rely on him, and rejoice in him; and thus let us be united to him, and then, for his sake, the Father will be well pleased with us.

II. The qualification of him for his office. I have put my Spirit upon him, to enable him to go through his undertaking, ch. lxi. i. The Spirit did not only come, but rest, upon him (ch. xi. 2), not by measure, as on others of God's servants, but without measure. Those whom God employs as his servants; as he will uphold them and be well pleased with them, so he will put his Spirit upon them.

III. The work to which he is appointed; it is to bring forth judgment to the Gentiles, that is, in infinite wisdom, holiness, and equity, to set up a religion in the world under the bonds of which the Gentiles should come and the blessings of which they should enjoy. The judgments of the Lord, which had been hidden from the Gentiles (Ps. cxlvii. 20), he came to bring forth to the Gentiles, for he was to be a light to lighten them.

IV. The mildness and tenderness with which he should pursue this undertaking, v. 2, 3. He shall carry it on, 1. In silence, and without noise: He shall not strive nor cry. It shall not be proclaimed, Lo, here, is Christ, or Lo, he is there; as when great princes ride in progress or make a public entry. He shall have no trumpet sounded before him, nor any noisy retinue to follow him. The opposition he meets with he shall

not strive against, but patiently *endure the contradiction of sinners against himself*. His kingdom is spiritual, and therefore its weapons are not carnal, nor is its appearance pompous; it comes not with observation.

2. Gently, and without rigour. Those that are wicked he will be patient with; when he has begun to crush them, so that they are as bruised reeds, he will give them space to repent and not immediately break them; though they are very offensive, as smoking flax (*ch. lxxv. 5*), yet he will bear with them, as he did with Jerusalem. Those that are weak he will be tender of; those that have but a little life, a little heat, that are weak as a reed, oppressed with doubts and fears, as a *bruised reed*, that are as *smoking flax*, as the wick of a candle newly lighted, which is ready to go out again, he will not despise them, will not plead against them with his great power, nor lay upon them more work or more suffering than they can bear, which would break and quench them, but will graciously consider their frame. More is implied than is expressed. *He will not break the bruised reed*, but will strengthen it, that it may become as a cedar in the courts of our God. *He will not quench the smoking flax*, but blow it up into a flame. Note, Jesus Christ is very tender towards those that have true grace, though they are but weak in it, and accepts the willingness of the spirit, pardoning and passing by the weakness of the flesh.

V. The courage and constancy with which he should persevere in this undertaking, so as to carry his point at last (*v. 4*): *He shall not fail nor be discouraged*. Though he meets with hard service and much opposition, and foresees how ungrateful the world will be, yet he goes on with his part of the work, till he is able to say, *It is finished*; and he enables his apostles and ministers to go on with theirs too, and not to fail nor be discouraged, till they also have finished their testimony. And thus he accomplishes what he undertook. 1. *He brings forth judgment unto truth*. By a long course of miracles, and his resurrection at last, he shall fully evince the truth of his doctrine and the divine origin and authority of that holy religion which he came to establish. 2. *He sets judgment in the earth*. He erects his government in the world, a church for himself among men, reforms the world, and by the power of his gospel and grace fixes such principles in the minds of men as tend to make them wise and just. 3. *The isles of the Gentiles wait for his law*, wait for his gospel, that is, bid it welcome as if it had been a thing they had long waited for. They shall become his disciples, shall sit at his feet, and be ready to receive the law from his mouth. *What wilt thou have us to do?*

5 Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens and stretch-

ed them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: 6 I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; 7 To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house. 8 I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. 9 Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them. 10 Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof. 11 Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up *their voice*, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains. 12 Let them give glory unto the LORD, and declare his praise in the islands.

Here is, I. The covenant God made with and the commission he gave to the Messiah, *v. 5—7*, which are an exposition of *v. 1*, *Behold my servant, whom I uphold*.

1. The royal titles by which the great God here makes himself known, and distinguishes himself from all pretenders, speak very much his glory (*v. 5*): *Thus saith God the Lord*. And who art thou, Lord? Why, he is the fountain of all being and therefore the fountain of all power. He is the fountain of being, 1. In the upper world; for *he created the heavens and stretched them out* (*ch. xl. 22*), and keeps the vast expanse still upon the stretch. 2. In the lower world; for *he spread forth the earth*, and made it a capacious habitation, and that which comes out of it is produced by his power. 3. In the world of mankind: *He gives breath to the people upon it*, not only air to breathe in, but the breath of life itself and organs to breathe with; nay, he gives spirit, the powers and faculties of a rational soul, to those that walk therein. Now this is prefixed to God's covenant with the Messiah, and the commission given him, not only to show that he has authority to make such a covenant and give such a commission, and had power sufficient to bear him out, but

that the design of the work or redemption was to maintain the honour of the Creator, and to restore man to the allegiance he owes to God as his Maker.

2. The assurances which he gives to the Messiah of his presence with him in all he did pursuant to his undertaking speak much encouragement to him, v. 6. (1.) God owns that the Messiah did not take the honour of being Mediator to himself, but was called of God, that he was no intruder, no usurper, but was fairly brought to it (Heb. v. 4): *I have called thee in righteousness*. God not only did him no wrong in calling him to this hard service, he having voluntarily offered himself to it, but did himself right in providing for his own honour and performing the word which he had spoken. (2.) He promises to stand by him and strengthen him in it, to hold his hand, not only to his work, but in it, to hold his hand, that it might not shake, that it might not fail, and so to keep him. When an angel was sent from heaven to strengthen him in his agonies, and the Father himself was with him, then this promise was fulfilled. Note, Those whom God calls he will own and help, and will hold their hands.

3. The great intentions of this commission speak abundance of comfort to the children of men. He was given for a *covenant of the people*, for a mediator, or guarantee, of the covenant of grace, which is all summed up in him. God, in giving us Christ, has with him freely given us all the blessings of the new covenant. Two glorious blessings Christ, in his gospel, brings with him to the Gentile word—light and liberty. (1.) He is given for a *light to the Gentiles*, not only to reveal to them what they were concerned to know, and which otherwise they could not have known, but to open the blind eyes, that they might know it. By his Spirit in the word he presents the object; by his Spirit in the heart he prepares the organ. When the gospel came light came, a great light, to those that sat in darkness, Matt. iv. 16; John iii. 19. And St. Paul was sent to the Gentiles to *open their eyes*, Acts xxvi. 18. Christ is the light of the world. (2.) He is sent to proclaim liberty to the captives, as Cyrus did, to *bring out the prisoners*; not only to open the prison-doors, and give them leave to go out, which was all that Cyrus could do, but to bring them out, to induce and enable them to make use of their liberty, which none did but those whose spirits God stirred up. This Christ does by his grace.

II. The ratification and confirmation of this grant. That we may be assured of the validity of it consider, 1. The authority of him that makes the promise (v. 8): *I am the Lord, Jehovah, that is my name*, and that was the name by which he made himself known when he began to perform the promise made to the patriarchs; whereas, be-

fore, he manifested himself by the name of God Almighty, Exod. vi. 3. If he is the Lord that gives being and birth to all things, he will give being and birth to this promise. If his name be *Jehovah*, which speaks him God alone, we may be sure his name is *jealous*, and he will not give his glory to another, whoever it is that stands in competition with him, especially not to *graven images*. He will send the Messiah to open men's eyes, that so he may turn them from the service of dumb idols to serve the living God, because, though he has long winked at the times of ignorance, he will now maintain his prerogative, and will not give his glory to graven images. He will perform his word because he will not lose the honour of being true to it, nor be ever charged with falsehood by the worshippers of false gods. He will deliver his people from under the power of idolaters because it looks as if he had given his praise to graven images when he gives up his own worshippers to be worshippers of images. 2. The accomplishment of the promises he had formerly made concerning his church, which are proofs of the truth of his word and the kindness he bears to his people (v. 9): "*Behold, the former things have come to pass*; hitherto the Lord has helped his church, has supported her under former burdens, relieved her in former straits; and this in performance of the promises made to the fathers. *There has not failed one word*, 1 Kings viii. 56. *And now new things do I declare*. Now I will make new promises, which shall as certainly be fulfilled in their season as old ones were; now I will bestow new favours, such as have not been conferred formerly. Old-Testament blessings you have had abundantly; now I declare New-Testament blessings, not a fruitful country and dominion over your neighbours, but *spiritual blessings in heavenly things*. *Before they spring forth* in the preaching of the gospel *I tell you of them*, under the type and figure of the former things." Note, The receipt of former mercies may encourage us to hope for further mercies; for God is constant in his care for his people, and his compassions are still new.

III. The song of joy and praise which should be sung hereupon to the glory of God (v. 10): *Sing unto the Lord a new song*, a New-Testament song. The giving of Christ for a *light to the Gentiles* (v. 6) was a new thing, and very surprising. The apostle speaks of it as a mystery which, in other ages, was not made known, as it is now revealed, *that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs*, Eph. iii. 5, 6. Now, this being the new thing which God declares, the newness of the song which is to be sung on this occasion is this, that whereas, before, the songs of the Lord were very much confined to the temple at Jerusalem (David's psalms were in the language of the Jews only, and

sung by them and in their own country only; for, when they were in a strange land, they hung their harps on the willow-trees and could not sing the Lord's song, as we find, Ps. cxxxvii. 2—4), now the songs of holy joy and praise shall be sung all the world over. The Gentile nations shall share equally with the Jews in New-Testament blessings, and therefore shall join in New-Testament praises and acts of worship. There shall be churches set up in Gentile nations and they shall sing a new song. The conversion of the Gentiles is often foretold under this notion, as appears, Rom. xv. 9—11. It is here promised that the praises of God's grace shall be sung with joy and thankfulness, 1. By those that live in the end of the earth, in countries that lie most remote from Jerusalem. *From the uttermost parts of the earth have we heard songs*, ch. xxiv. 16. This was fulfilled when Christianity was planted in our land. 2. By mariners and merchants, and those that go down to the sea, that do business in great waters, and suck the riches of the sea, and so make themselves masters of the fulness thereof and all that is therein, with which they shall praise God, and justly, for it is his, Ps. xxiv. 1; xev. 5. The Jews traded little at sea; if therefore God's praises be sung by those that go down to the sea, it must be by Gentiles. Sea-faring men are called upon to praise God, Ps. cvii. 23. 3. By the islands and the inhabitants thereof, v. 10, and again, v. 12. Let them declare his praise in the islands, the isles of the Gentiles, probably referring to the islands of Greece. 4. By the wilderness and the cities thereof, and the villages of Kedar. These lay east from Jerusalem, as the islands lay west, so that the gospel songs should be sung from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same. The whole Gentile world had been like an island, cut off from communication with God's church, and like a wilderness, uncultivated and bringing forth no fruit to God; but now the islands and the wilderness shall praise God. 5. By the inhabitants of the rock, and those that dwell on the tops of the mountains, not only the Gentiles, but the poorest and meanest and most despicable, those that dwell in cottages, as well as those that inhabit cities and villages. The rude and most barbarous, as the mountaineers commonly are, shall be civilized by the gospel. Or by the inhabitants of the rock may be meant the inhabitants of that part of Arabia which is called *Petræa—the rocky*. Perhaps the neighbouring countries shared in the joy of the Israelites when they returned out of Babylon and some of them came and joined with them in their praises; but we find not that it was to any such degree as might fully answer this illustrious prophecy, and must conclude that it reaches further, and was fulfilled in that which many other prophe-

cies of the joy of the nations are said in the New-Testament to be fulfilled in, the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ. When they are brought into the church they are brought to give glory to the Lord; then they are to him for a name and a praise, and they make it their business to praise him. He is glorified in them and by them.

13 The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies. 14 I have long time holden my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself: now will I cry like a travelling woman; I will destroy and devour at once. 15 I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs; and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools. 16 And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them. 17 They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images, that say to the molten images, Ye are our gods.

It comes all to one whether we make these verses (as some do) the song itself that is to be sung by the Gentile world or a prophecy of what God will do to make way for the singing of that song, that evangelical new song.

I. He will appear in his power and glory more than ever. So he did in the preaching of his gospel, in the divine power and energy which went along with it, and in the wonderful success it had in the pulling down of Satan's strongholds, v. 13, 14. He had long held his peace, and been still, and refrained himself, while he winked at the times of the ignorance of the Gentile world (Acts xvii. 30), and suffered all nations to walk in their own ways (Acts xiv. 16); but now he shall go forth as a mighty man, as a man of war, to attack the devil's kingdom and give it a fatal blow. The going forth of the gospel is thus represented, Rev. vi. 2. Christ, in it, went forth conquering and to conquer. The ministry of the apostles is called their warfare; and they were the soldiers of Jesus Christ. He shall stir up jealousy, shall appear more jealous than ever for the glory of his own name and against idolatry. 1. He shall cry, in the preaching of his word, cry like a travelling woman; for the ministers of Christ preached as men in

earnest, and that travailed in birth again till they saw Christ formed in the souls of the people, Gal. iv. 19. *He shall cry, yea, roar,* in the gospel woes, which are more terrible than the roaring of a lion, and which must be preached along with gospel blessings to awaken a sleeping world. 2. He shall conquer by the power of his Spirit: *He shall prevail against his enemies,* shall prevail to make them friends, Col. i. 21. Those that contradict and blaspheme his gospel, he shall prevail to put them to silence and shame. He will destroy and devour at once all the oppositions of the powers of darkness. Satan shall fall as lightning from heaven, and he that had the power of death shall be destroyed. As a type and figure of this, to make way for the redemption of the Jews out of Babylon, God will humble the pride, and break the power, of their oppressors, and will at once destroy and devour the Babylonian monarchy. In accomplishing this destruction of Babylon by the Persian army under the command of Cyrus, *he will make waste mountains and hills, level the country, and dry up all their herbs.* The army, as usual, shall either carry off the forage or destroy it, and by laying bridges of boats over rivers shall turn them into islands, and so drain the fens and low grounds, to make way for the march of their army, that the pools shall be dried up. Thus, when the gospel shall be preached, it shall have a free course, and that which hinders the progress of it shall be taken out of the way.

II. He will manifest his favour and grace towards those whose spirits he had stirred up to follow him, as Ezra i. 5. Those who ask the way to Zion he will show the way, and lead in it, v. 16. Those who by nature were blind, and those who, being under convictions of sin and wrath are quite at a loss and know not what to do with themselves, God will lead by a way that they knew not, will show them the way to life and happiness by Jesus Christ, who is the way, and will conduct and carry them on in that way, which before they were strangers to. Thus, in the conversion of Paul, he was struck blind first, and then God revealed his Son in him, and made the scales to fall from his eyes. They are weak in knowledge, and the truths of God at first seem unintelligible; but God will make darkness light before them, and knowledge shall be easy to them. They are weak in duty, the commands of God seem impracticable, and insuperable difficulties are in the way of their obedience; but God will make crooked things straight; their way shall be plain, and the yoke easy. Those whom God brings into the right way he will guide in it. As a type of this, he will lead the Jews, when they return out of captivity, in a ready road to their own land again, and nothing shall occur to perplex or embarrass them in

their journey. These are great things, and kind things, very great and very kind; but lest any should say, "They are too great, too kind, to be expected from God by such an undeserving people as that of the Jews, such an undeserving world as that of the Gentiles," he adds, *These things will I do unto them,* take my word for it I will, and I will not forsake them; he that begins to show this great mercy will go on to do them good.

III. He will particularly put those to confusion who adhere to idols notwithstanding the attempts made by the preaching of the gospel to turn them from idols (v. 17): *They shall be turned back, and greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images.* The Babylonians shall when they see how the Jews, who despise their images, are owned and delivered by the God they worship without images, and the Gentiles when they see how idolatry falls before the preaching of the gospel, is scattered like darkness before the light of the sun, and melts like snow before its heat. They shall be ashamed that ever they said to these molten images, *You are our gods;* for how can those help their worshippers who cannot help themselves, nor save themselves from falling into contempt? In times of reformation, when many turn from iniquity, and sin, being generally deserted, becomes unfashionable, it may be hoped that those who will not otherwise be reclaimed will be wrought upon by that consideration to be ashamed of it.

18 Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see. 19 Who is blind, but my servant? Or deaf, as my messenger that I sent? Who is blind as *he that is perfect*, and blind as the LORD's servant? 20 Seeing many things, but thou observe not; opening the ears, but he heareth not. 21 The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable. 22 But this is a people robbed and spoiled; *they are* all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison-houses: they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith, Restore. 23 Who among you will give ear to this? Who will hearken and hear for the time to come? 24 Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? Did not the LORD, he against whom we have sinned? For they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law. 25 Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of

his anger, and the strength of battle : and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not ; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart.

The prophet, having spoken by way of comfort and encouragement to the believing Jews who waited for the consolation of Israel, here turns to those among them who were unbelieving, for their conviction and humiliation. Among those who were in captivity in Babylon there were some who were as the evil figs in Jeremiah's vision, who were sent thither for their hurt, to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth, for a reproach and a proverb, Jer. xxiv. 9. In them there was a type of the Jews who rejected Christ and were rejected by him, and then fell more than ever under the curse, when those who believed were inheriting the blessing ; for they were broken, and ruined, and remain dispersed unto this day. Observe,

I. The call that is given to this people (v. 18) : "*Hear, you deaf, and attend to the joyful sound, and look you blind, that you may see the joyful light.*" There is no absurdity in this command, nor is it unbecoming the wisdom and goodness of God to call us to do that good which yet of ourselves we are not sufficient for ; for those have natural powers which they may employ so as to do better than they do, and may have supernatural grace if it be not their own fault, who yet labour under a moral impotency to that which is good. This call to the deaf to hear and the blind to see is like the command given to the man that had the withered hand to stretch it forth ; though he could not do this, because it was withered, yet, if he had not attempted to do it, he would not have been healed, and his being healed thereupon was owing, not to his act, but to the divine power.

II. The character that is given of them (v. 19, 20) : *Who is blind, but my servant, or deaf as my messenger ?* The people of the Jews were in profession God's servants, and their priests and elders his messengers (Mal. ii. 7) ; but they were deaf and blind. The verse before may be understood as spoken to the Gentile idolaters, whom he calls *deaf and blind*, because they worshipped gods that were so. "But," says he, "no wonder you are deaf and blind when my own people are as bad as you, and many of them as much set upon idolatry."

1. He complains of their stottishness—they are blind ; and of their stubbornness—they are deaf. They were even worse than the Gentiles themselves. *Corruptio optimi est pessima—What is best becomes, when corrupted, the worst.* "Who is so wilfully, so scandalously, blind and deaf as my servant and my messenger, as Jacob who is my servant ch. xli. 8), and as their prophets and teachers who are my messengers ? Who

is blind as he that in profession and pretension is perfect, that should come nearer to perfection than other people, their priests and prophets ? The one prophesies falsely, and the other bears rule by their means ; and who so blind as those that will not see when they have the light shining in their faces ?" Note, (1.) It is a common thing, but a very sad thing, for those that in profession are God's servants and messengers to be themselves blind and deaf in spiritual things, ignorant, erroneous, and very careless. (2.) Blindness and deafness in spiritual things are worse in those that profess themselves to be God's servants and messengers than in others. It is in them the greater sin and shame, the greater dishonour to God, and to themselves a greater damnation.

2. The prophet goes on (v. 20) to describe the blindness and obstinacy of the Jewish nation, just as our Saviour describes it in his time (Matt. xiii. 14, 15) : *Seeing many things, but thou observest not.* Multitudes are ruined for want of observing that which they cannot but see ; they perish, not through ignorance, but mere carelessness. The Jews in our Saviour's time saw many proofs of his divine mission, but they did not observe them ; they seemed to open their ears to him, but they did not hear, that is, they did not heed, did not understand, or believe, or obey, and then it was all one as if they had not heard.

III. The care God will take of the honour of his own name, notwithstanding their blindness and deafness, especially of his word, which he has magnified above all his name. *Shall the unbelief and obstinacy of men make the promise of God of no effect ? God forbid,* Rom. iii. 3, 4. No, though they are blind and deaf, God will be no loser in his glory (v. 21) : *The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake ; not well pleased with their sin, but well pleased in the manifestation of his own righteousness, in rejecting them for rejecting the great salvation.* He speaks as one well pleased, ch. i. 24 : *Ah ! will ease me of my adversaries ;* and Ezek. v. 13, *I will be comforted.* The scripture was fulfilled in the casting off of the Jews as well as in the calling in of the Gentiles, and therein the Lord will be well pleased. *He will magnify the law* (divine revelation in all the parts of it) *and will make it honourable.* The law is truly honourable, and the things of it are great things ; and, if men will not magnify it by their obedience to it, God will magnify it himself by punishing them for their disobedience. He will magnify the law by accomplishing what is written in it, will magnify its authority, its efficacy, its equity. He will do it at last, when all men shall be judged by the law of liberty, James ii. 12. He is doing it every day. What is it that God is doing in the world, but magnifying the law and making it honourable ?

IV The calamities God will bring upon

the Jewish nation for their wilful blindness and deafness, *v. 22.* They are *robbed and spoiled.* Those that were impenitent and unreformed in Babylon were sentenced to perpetual captivity. It was for their sins that they were spoiled of all their possessions, not only in their own land, but in the land of their enemies. They were some of them *snared in holes*, and others *hidden in prison-houses.* They cannot help themselves, for they are snared. Their friends cannot help them, for they are hidden; and their enemies have forgotten them in their prisons. They, and all they have, are for a prey and for a spoil; and there is none that delivers either by force or ransom, nor any that dares say to the proud oppressors, *Restore.* There they lie, and there they are likely to lie. This had its full accomplishment in the final destruction of the Jewish nation by the Romans, which God brought upon them for rejecting the gospel of Christ.

V. The counsel given them in order to their relief; for, though their case be sad, it is not desperate.

1. The generality of them are deaf; they will not hearken to the voice of God's word. He will therefore try his rod, and see *who among them will give ear to that, v. 23.* We must not despair concerning those who have been long reasoned with in vain; some of them may, at length, give ear and hearken. If one method do not take effect, another may, and sinners shall be left inexcusable. Observe, (1.) We may all of us, if we will, hear the voice of God, and we are called and invited to hear it. (2.) It is worth while to enquire who they are that perceive God speaking to them and are willing to hear him. (3.) Of the many that hear the voice of God there are very few that hearken to it or heed it, that hear it with attention and application. (4.) In hearing the word we must have an eye to the time to come. We must hear for hereafter, for what may occur between us and the grave; we must especially hear for eternity. We must hear the word with another world in our eye.

2. The counsel is, (1.) To acknowledge the hand of God in their afflictions, and, whoever were the instruments, to have an eye to him as the principal agent (*v. 24*): "*Who gave Jacob and Israel, that people that used to have such an interest in heaven and such a dominion on earth, who gave them for a spoil to the robbers, as they are now to the Babylonians and to the Romans? Did not the Lord?*" You know he did; consider it then, and hear his voice in these judgments." (2.) To acknowledge that they had provoked God thus to abandon them, and had brought all these calamities upon themselves. [1.] These punishments were first inflicted on them for their disobedience to the laws of God: It is he *against whom we have sinned*; the prophet puts himself into the number of the sinners, as Dan. ix.

7, 8. "*We have sinned*; we have all brought fuel to the fire; and there are those among us that have wilfully refused to walk in his ways. Jacob and Israel would never have been given up to the robbers if they had not by their iniquities sold themselves. Therefore it is, because they have violated the commands of the law, that God has brought upon them the curses of the law; he has not dropped, but poured upon him the fury of his anger and the strength of battle, all the desolations of war, which have set him on fire round about; for God surrounds the wicked with his judgments, as he does the righteous with his favours. See the power of God's anger; there is no resisting it, no escaping it. See the mischief that sin makes; it provokes God to anger against a people, and so kindles a universal conflagration, sets all on fire. [2.] These judgments were continued upon them for their senselessness and incorrigibility under the rod of God. The fire of God's wrath kindled upon him, and he knew it not, was not aware of it, took no notice of the judgments, at least not of the hand of God in them. Nay, it burned him, and, though he could not then but know it and feel it, yet he laid it not to heart, was not awakened by the fiery rebukes he was under nor at all affected with them. Those who are not humbled by less judgments must expect greater; for when God judges he will overcome.

CHAP. XLIII.

The contents of this chapter are much the same with those of the foregoing chapter, looking at the release of the Jews out of their captivity, but looking through that, and beyond that, to the great work of man's redemption by Jesus Christ, and the grace of the gospel, which through him believers partake of. Here are, I. Precious promises made to God's people in their affliction, of his presence with them, for their support under it, and their deliverance out of it, *ver. 1-7.* II. A challenge to idols to vie with the omniscience and omnipotence of God, *ver. 8-13.* III. Encouragement given to the people of God to hope for their deliverance out of Babylon, from the consideration of what God did for their fathers when he brought them out of Egypt, *ver. 14-21.* IV. A method taken to prepare the people for their deliverance, by putting them in mind of their sins, by which they had provoked God to send them into captivity and continue them there, that they might repent and seek to God for pardoning mercy, *ver. 22-28.*

BUT now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. 2 When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. 3 For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy one of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. 4 Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I

have loved thee : therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. 5 Fear not: for I *am* with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; 6 I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; 7 *Even* every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.

This chapter has a plain connexion with the close of the foregoing chapter, but a very surprising one. It was there said that Jacob and Israel would not walk in God's ways, and that when he corrected them for their disobedience they were stubborn and laid it not to heart; and now one would think it should have followed that God would utterly abandon and destroy them; but no, the next words are, *But now, fear not, O Jacob! O Israel! I have redeemed thee, and thou art mine.* Though many among them were untractable and incorrigible, yet God would continue his love and care for his people, and the body of that nation should still be reserved for mercy. God's goodness takes occasion from man's badness to appear so much the more illustrious. *Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound* (Rom. v. 20), and *mercy rejoices against judgment*, as having prevailed and carried the day, Jam. ii. 13. Now the sun, breaking out thus of a sudden from behind a thick and dark cloud, shines the brighter, and with a pleasing surprise. The expressions of God's favour and good-will to his people here are very high, and speak abundance of comfort to all the spiritual seed of upright Jacob and praying Israel: *to us is this gospel preached as well as unto those that were captives in Babylon*, Heb. iv. 2. Here we have,

I. The grounds of God's care and concern for his people and the interests of his church and kingdom among men. Jacob and Israel, though in a sinful miserable condition, shall be looked after; for, 1. They are God's *workmanship, created by him unto good works*, Eph. ii. 10. He has created them and formed them, not only given them a being, but this being, formed them into a people, constituted their government, and incorporated them by the charter of his covenant. The new creature, wherever it is, is of God's forming, and *he will not forsake the work of his own hands*. 2. They are the people of his purchase: he has redeemed them. Out of the land of Egypt he first redeemed them, and out of many another bondage, *in his love, and in his pity* (ch. lxxiii. 9); much more will he take care of those who are redeemed with the blood of his Son. 3. They are his peculiar people, whom he has distinguished

from others, and set apart for himself: he has called them by name, as those he has a particular intimacy with and concern for, and they are his, are appropriated to him and he has a special interest in them. 4. He is their God in covenant (v. 3): *I am the Lord thy God*, worshipped by thee and engaged by promise to thee, *the Holy One of Israel*, the God of Israel; for the true God is a holy one, and holiness becomes his house. And upon all these accounts he might justly say, *Fear not* (v. 1), and again v. 5, *Fear not*. Those that have God for them need not fear who or what can be against them.

II. The former instances of this care. 1. God had purchased them dearly: *I gave Egypt for thy ransom*; for Egypt was quite laid waste by one plague after another, all their first-born were slain and all their men of war drowned; and all this to force a way for Israel's deliverance from them. Egypt shall be sacrificed rather than Israel shall continue in slavery, when the time has come for their release. The Ethiopians had invaded them in Asa's time; but they shall be destroyed rather than Israel shall be disturbed. And if this was reckoned so great a thing, to give Egypt for their ransom, what reason have we to admire God's love to us in giving his own Son to be a *ransom for us*? 1 John iv. 10. What are Ethiopia and Seba, all their lives and all their treasures, compared with the blood of Christ? 2. He had prized them accordingly, and they were very dear to him (v. 4): *Since thou hast been precious in my sight thou hast been honourable*. Note. True believers are precious in God's sight: they are his jewels, his peculiar treasure (Exod. xix. 5); he loves them, his delight is in them, above any people. His church is his vineyard. And this makes God's people truly honourable, and their name great; for men are really what they are in God's eye. When the forces of Sennacherib, that they might be diverted from falling upon Israel, were directed by Providence to fall upon Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba, then God gave those countries for Israel, and showed how precious his people were in his sight. So some understand it.

III. The further instances God would give them of his care and kindness. 1. He would be present with them in their greatest difficulties and dangers (v. 2): *"When thou passest through the waters and the rivers, through the fire and the flame, I will be with thee, and that shall be thy security; when dangers are very imminent and threatening, thou shalt be delivered out of them."* Did they, in their journey, pass through deep waters? They should not perish in them: *"The rivers shall not overflow thee"*. Should they by their persecutors be cast into a fiery furnace, for their constant adherence to their God, yet then the flame should not kindle upon them, which was fulfilled in the letter in the wonderful

preservation of the three children, Dan. iii. though they went through fire and water, which would be to them as the *valley of the shadow of death*, yet, while they had God with them, they need fear no evil, they should be borne up, and brought out into a *wealthy place*, Ps. lxxvi. 12. 2. He would still, when there was occasion, make all the interests of the children of men give way to be interests of his own children: "*I will give men for thee, great men, mighty men, and men of war, and people (men by wholesale) for thy life.*" Nations shall be sacrificed to thy welfare." All shall be cut off rather than God's Israel shall, so precious are they in his sight. The affairs of the world shall all be ordered and directed so as to be most for the good of the church, 2 Chron. xvi. 9. 3. Those of them that were scattered and dispersed in other nations should all be gathered in and share in the blessings of the public, v. 5—7. Some of the seed of Israel were dispersed into all countries, east, west, north, and south, or into all the parts of the country of Babylon; but those whose spirits God stirred up to go to Jerusalem should be fetched in from all parts; divine grace should reach those that lay most remote, and at the greatest distance from each other; and, when the time should come, nothing should prevent their coming together to return in a body, in answer to that prayer (Ps. cvi. 47), *Gather us from among the heathen*, and in performance of that promise (Deut. xxx. 4), *If any of thine be driven to the utmost parts of heaven, thence will the Lord thy God gather thee*, which we find pleaded on behalf of the children of the captivity, Neh. i. 9. But who are the seed of Israel that shall be thus carefully gathered in? He tells us (v. 7) they are such as God has marked for mercy; for, (1.) They are called by his name; they make profession of religion, and are distinguished from the rest of the world by their covenant-relation to God and denomination from him. (2.) They are created for his glory; the spirit of Israelites is created in them, and they are formed according to the will of God, and these shall be gathered in. Note, Those only are fit to be called by the name of God that are created by his grace for his glory; and those whom God has created and called shall be gathered in now to Christ as their head and hereafter to heaven as their home. *He shall gather in his elect from the four winds.* This promise points at the gathering in of the dispersed of the Gentiles, and the strangers scattered, by the gospel of Christ, who died to gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad; for the promise was to all that were afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call and create. God is with the church, and therefore let her not fear; none that belong to her shall be lost.

8 Bring forth the blind people that

have eyes, and the deaf that have ears. 9 Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and show us former things? Let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, *It is truth.* 10 Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. 11 I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour. 12 I have declared, and have saved, and I have showed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I am God. 13 Yea, before the day was, I am he; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall let it?

God here challenges the worshippers of idols to produce such proofs of the divinity of their false gods as even this very instance (to go no further) of the redemption of the Jews out of Babylon furnished the people of Israel with, to prove that their God is the true and living God, and he only.

I. The patrons of idolatry are here called to appear, and say what they have to say in defence of their idols, v. 8, 9. Their gods have eyes and see not, ears and hear not, and those that make them and trust in them are like unto them; so David had said (Ps. cxv. 9), to which the prophet seems here to refer when he calls idolaters *blind people that have eyes, and deaf people that have ears*. They have the shape, capacities, and faculties, of men; but they are, in effect, destitute of reason and common sense, or they would never worship gods of their own making. "*Let all the nations therefore be gathered together*, let them help one another, and with a combined force plead the cause of their dunghill gods; and, if they have nothing to say in their own justification, let them hear what the God of Israel has to say for their conviction and confutation."

II. God's witnesses are subpoenaed, or summoned to appear, and give in evidence for him (v. 10): "*You, O Israelites! all you that are called by my name, you are all my witnesses, and so is my servant whom I have chosen.*" It was Christ himself that was so described (ch. xlii. 1), *My servant and my elect*. Observe,

1. All the prophets that testified to Christ. and Christ himself, the great prophet, are here appealed to as God's witnesses. (1.)

God's people are witnesses for him, and can attest, upon their own knowledge and experience, concerning the power of his grace, the sweetness of his comforts, the tenderness of his providence, and the truth of his promise. They will be forward to witness for him that he is gracious and that no word of his has fallen to the ground. (2.) His prophets are in a particular manner witnesses for him, with whom his secret is, and who know more of him than others do. But the Messiah especially is given to be a witness for him to the people; having lain in his bosom from eternity, he has declared him. Now,

2. Let us see what the point is which these witnesses are called to prove (v. 12): *You are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God.* Note, Those who do themselves acknowledge that the Lord is God should be ready to testify what they know of him to others, that they also may be brought to the acknowledgment of it. *I believed, therefore have I spoken.* Particularly, "Since you cannot but know, and believe, and understand, you must be ready to bear record, (1.) That I am he, the only true God, that I am a being self-existent and self-sufficient; I am he whom you are to fear, and worship, and trust in. Nay (v. 13), *before the day was* (before the first day of time, before the creation of the light, and, consequently, from eternity) *I am he.*" The idols were but of yesterday, *new gods that came newly up* (Deut. xxxii. 17); but the God of Israel was from everlasting. (2.) That *there was no God formed before me, nor shall be after me.* The idols were gods formed (*dei facti*—made gods, or rather *fictitii*—fictitious); by nature they were no gods, Gal. iv. 8. But God had a being from eternity, yea, and a religion in this world before there were either idols or idolaters (truth is more ancient than error); and he will have a being to eternity, and will be worshipped and glorified when idols are famished and abolished and idolatry shall be no more. True religion will keep its ground, and survive all opposition and competition. *Great is the truth, and will prevail.* (3.) That *I, even I, am the Lord, the great Jehovah, who is, and was, and is to come; and besides me there is no Saviour,* v. 11. See what it is that the great God glories in, not so much that he is the only ruler as that he is the only Saviour; for he *delights to do good*: he is the *Saviour of all men*, 1 Tim. iv. 10.

3. Let us see what the proofs are which are produced for the confirmation of this point. It appears,

(1.) That the Lord is God, by two proofs. [1.] He has an infinite and infallible knowledge, as is evident from the predictions of his word (v. 12): *I have declared and I have shown* that which has without fail come to pass; nay, I never declared nor showed any thing but it has been accomplished. *I showed*

when there was no strange god among you that is, when you pretended not to consult any oracles but mine, nor to have any prophets but mine." It is said, when they came out of Egypt, that *the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him* [2.] He has an infinite and irresistible power as is evident from the performances of his providence. He pleads not only, *I have shown*, but, *I have saved*, not only foretold what none else could foresee, but done what none else could do; for (v. 13), "*None can deliver out of my hand those whom I will punish; not only no man can, but none of all the gods of the heathen can protect.*" It is therefore a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, because there is no getting out of them again. "I will work what I have designed, both in mercy and judgment, and who shall either oppose or retard it?"

(2.) That the gods of the heathen, who are rivals with him, are not only inferior to him, but no gods at all, which is proved (v. 9) by a challenge: *Who among them can declare this that I now declare? Who can foretell things to come? Nay, which of them can show us former things? ch. xli. 22* They cannot so much as inspire an historian much less a prophet. They are challenged to join issue upon this: *Let them bring forth their witnesses*, to prove their omniscience and omnipotence. And, [1.] If they do prove them, they shall be justified, the idols in demanding homage and the idolaters in paying it. [2.] If they do not prove them, let them say, *It is truth*; let them own the true God, and receive the truth concerning him, that he is God alone. The cause of God is not afraid to stand a fair trial; but it may reasonably be expected that those who cannot justify themselves in their idolatry should submit to the power of the truth and true religion.

14 Thus saith the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; For your sake I have sent to Babylon nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships. 15 I am the LORD, your Holy One, the creator of Israel, your King. 16 Thus saith the LORD, which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters; 17 Which bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power; they shall lie down together, they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched as tow. 18 Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. 19 Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth;

shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. 20 The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen. 21 This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise.

To so low an ebb were the faith and hope of God's people in Babylon brought that here needed line upon line to assure them that they should be released out of their captivity; and therefore, that they might have strong consolation, the assurances of it are often repeated, and here very expressly and encouragingly.

I. God here takes to himself such titles of his honour as were very encouraging to them. He is *the Lord their Redeemer*, not only he will redeem them, but will take it upon him as his office and make it his business to do so: If he be their God, he will be all that to them which they need, and therefore, when they are in bondage, he will be their Redeemer. He is *the Holy One of Israel* (c. 14), and again (v. 15), *their Holy One*, and therefore will make good every word he has spoken to them. He is *the Creator of Israel*, that made them a people out of nothing (for that is creation), nay, worse than nothing; and he is their *King*, that owns them as his people and presides among them.

II. He assures them he will find out a way to break the power of their oppressors that held them captives and filled up the measure of their own iniquity by their resolution never to let them go, *ch. xiv. 17*. God will take care to send a victorious prince and army to Babylon, that shall *bring down all their nobles*, and lay their honour in the dust, and all their people too, *even the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships* (for seamen are apt to be noisy), or whose cry is *to the ships*, as their refuge when the city is taken, that they may escape by the benefit of their great river. Note, The destruction of Babylon must make way for the enlargement of God's people. And in the prediction of the fall of the New-Testament Babylon we meet with the cries and lamentations of the sailors, *Rev. xviii. 17, 18*. And observe, It is for Israel's sake that Babylon is ruined, to make way for their deliverance.

III. He reminds them of the great things he did for their fathers when he brought them out of the land of Egypt; for so it may be read (v. 16, 17): "*Thus saith the Lord, who did make a way in the sea, the Red Sea, and did bring forth Pharaoh's chariot and horse, that they might lie down together in the bottom of the sea, and never rise but be extinct. He that did this can,*

if he please, make a way for you in the sea when you return out of Babylon, and will do so rather than leave you there." Note, For the encouragement of our faith and hope, it is good for us often to remember what God has done formerly for his people against his and their enemies. Think particularly what he did at the Red Sea, how he made it, 1. A road to his people, a straight way, a near way, nay, a refuge to them, into which they fled and were safe, the waters being a wall unto them. 2. A grave to his enemies. The chariot and horse were drawn out by him who is Lord of all hosts, on purpose that they might fall together; howbeit, *they meant not so*, *Mic. iv. 11, 12*.

IV. He promises to do yet greater things for them than he had done in the days of old; so that they should not have reason to ask, in a way of complaint, as Gideon did, *Where are all the wonders that our fathers told us of?* for they should see them repeated, nay, they should see them outdone (v. 18): "*Remember not the former things*, from them to take occasion, as some do, to undervalue the present things, as if the *former days were better than these*; no, you may, if you will, comparatively forget them, and yet know enough by the events of your own day to convince you that the Lord is God alone; for, *behold, the Lord will do a new thing*, no way inferior, both for the wonder and the worth of the mercy, to the things of old." The best exposition of this is, *Jer. xvi. 14, 15; xxiii. 7, 8. It shall no more be said, The Lord liveth that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt*; that is an old thing, the remembrance of which will be in a manner lost in the new thing, in the new proof that the Lord liveth, for he brought up the children of Israel out of the land of the north. Though former mercies must not be forgotten, fresh mercies must in a special manner be improved. *Now it springs forth*, as it were a surprise upon you; you are like those that dream. *Shall you not know it?* And will you not own God's hand in it?

V. He promises not only to deliver them out of Babylon, but to conduct them safely and comfortably to their own land (v. 19, 20): *I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert*; for, it seems, the way from Babylon to Canaan, as well as from Egypt, lay through a desert land, which, while the returning captives passed through, God would provide for them, that their camp should be both well victualled and under a good conduct. The same power that made a way in the sea (v. 16) can make a way in the wilderness, and will force its passage through the greatest difficulties. And he that made dry land in the waters can produce waters in the driest land, in such abundance as not only to give drink to his people, his chosen, but to the beasts of the field, also the dragons and the ostriches, who

are therefore said to honour God for it; it is such a sensible refreshment, and yields them so much satisfaction, that, if they were capable of doing it, they would praise God for it, and shame man, who is made capable of praising his benefactor and does not. Now, 1. This looks back to what God did for Israel when he led them through the wilderness from Egypt to Canaan, and fetched water out of a rock to follow them; what God did for them formerly he would do again, for he is still the same. And, though we do not find that the miracle was repeated in their return out of Babylon, yet the mercy was, in the common course of Providence, for which it became them to be no less thankful to God. 2. It looks forward, not only to all the instances of God's care of the Jewish church in the latter ages of it, between their return from Babylon and the coming of Christ, but to the grace of the gospel, especially as it is manifested to the Gentile world, by which a way is opened in the wilderness and rivers in the desert; the world, which lay like a desert, in ignorance and unfruitfulness, was blessed with divine direction and divine comforts, and, in order to both, with a plentiful effusion of the Spirit. The sinners of the Gentiles, who had been as the beasts of the field, running wild, fierce as the dragons, stupid as the owls or ostriches, shall be brought to honour God for the extent of his grace to his chosen among them.

VI. He traces up all these promised blessings to their great original, the purposes and designs of his own glory (v. 21): *This people have I formed for myself*, and therefore I do all this for them, that they may show forth my praise. Note, 1. The church is of God's forming, and so are all the living members of it. The new heavens, the new earth, the new man, are the work of God's hand, and are no more, no better, than he makes them; they are fashioned according to his will. 2. He forms it for himself. He that is the first cause is the highest end both of the first and of the new creation. *The Lord has made all things for himself*, his Israel especially, to be to him for a people, and for a name, and for a praise; and no otherwise can they be for him, or serviceable to him, than as his grace is glorified in them, Jer. xiii. 11; Eph. i. 6, 12, 14. 3. It is therefore our duty to show forth his praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to his service. As he formed us, so he feeds us, and keeps us, and leads us, and all for himself; for every instance therefore of his goodness we must praise him, else we answer not the end of the beings and blessings we have.

22 But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. 23 Thou hast not brought me the small cattle

of thy burnt-offerings; neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifice. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense. 24 Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but thou hast made me serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. 25 I, *and I, am* he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. 26 Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified. 27 Thy first father hath sinned, and thy teachers have transgressed against me. 28 Therefore have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.

This charge (and a high charge it is which is here exhibited against Jacob and Israel God's professing people) comes in here, To clear God's justice in bringing them into captivity, and to vindicate that. Were they not in covenant with him? Had they not his sanctuary among them? *Why then doth the Lord deal thus with his land?* Deut. xxix. 24. Here is a good reason given why they had neglected God and had cast him off, and therefore he justly rejected them and gave them to the curse (v. 28); and they must be brought to own this before they are prepared for deliverance; and they did so Dan. ix. 5; Neh. ix. 33. 2. To advance God's mercy in their deliverance and make that appear more glorious. Many things are before observed to magnify the power of God in it; but this magnifies his goodness, that he should do such great and kind things for a people that had been so very provoking to him and were now suffering the just punishment of their iniquity. The pardoning of their sin was as great an instance of God's power (for so Moses reckons it, Num. xiv. 17, &c.) as the breaking of the yoke of their captivity. Now observe here,

I. What the sins are which they are here charged with.

1. Omissions of the good which God had commanded; and this part of the charge here much insisted upon. Observe how it comes in with a *but*; compare v. 21, where God tells them what favours he had bestowed upon them and what his just expectations were from them. He had formed them for himself, intending they should show forth his praise. But they had not done so; they had frustrated God's expectations from them and made very ill returns to him for his

ours. For, (1.) They had cast off prayer: *Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob!* Jacob is a man famous for prayer (Hosea xii. 4); the seed bore his name, but did not tread in his steps, and therefore are justly upbraided with it. God takes it ill when children degenerate from the virtue and devotion of their ancestors. To boast of the name of Jacob, and yet live without prayer, is to mock God and deceive ourselves. If Jacob does not call upon God, who will? (2.) They had grown weary of their religion: "Thou art Israel, the seed not only of a praying but of a prevailing father, that was a prince with God; and yet, not valuing his experiences any more than his example, *thou hast been weary of me.*" They had been in relation to God, employed in his service and in communion with him; but they began to snuff it, and to say, *Behold, what a weariness is this!* Note, Those who neglect to call upon God do in effect tell him they are weary of him and have a mind to change their Master.

(3.) They grudged the expense of their devotion, and were niggardly and penurious in their service. They were for a cheap religion; and in those acts of devotion that were costly they desired to be excused. They had not brought, as God required, not their small cattle, the lambs and the kids, which God required for burnt-offerings (Lev. 23), much less did they bring their greater cattle, pretending they could not spare them, they must have them for the maintenance of their families. So little did they have of the greatness of God and their obligations to him that they could not add in their hearts to part with a lamb out of their flock for his honour, though he called for it and would graciously have accepted of it. *Sweet cane, or calamus*, was used for the holy oil, incense, and perfume; but they were not willing to be at the charge of that.

(4.) What they had must serve, though it was old and good for nothing; they could not buy fresh. Perhaps it was usual for devout pious persons to bring free-will offerings as well as other free-will offerings; but they were not so generous, nor did they fill the altar of God, nor moisten it abundantly, as they should have done, *with the oil of their sacrifices*; what sacrifices they did bring were of the lean and refuse of their cattle, that had no fat in them to regale the altar with. (5.) What sacrifices they did offer they did not honour God with them, and so they were, in effect, as no sacrifices (Lev. 23): *Neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices.* Some of them offered their sacrifices to false gods; others, who offered them to the true God, were either careless in the manner of offering them or hypocritical in their intentions, so that they might be truly said not to honour God with them, but rather to dishonour him. (6.) That which aggravated their neglect of sacrificing was that, as God had appointed it, it was so burdensome a thing; it was not a service

that they had any reason at all to complain of: *"I have not caused thee to serve with an offering; I have not made it a task and drudgery to you, whatever you, through the corruption of your natures, have made it yourselves. I have not wearied thee with incense."* None of God's commandments are grievous, no, not those concerning sacrifice and incense. They were not more costly than might be afforded by those that lived in such a plentiful country, nor did their attendance on them require any more time than they could well spare. But that which especially forbade them to call it a wearisome service was that they were required to be cheerful and pleasant, and to rejoice before God in all their approaches to him, Deut. xii. 12. They had many feasts and good days, but only one day in all the year in which they were to afflict their souls. The ordinances of the ceremonial law, though, in comparison with Christ's easy yoke, they are spoken of as heavy (Acts xv. 10), yet, in comparison with the service that idolaters did to their false gods, they were light, and not to be called services nor found fault with as wearisome. God did not require them to sacrifice their children, as Moloch did.

2. Commissions of the evil which God had forbidden; and omissions commonly make way for commissions: *Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins.* When we make God's gifts the food and fuel of our lusts, and his providence the patron of our wicked projects, especially when we encourage ourselves to continue in sin because grace has abounded, then we make God to serve with our sins. Or it may denote what a grief and burden sin is to God; it not only wearies men and makes the creation groan, but it *wearies my God also* (ch. vii. 13) and makes the Creator complain that he is *grieved* (Ps. xcvi. 10), that he is *broken* (Ezek. vi. 9), that he is pressed with sinners *as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves* (Amos ii. 13), and to cry out, *Ah! I will ease me of my adversaries*, ch. i. 24. The antithesis is observable: God had not made them to serve with their sacrifices, but they had made him to serve with their sins. The master had not tired the servants with his commands, but they had tired him with their disobedience. Those are wicked servants indeed that behave so ill to so good a Master. God is tender of our comfort, but we are careless of his honour. Let this engage us to keep close to our duty, that it is easy and reasonable, and no disparagement to us, nor too hard for us.

II. What were the aggravations of their sin, v. 27. 1. That they were children of disobedience; for their *first father* (that is, their forefathers) *had sinned*; and they had not only sinned in their loins, but sinned like them. Ezra confesses this: *Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great*

trespass, ch. ix. 7. But their forefathers are called their *first father* to put us in mind of the apostasy and rebellion of our first father Adam, to which corrupt fountain we must trace up the streams of all our transgressions. 2. That they were scholars of disobedience too; for *their teachers had transgressed against God*, were guilty of gross scandalous sins, and the people, no doubt, would learn to do as they did. It is ill with a people when their leaders cause them to err, and their teachers, who should reform them, corrupt them.

III. What were the tokens of God's displeasure against them for their sins, v. 23. He brought ruin both upon church and state. 1. The honour of their church was laid in the dust and trampled on: *I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary*, that is, the priests and Levites who presided with great dignity and power in the temple-service; they profaned themselves, and made themselves vile, by their enormities, and then God profaned them and made them vile, by their calamities and the contempt they fell into, Mal. ii. 9. 2. The honour of their state was ruined likewise: "*I have given Jacob to the curse*, that is, to be cursed, and hated, and abused by all their neighbours, *and Israel to reproach*, to be insulted, ridiculed, and triumphed over by their enemies." They reproached them perhaps for that in them that was good; they *mocked at their sabbaths* (Lam. i. 7); but God gave them up to reproach, to correct them for what was amiss. Note, The dishonour which men at any time do us should humble us for the dishonour we have done to God; and we must bear it patiently because we suffer it justly, and must acknowledge that to us belongs confusion.

IV. What were the riches of God's mercy towards them notwithstanding (v. 25): *I, even I, am he who notwithstanding all this blotteth out thy transgressions*.

1. This gracious declaration of God's readiness to pardon sin comes in very strangely. The charge ran very high: *Thou hast wearied me with thy iniquities, v. 24.* Now one would think it should follow: "*I, even I, am he that will destroy thee, and burden myself no longer with care about thee.*" No, *I, even I, am he that will forgive thee*; as if the great God would teach us that forgiving injuries is the best way to make ourselves easy and to keep ourselves from being wearied with them. This comes in here to encourage them to repent, because there is forgiveness with God, and to show the freeness of divine mercy; where sin has been exceedingly sinful grace appears exceedingly gracious. Apply this, (1.) To the forgiving of the sins of Israel as a people, in their national capacity. When God stopped the course of threatening judgments, and saved them from utter ruin, even then when he had them under severe rebukes.

then he might be said to *blot out their transgressions*. Though he corrected them, was reconciled to them again, and did not cut them off from being a people. This did many a time, till they rejected Christ and his gospel, which was a sin against remedy, and then he would forgive them no more as a nation, but utterly destroy them. (2.) To the forgiving of the sins of every particular believing penitent—*transgressions and sins*, infirmities though ever so numerous, backslidings though ever so heinous. Observe here, [1.] How the pardon is expressed; he will *blot them out*, as cloud is blotted out by the beams of the sun (ch. xlv. 22), as a debt is blotted out not appear against the debtor (the book is crossed as if the debt were paid, because it is paid upon the payment which the surety has made), or as a sentence is blotted out when it is reversed, as the curse was blotted out with the waters of jealousy, which made it of no effect to the innocent, Num. v. 2. He will not remember the sin, which intimates not only that he will remit the punishment of what is past, but that it shall be no diminution to his love for the future. When God forgives he forgets. [2.] What is the ground and reason of the pardon. It is not for the sake of any thing in us, but for his own sake, for his mercies'-sake, his promise-sake, and especially for his Son's sake, and that he may himself be glorified in it. [3.] How God glories in it: *I, even I, am he*. He glories in it as his prerogative. None can forgive sin but God only, and he will do it; it is his settled resolution. It is his pleasure; it is his honour; so he is pleased to reckon it.

2. Those words (v. 26), *Put me in remembrance*, may be understood either (1.) As a rebuke to a proud Pharisee, that stands upon his own justification before God, and expects to find favour for his merits and not to be beholden to free grace: "If you have any thing to say in your own justification, any thing to offer for the sake of which you should be pardoned, and not for my sake, put me in remembrance of it. I will give you leave to plead your own cause with me; declare what your merits are, that you may be justified by them:" but those who are thus challenged will be speechless. Or, (2.) As direction and encouragement to a penitent publican. Is God thus ready to pardon sin, and when he pardons it, will he remember it no more? Let us then put him in remembrance, mention before him those sins which he has forgiven; for they must be ever before us, to humble us, though they are pardoned, Ps. li. 3. Put him in remembrance of the promises he has made to penitents, and the satisfaction his Son has made for them. Plead these with him in wrestling for pardon, and declare these things, in order that thou mayest be justified freely by him.

ice. 'This is the only way, and it is a sure y. to peace. *Only acknowledge thy transgression.*

CHAP. XLIV.

by the prophet, goes on in this chapter, as before, I. To encourage his people with the assurance of great blessings he had in store for them at their return out of captivity, and those typical much greater which the gospel church, his spiritual Israel, could partake of in the days of the Messiah; and hereby he proves himself to be God alone against all pretenders, ver. 1-3. II. To show the sottishness and amusing folly of idol-makers and idol-worshippers, ver. 9-20. III. To ratify and confirm the assurances he had given to his people of those great blessings, and to let them joyful and believing expectations of them, ver. 21-28.

YET now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: 2 Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jerusalem, whom I have chosen. 3 For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: 4 And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses. 5 One shall say, I am the LORD's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel. 6 Thus saith the LORD the Redeemer of Israel, and his Redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. 7 And who, as I, shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? And the things that are coming, and shall come, let them now unto them. 8 Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared? Ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? Yea, there is no God; I know not any.

Two great truths are abundantly made out in these verses:—

I. That the people of God are a happy people, especially upon account of the covenant that is between them and God. The people of Israel were so as a figure of the gospel Israel. Three things complete their happiness:—

1. The covenant-relations wherein they stand to God, *v. 1*. 2. Israel is here called *Eschurun—the upright one*; for those only, like Nathanael, are Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile, and those only shall have

the everlasting benefit of these promises. Jacob and Israel had been represented, in the close of the foregoing chapter, as very provoking and obnoxious to God's wrath, and already given to the curse and to reproaches; but, as if God's bowels yearned towards him and his repentings were kindled together, mercy steps in with a *non-obstante—notwithstanding*, to all these quarrels: "*Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant! thou and I will be friends again for all this.*" God had said (*ch. xliii. 25*), *I am he that bloteth out thy transgression*, which is the only thing that creates this distance; and when that is taken away the streams of mercy run again in their former channel. The pardon of sin is the inlet of all the other blessings of the covenant. So and so I will do for them, says God (*Heb. viii. 12*), *for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness*. Therefore hear, O Jacob! hear these comfortable words; therefore *fear not, O Jacob!* fear not thy sins, for they are pardoned; fear not thy troubles, for by the pardon of sin the property of them too is altered. Now the relations wherein they stand to him are very encouraging. (1.) They are his *servants*; and those that serve him he will own and stand by and see that they be not wronged. (2.) They are his *chosen*, and he will abide by his choice; he knows those that are his, and those whom he has chosen he takes under special protection. (3.) They are his creatures. He *made them*, and brought them into being; he *formed them*, and cast them into shape; he began betimes with them, for he *formed them from the womb*; and therefore he will help them over their difficulties and help them in their services.

2. The covenant-blessings which he has secured to them and theirs, *v. 3, 4*. (1.) Those that are sensible of their spiritual wants, and the insufficiency of the creature to supply them, shall have abundant satisfaction in God: *I will pour water upon him that is thirsty*, that thirsts after righteousness; he shall be filled. Water shall be poured out to those who truly desire spiritual blessings above all the delights of sense. (2.) Those that are barren as the dry ground shall be watered with the grace of God, with floods of that grace, and God will himself give the increase. If the ground be ever so dry, God has floods of grace to water it with. (3.) The water God will pour out is his *Spirit* (*John vii. 39*), which God will pour out without measure upon the seed, that is, Christ (*Gal. iii. 16*), and by measure upon all the seed of the faithful, upon all the praying wrestling seed of Jacob, *Luke xi. 13*. This is the great New-Testament promise, that God, having sent his servant Christ, and upheld him, will send his Spirit to uphold us. (4.) This gift of the Holy Ghost is the great blessing God had reserved the plentiful effusion of for the latter days: *I will pour my Spirit*, that is,

my blessing; for where God gives his Spirit he will give all other blessings. (5.) This is reserved for the seed and offspring of the church; for so the covenant of grace runs: *I will be a God to thee and to thy seed.* To all who are thus made to partake of the privileges of adoption God will give the spirit of adoption. (6.) Hereby there shall be a great increase of the church. Thus it shall be spread to distant places. Thus it shall be propagated and perpetuated to after-times: *They shall spring up and grow as fast as willows by the watercourses, and in every thing that is virtuous and praiseworthy shall be eminent and excel all about them, as the willows overtop the grass among which they grow, v. 4.* Note, It is a great happiness to the church, and a great pleasure to good men, to see the rising generation hopeful and promising. And it will be so if God pour his Spirit upon them, that blessing, that blessing of blessings.

3. The consent they cheerfully give to their part of the covenant, v. 5. When the Jews returned out of captivity they renewed their covenant with God (Jer. i. 5), particularly that they would have no more to do with idols, Hos. xiv. 2, 3, 8. Backsliders must thus repent and do their first works. Many of those that were without did at that time join themselves to them, invited by that glorious appearance of God for them, Zech. viii. 23; Esth. viii. 17. And they say, *We are the Lord's and call themselves by the name of Jacob*; for there was one law, one covenant, *for the stranger and for those that were born in the land.* And doubtless it looks further yet, to the conversion of the Gentiles, and the multitudes of them who, upon the effusion of the Spirit, after Christ's ascension, should be *joined to the Lord and added to the church.* These converts are *one and another*, very many, of different ranks and nations, and all welcome to God, Col. iii. 11. When one does it another shall by his example be invited to do it, and then another; thus the zeal of one may provoke many. (1.) They shall resign themselves to God: not one in the name of the rest, but every one for himself shall say, *"I am the Lord's"*; he has an incontestable right to rule me, and I submit to him, to all his commands, to all his disposals. I am, and will be, his only, his wholly, his for ever, will be for his interests, will be for his praise; living and dying I will be his." (2.) They shall incorporate themselves with the people of God, *call themselves by the name of Jacob*, forgetting their own people and their fathers' house, and desirous to wear the character and livery of God's family. They shall love all God's people, shall associate with them, give them the right hand of fellowship, espouse their cause, seek the good of the church in general and of all the particular members of it, and be willing to take their lot with them in all conditions (3.) They

shall do this very solemnly. Some of them shall *subscribe with their hand unto the Lord*, as for the confirming of a bargain, as he sets his hand to it, and delivers it as his and deed. The more express we are in covenanting with God the better, Exod. xx. 7; Josh. xxiv. 26, 27; Neh. ix. 38. *Find, bind, fast find.*

II. That, as the Israel of God are a holy people, so the God of Israel is a great God and he is God alone. This also, as the former, speaks abundant satisfaction to all that trust in him, v. 6—8. Observe here, God's glory and our comfort, 1. That the God we trust in is a God of incontestable sovereignty and irresistible power. He is *the Lord, Jehovah*, self-existent and self-sufficient; and he is *the Lord of hosts*, of the hosts of heaven and earth, of angels and men. 2. That he stands in relation to, and has a particular concern for, his church. He is *the King of Israel and his Redeemer*, therefore his Redeemer because his King, and those that take God for their King shall have him for their Redeemer. When God would assert himself God alone he proclaim himself Israel's God, that his people may be encouraged both to adhere to him and triumph in him. 3. That he is eternal—*first and the last.* He is God from everlasting, before the worlds were, and will be to everlasting, when the world shall be no more. If there were not a God to create nothing would ever have been; and, if there were not a God to uphold, all would soon come to nothing again. He is all in all, the first cause, from whom are all things and the last end, to and for whom are all things (Rom. xi. 36), the *Alpha and Omega*, Rev. i. 11. 4. That he is God alone (v. 6): *Besides me there is no God. Is there a God besides me? v. 8.* We will appeal to the greatest scholars. Did they ever in their reading meet with any other? Those that have had the largest acquaintance with the world. Did they ever meet with any other? There are *gods many* (1 Cor. viii. 5, 6), *called gods*, and counterfeit gods: but is there any besides our God that is infinite and eternal, any besides him that is the creator of the world and the protector and benefactor of the whole creation, any besides him that can do that for their worshippers which he can and will do for his? *"Ye are my witnesses. I have been a nonsuch to you. You have tried other gods; have you found any of them all-sufficient to you, any of them like me? Yea, there is no god but I, no rock (so the word is), none besides I, Jehovah that can be a rock for a foundation to build on, a rock for shelter to flee to. God is the rock, and their rock is not as our rock," Deut. xxxii. 4, 31. I know not any; as he had said, "I never met with any that offered to stand in competition with me, that durst bring their pretensions to a trial; if I did know of any that could be*

send you better than I can, I would recommend you to them; but I know not any." There is no God besides Jehovah. He is infinite, and therefore there can be no other; he is all-sufficient, and therefore he needs no other. This is designed for the confirming of the hopes of God's people in the promise of their deliverance out of Babylon, and, in order to that, for the curing of them of their idolatry; when the affliction had done its work it should be removed. They are reminded of the first and great article of their creed, that *the Lord their God is one Lord*, Deut. vi. 4. And therefore, (1.) They needed not to hope in any other god. Those on whom the sun shines need neither moon nor stars, nor the light of their own fire. (2.) They needed not to fear any other god. Their own God was more able to do them good than all the false and counterfeit gods of their enemies were to do them hurt. 5. That none besides could foretell these things to come, which God now by his prophet gave notice of to the world, above 200 years before they came to pass (7): "*Who, as I, shall call, shall call Cyrus to Babylon, shall call Israel out of Babylon? Is there any but God that can do all effectually, and has every creature, every part, at his beck? Who shall declare it, how it shall be, and by whom, as I do?*" Nay, God goes further; he not only sees it in order, as having the foreknowledge of it, *he sets it in order*, as having the sole management and direction of it. Can any other pretend to this? He has always set things in order according to the counsel of his own will, ever since he appointed the ancient people, the people of Israel, who could give a truer and fuller account of the antiquities of their own nation than any other kingdom in the world could give of theirs. Ever since he appointed that people to be his peculiar people his providence was particularly conversant about them, and he told them beforehand the events that should occur respecting them—their bondage in Egypt, their deliverance from it, and their settlement in Canaan. All was set in order in the divine predictions as well as in the divine purposes. Could any other have done so? Would any other have been so concerned for them? He challenges the pretenders to show the things that shall come hereafter: "Let them, if they can, tell us the name of the man that shall destroy Babylon and deliver Israel? Nay, if they cannot pretend to tell us *the things that shall come* hereafter, let them tell us the things that *are coming*, that are nigh at hand and at the door. Let them tell us what shall come to pass to-morrow; but they cannot do that; fear them not therefore, nor be afraid of them. What harm can they do you? What hindrance can they give to your deliverance, when I have told you it shall be accomplished in its season,

and I have solemnly declared it?" Note, Those who have the word of God's promise to depend upon need not be afraid of any adverse powers or policies whatsoever.

9 They that make a graven image *are* all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they *are* their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. 10 Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image that is profitable for nothing? 11 Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed: and the workmen, they *are* of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; *yet* they shall fear, *and* they shall be ashamed together. 12 The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms: yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth: he drinketh no water, and is faint. 13 The carpenter stretcheth out *his* rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house. 14 He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish *it*. 15 Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth *it*, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth *it*; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. 16 He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth *himself*, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: 17 And the residue thereof he marketh a god, *even* his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth *it*, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou *art* my god. 18 They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; *and* their hearts, that they cannot under-

stand. 19 And none considereth in his heart, neither *is there* knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten *it*: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? Shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? 20 He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, *Is there* not a lie in my right hand?

Often before, God, by the prophet, had mentioned the folly and strange sottishness of idolaters; but here he enlarges upon that head, and very fully and particularly exposes them to contempt and ridicule. This discourse is intended, 1. To arm the people of Israel against the strong temptation they would be in to worship idols when they were captives in Babylon, in compliance with the custom of the country (they being far from the city of their own solemnities) and to humour those who were now their lords and masters. 2. To cure them of their inclination to idolatry, which was the sin that did most easily beset them and to reform them from which they were sent into Babylon. As the rod of God is of use to enforce the word, so the word of God is of use to explain the rod, that the voice of both together may be heard and answered. 3. To furnish them with something to say to their Chaldean task-masters. When they insulted over them, when they asked, *Where is your God?* they might hence ask them, *What are your gods?* 4. To take off their fear of the gods of their enemies, and to encourage their hope in their own God that he would certainly appear against those who set up such scandalous competitors as these with him for the throne.

Now here, for the conviction of idolaters, we have,

I. A challenge given to them to clear themselves, if they can, from the imputation of the most shameful folly and senselessness imaginable, *v. 9—11*. They set their wits on work to contrive, and their hands on work to frame, graven images, and they call them *their delectable things*; extremely fond they are of them, and mighty things they expect from them. Note, Through the corruption of men's nature, those things that should be detestable to them are desirable and delectable; but those are far gone in a distemper to whom that which is the food and fuel of it is most agreeable. Now, 1. We tell them that those that do so are all vanity; they deceive themselves and one another, and put a great cheat upon those for whom they make these images. 2. We tell them that *their delectable things shall not profit*

them, nor make them any return for the pleasure they take in them; they can neither supply them with good nor protect them from evil. The *graven images* are *profitable for nothing* at all, nor will they ever do any thing by the devours they pay to them. 3. We appeal to themselves whether it is not a silly sottish thing to expect any good from gods of their own making: *They are their own witnesses*, witnesses against themselves, if they would but give their own consciences leave to deal faithfully with them, that they are blind and ignorant, doing thus. *They see not nor know*, and let them own it, *that they may be ashamed*. If men would but be true to their own convictions, ordinarily we might be sure of their conversion, particularly idolaters; *Who has formed a god?* Who but a man, or one out of his wits, would think forming a god, of making that which, if he make it a god, he must suppose to be his maker? 4. We challenge them to plead their own cause with any confidence or assurance. If any one has the front to say that he has formed a god, when all his fellows come together to declare what each of them has done towards the making of this god, they will all be ashamed of the cheat they have put upon themselves, and laugh in their sleeves at those whom they have imposed upon; for *the workmen that have formed this god are of men*, weak and impotent, and therefore cannot possibly make being that shall be omnipotent, nor can they without blushing pretend to do so. *Let them all be gathered together*, as Demetrius and the craftsmen were, to support their sinking trade; *let them stand up* to plead their own cause, and make the best they can of it with hand joined in hand; *yet they shall be afraid* to undertake it when it comes to setting to, as conscious to themselves of their weakness and badness of their cause, *that they shall be ashamed* of it, not only when they appear singly, but when by appearing together they hope to keep one another's countenance. Note, Idolatry and impiety are things which men may justly both tremble and blush to appear in the defence of.

II. A particular narrative of the whole proceeding in making a god; and the needs no more to expose it than to describe it and tell the story of it.

1. The persons employed about it are handicraft tradesmen, the meanest of the very same that you would employ in making the common utensils of your household, a cart or a plough. You must have a *smith*, a blacksmith, who *with the tongs works in the coals*; and it is hard work, for *he works with the strength of his arms*, till he is hungry and his strength fails, so eager is he, and so hasty are those who set him at work to get it despatched. He cannot allow himself time to eat or drink, *for he drinks no water*, and therefore is faint, *v. 1*

haps it was a piece of superstition among them for the workman not to eat or drink while he was making a god. The plates of which the smith was to cover the image, or whatever iron-work was to be made about it, *he fashioned with hammers*, and made it all very exact, according to the model given him. Then comes the carpenter, and he takes as much care and pains about the timber-work, v. 13. He brings a box of tools, for he has occasion for them all: *He stretches out his rule upon the piece of wood, marks it with a line*, where it is to be saved or cut off; *he fits it, or dresses it, with planes*, the greater first and then the less; *he marks out with the compasses what must be the size and shape of it*; and it is just what he pleases.

2. The form in which it is made is that of a man, a poor, weak, dying creature: it is the noblest form and figure that he is acquainted with, and, being his own, he has a peculiar fondness for it and is willing to put all the reputation he can upon it. He makes it *according to the beauty of a man*, a comely proportion, with those limbs and ornaments that are the beauty of a man, but are altogether unfit to represent the beauty of the Lord. God put a great honour upon man when, in respect of the powers and faculties of his soul, he made him after the image of God; but man does a great dishonour to God when he makes him, in respect of bodily parts and members, after the image of man. Nor will it at all atone for the affront so far to compliment his gods as to take the fairest of the children of men or his original whence to take his copy, and to give him all the beauty of a man that he can think of; for all the *beauty of the body of a man*, when pretended to be put upon him who is an infinite Spirit, is a deformity and diminution to him. And, when the goodly piece is finished, it must remain in the house, in the temple or shrine prepared for it, or perhaps in the dwelling-house if it be one of the *lares* or *penates*—the household gods.

3. The matter of which it is mostly made is sorry stuff to make a god of; it is the stock of a tree.

(1.) The tree itself was fetched out of the forest, where it grew among other trees, of no more virtue or value than its neighbours. It was a cedar, it may be, or a cypress, or an oak, v. 14. Perhaps he had an eye upon it some time before for this use, and *strengthened it for himself*, used some art or other to make it stronger and better-grown than other trees were. Or, as some read it, *which hath strengthened or lifted up itself among the trees of the forest*, the tallest and strongest he can pick out. Or, it may be, it pleases his fancy better to take an ash, which is of a quicker growth, and which was of his own planting for this use, and which has been nourished with rain from

heaven. See what a fallacy he puts upon himself, in making that his refuge which was of his own planting, and which he not only gave the form to, but prepared the matter for; and what an affront he puts upon the God of heaven in setting up that as a rival with him which was nourished by his rain, that rain which falls upon the just and unjust.

(2.) The boughs of this tree were good for nothing but for fuel; to that use were they put, and so were the chips that were cut off from it in the working of it; they are *for a man to burn*, v. 15, 16. To show that that tree has no innate virtue in it for its own protection, it is as capable of being burnt as any other tree; and, to show that he who chose it had no more antecedent value for it than for any other tree, he makes no difficulty of throwing part of it into the fire as common rubbish, asking no question for conscience' sake.

[1.] It serves him for his parlour-fire: *He will take thereof and warm himself* (v. 15), and he finds the comfort of it, and is so far from having any regret in his mind for it that he saith, *Aha! I am warm; I have seen the fire*; and certainly that part of the tree which served him for fuel, the use for which God and nature designed it, does him a much greater kindness and yields him more satisfaction than ever that will which he makes a god of. [2.] It serves him for his kitchen-fire: *He eats flesh* with it, that is, he dresses the flesh with it which he is to eat; *he roasteth roast, and is satisfied* that he has not done amiss to put it to this use. Nay, [3.] It serves him to heat the oven with, in which we use that fuel which is of least value: *He kindles it and bakes bread* with the heat of it, and none charges him with doing wrong.

(3.) Yet, after all, the stock or body of the tree shall serve to make a god of, when it might as well have served to make a bench, as one of themselves, even a poet of their own, upbraids them, *Horat. Sat. i. 8*:

Olim truncus eram ficulnus, inutile lignum,
Quum faber, incertus scamnum faceretne Priapum.
Maluit esse deum; deus inde ego—

In days of yore our godship stood
A very worthless log of wood,
The joiner, doubting to or shape us
Into a stool or a Priapus,
At length resolved, for reasons wise,
Into a god to bid me rise. FRANCIS.

And another of them threatens the idol to whom he had committed the custody of his woods that, if he did not preserve them to be fuel for his fire, he should himself be made use of for that purpose:

Furaces moneo manus repellas,
Et silvam domini focus reserves,
Si defecerit hæc, et ipse lignum es.

Drive the plunderers away, and preserve the wood for thy master's hearth, or thou thyself shalt be converted into fuel.—MARTIAL.

When the besotted idolater has thus served the meanest purposes with part of his tree, and the rest has had time to season (he makes that a god in his imagination while that is in the doing, *and worships it*): He makes it a graven image, and falls down thereto (v. 15), that is (v. 17), *The residue thereof he makes a god, even his graven image*, according to his fancy and intention; he falls down to it, and worships it, gives divine honours to it, prostrates himself before it in the most humble reverent posture, as a servant, as a suppliant; he prays to it, as having a dependence upon it, and great expectations from it; he saith, *Deliver me, for thou art my god*. There where he pays his homage and allegiance he justly looks for protection and deliverance. What a strange infatuation is this, to expect help from gods that cannot help themselves! But it is this praying to them that makes them gods, not what the smith or the carpenter did to them. What we place our confidence in for deliverance that we make a god of.

Qui fingit sacros, auro vel marmore, vultus
Non facit ille deos; qui rogat, ille facit.
He who supplicates the figure, whether it be of gold or of marble, makes it a god, and not he who merely constructs it.—MARTIAL.

III. Here is judgment given upon this whole matter, v. 18—20. In short, it is the effect and evidence of the greatest stupidity and sottishness that one could ever imagine rational beings to be guilty of, and shows that man has become worse than the beasts that perish; for they act according to the dictates of sense, but man acts not according to the dictates of reason (v. 18): *They have not known nor understood common sense*; men that act rationally in other things in this act most absurdly. Though they have some knowledge and understanding, yet they are strangers to, nay, they are rebels against the great law of consideration (v. 12): *None considers in his heart*, nor has so much application of mind as to reason thus with himself, which one would think he might easily do, though there were none to reason with him: “*I have burnt part of this tree in the fire, for baking and roasting; and now shall I make the residue thereof an abomination?*” (that is, *an idol*, for that is an abomination to God and all wise and good men); “*shall I ungratefully choose to do, or presumptuously dare to do, what the Lord hates?* shall I be such a fool as to fall down to the stock of a tree—a senseless, lifeless, helpless thing? shall I so far disparage myself, and make myself like that I bow down to?” A growing tree may be a beautiful stately thing, but the stock of a tree has lost its glory, and he has lost his that gives glory to it. Upon the whole, the sad character given of these idolaters is, 1. That they put a cheat upon themselves (v. 20): *They feed on ashes*; they feed themselves with hopes of advantage by worshipping these idols, but

they will be disappointed as much as a man that would expect nourishment by feeding on ashes. Feeding on ashes is an evidence of a depraved appetite and a distempered body; and it is a sign that the soul is overpowered by very bad habits when men, in their worship, go no further than the sight, their eyes will carry them. They are wretchedly deluded, and it is their own fault. *A deceived heart of their own*, more than the deceiving tongue of others, has turned them aside from the faith and worship of the living God to dumb idols. They are drawn away of their own lusts and enticements. The apostasy of sinners from God is owing entirely to themselves and to the evil heart of unbelief that is in their own bosom. A revolting and rebellious heart is a deceived heart. 2. That they wilfully persist in the self-delusion and will not be undeceived. There is none of them that can be persuaded so far to suspect himself as to say, *Is there not a lie in my right hand?* and so to think of delivering his soul. Note, (1.) Idolaters have a lie in their right hand; for an idol a lie, is not what it pretends, performs not what it promises, and it is a teacher of lies. Hab. ii. 18. (2.) It highly concerns those that are secure in an evil way seriously to consider whether there be not a lie in the right hand. Is not that a lie which with complacency we hold fast as our chief good? Are our hearts set upon the wealth of the world and the pleasures of sense? This will certainly prove a lie in our right hand. And is not that a lie which with confidence we hold fast by, as the ground on which we build our hopes for heaven? If we trust in our external professions and performances, as if those would save us, we deceive ourselves with a lie in our right hand, with a house built on the sand. (3.) Self-suspicion is the first step towards self-deliverance. We cannot be faithful to ourselves unless we are jealous of ourselves. He that would deliver his soul must begin with putting the question to his own conscience, *Is there a lie in my right hand?* (4.) Those that are given up to believe in a lie are under the power of strong delusions, which it is hard to get clear of, 2 Thes. ii. 11.

21 Remember these, O Jacob an Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me. 22 I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee. 23 Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O fountains and every tree therein: for the LORD

th redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel. 24 Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that redeemed thee from the womb, I am the LORD that maketh all things; at stretcheth forth the heavens one; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself; 25 That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh the diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish; 26 That confirmeth the word of his servant, and perfirmeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof: 27 That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers: 28 That saith of Cyrus, *He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure*: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.

In these verses we have,

I. The duty which Jacob and Israel, now in captivity, were called to, that they might be qualified and prepared for the deliverance designed them. Our first care must be to get good by our afflictions, and then we may hope to get out of them. The duty is expressed in two words: *Remember and return*, as in the counsel to Ephesus, Rev. ii.

5. 1. "*Remember these, O Jacob! Remember what thou hast been told of the folly of idolatry, and let the convictions thou art now under be ready to thee whenever thou art tempted to that sin. Remember that thou art my servant, and therefore must not serve other masters.*" 2. *Return unto me, v. 22.* It is the great concern of those who have backslidden from God to hasten their return to him; and this is that which he calls them to when they are in affliction, and when he is returning to them in a way of mercy.

II. The favours which Jacob and Israel, now in captivity, were assured of; and what he promised to them upon their remembering and returning to God is in a spiritual sense promised to all that in like manner return to God. It is a very comfortable word, for more is implied in it than is expressed (v. 21): "*O Israel! thou shalt not be forgotten of me, though for the present thou seemest to be so.*" When we begin to remember God he will begin to remember us; nay, it is he that remembers us first. Now observe here,

1. The grounds upon which God's favour-

able intentions to his people were built and on which they might build their expectations from him. He will deliver them out of captivity; for, (1.) They are his servants, and therefore he has a just quarrel with those that detain them. *Let my people go, that they may serve me.* The servants of the King of kings are under special protection. (2.) He formed them into a people, formed them *from the womb*, v. 24. From the first beginning of their increase into a nation they were under his particular care and government, more than any other people; their national constitution was of his framing, and his covenant with them was the charter by which they were incorporated. They are his, and he will save them. (3.) He has redeemed them formerly, has many a time redeemed them out of great distress, and he is still the same, in the same relation to them, has the same concern for them. "*Therefore return unto me, for I have redeemed thee*, v. 22. Whither wilt thou go, but to me?" Having redeemed them, as well as formed them, he has acquired a further title to them and propriety in them, which is a good reason why they should dutifully return to him and why he will graciously return to them. *The Lord has redeemed Jacob*; he is about to do it (v. 23); he has determined to do it; for he is the Lord their Redeemer, v. 24. Note, The work of redemption which God has by his Son wrought for us encourages us to hope for all promised blessings from him. He that has redeemed us at so vast an expense will not lose his purchase. (4.) He has *glorified himself in them* (v. 23), and therefore will do so still, John xii. 28. It is matter of comfort to us to see God's glory interested in the deliverances of the church; for *therefore* he will certainly redeem Jacob, because thus he will glorify himself. And this assures us that he will perfect the redemption of his saints by Jesus Christ, because there is a day set when he will be glorified and admired in them all. (5.) He has pardoned their sins, which were the cause of their calamity and the only obstruction to their deliverance, v. 22. *Therefore* he will break the yoke of captivity from off their necks, because he has *blotted out, as a thick cloud, their transgressions*. Note, [1.] Our transgressions and our sins are as a cloud, a thick cloud; they interpose between heaven and earth, and for a time suspend and intercept the correspondence between the upper and lower world (sin separates between us and God, ch. lix. 2); they threaten a storm, a deluge of wrath, as thick clouds do, which God will rain upon sinners, Ps. xi. 6. [2.] When God pardons sin he blots out this cloud, this thick cloud; so that the intercourse with heaven is laid open again. God looks down upon the soul with favour; the soul looks up to him with pleasure. The cloud is scattered by the influence of the

Sun of righteousness. It is only through Christ that sin is pardoned. When sin is pardoned, like a cloud that is scattered, it appears no more, it is quite gone. *The iniquity of Jacob shall be sought for, and not found*, Jer. i. 20. And the comforts that flow into the soul when sin is pardoned are like *the clear shining after clouds and rain*.

2. The universal joy which the deliverance of God's people should bring along with it (v. 23): *Sing, O you heavens!* This intimates, (1.) That the whole creation shall have cause for joy and rejoicing in the redemption of God's people; to that it is owing that it subsists (that it is rescued from the curse which the sin of man brought upon the ground) and that it is again put into a capacity of answering the ends of its being, and is assured that though now it groans, being burdened, it shall at last be delivered from the bondage of corruption. The greatest establishment of the world is the kingdom of God in it, Ps. xcvi. 11—13; xcvi. 7—9. (2.) That the angels shall rejoice in it, and the inhabitants of the upper world. The heavens shall sing, for the Lord has done it. And there is joy in heaven when God and man are reconciled (Luke xv. 7), joy when Babylon falls, Rev. xviii. 20. (3.) That those who lay at the greatest distance, even the inhabitants of the Gentile world, should join in these praises, as sharing in these joys. *The lower parts of the earth*, the forest and the trees there, shall bring in the tribute of thanksgiving for the redemption of Israel.

3. The encouragement we have to hope that though great difficulties, and such as have been thought insuperable, lie in the way of the church's deliverance, yet, when the time for it shall come, they shall all be got over with ease; for *thus saith Israel's Redeemer, I am the Lord that maketh all things*, did make them at first and am still making them; for providence is a continued creation. All being, power, life, motion, and perfection, are from God. *He stretches forth the heavens alone*, has no help nor needs any; and the earth too he *spreads abroad by himself*, and by his own power. Man was not by him when he did it (Job xxxviii. 4), nor did any creature advise or assist; only his own eternal wisdom and Word was by him then as *one brought up with him*, Prov. viii. 30. His stretching out the heavens by himself denotes the boundless extent of his power. The strongest man, if he has to stretch a thing out, must get somebody or other to lend a hand; but God stretched out the vast expanse, and keeps it still upon the stretch, himself, by his own power. Let not Israel be discouraged then; nothing is too hard for him to do that made the world, Ps. cxxiv. 8. And, having made all things, he can make what use he pleases of all, and has it in his power to serve his own purposes by them.

4. The confusion which this would give upon the oracles of Babylon, by the confirmation it would give them, v. 25. God, delivering his people out of Babylon, would *frustrate the tokens of the liars*, of all the lying prophets, that said the Babylonian monarchy had many ages yet to live, and pretended to ground their predictions upon some token, some sign or other, which, according to the rules of their art, foreboded its prosperity. How mad will these confusions grow with vexation when they see that their skill fails them, and that the contrary happens to that which they so coveted and were so confident of. Nor would it only baffle their pretended prophets, but the celebrated politicians too: *He turns the wise men backward*. Finding they cannot go with their projects, they are forced to quit them; and so he makes the judges foolish and makes their knowledge foolish. Those that are made acquainted with Christ see the knowledge they had before to be foolishness in comparison with the knowledge of him. And those that are adversaries to him will find all their counsels, like Ahithophel turned into foolishness, and themselves *taken in their own craftiness*, 1 Cor. iii. 18.

5. The confirmation which this would give to the oracles of God, which the Jews had distrusted and their enemies despised. *God confirms the word of his servant* (v. 26) he confirms it by accomplishing it in season; and *performs the counsel of his messengers* whom he hath many a time sent to his people, to tell them what great blessings he had in store for them. Note, The exact fulfilling of the prophecies of scripture is a confirmation of the truth of the word and an incontestable evidence of divine origin and authority.

6. The particular favours God designs for his people, that were now in captivity v. 26—28. These were foretold long before they went into captivity, that they might have reason to expect a correction, but no reason to fear a final destruction. (1.) It is but supposed that Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, should for a time lie in ruins, desolated and uninhabited; but it is promised that they shall be rebuilt and repeopled. When Isaiah lived, Jerusalem and the cities of Judah were full of inhabitants; but they will be emptied, burnt, and destroyed. It was then hard to believe that concerning such strong and populous cities. The justice of God will do that; and when that is done, it will be hard to believe that ever they will recover themselves again, and yet the zeal of the Lord of hosts will do that too. God has said *Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited*; for while the world stands, God will have church in it, and therefore he will raise those who shall say to Jerusalem, *Thou shalt be built*; for, if it be not built, it cannot be inhabited, Ps. lxxix. 35, 36. When God

ne shall have come for the building up of his church, let him alone to find both houses and his people (for they shall not lie exposed) and people for his houses, for they shall not stand empty. The cities of Judah too shall again be built. The Assyrian army under Sennacherib only took them, and then, upon the defeat of that army, they returned undamaged to the right owners; but the Chaldean army demolished them, and by carrying away the inhabitants left them to decay of themselves; for, if less judgments prevail not to humble and reform men, God will send greater. Yet these demolitions shall not be perpetual. God will raise up the wastes and decayed places there; for he will not contend for ever. The city of strangers, when it is ruined, shall never be built (*ch. xxv. 2*), but the city of God's own children is but discontinued for time. (2.) It is here supposed that the temple too should be destroyed, and lie for a time razed to the foundations; but it is promised that the foundation of it shall again be laid, and no doubt built upon. As the dissolution of the sanctuary was to all the pious Jews the most mournful part of the destruction, so the restoration and re-establishment of it would be the most joyful part of the deliverance. What joy can they have in the rebuilding of Jerusalem if the temple there be not rebuilt? for it is that which makes it a holy city and truly beautiful. This therefore was the chief thing that the Jews had at heart and had in view in their return; therefore they would go back to Jerusalem, to build the house of the Lord and of Israel there, *Ezra i. 3*. (3.) It is here supposed that very great difficulties would lie in the way of this deliverance, which it would be impossible for them to wade through; but it is promised that by a divine power they shall all be removed (*v. 27*): *God saith to the prophet, Be dry*; so he did when he brought Israel out of Egypt, and so he will again when he brings them out of Babylon, if ever be occasion. *Who art thou, O great mountain? Dost thou stand in the way? Before Zerubbabel, the commander-in-chief of the returning captives, thou shalt become plain*, *Zech. iv. 7*. So, *Who art thou, O great deep? Dost thou retard their passage and think to block it up? Thou shalt be dry*, and thy rivers that supply thee shall be dried up. When Cyrus took Babylon by gaining the river Euphrates into many channels, and so making it passable for his army, this was fulfilled. Note, Whatever obstructions lie in the way of Israel's redemption, God can remove them with a word's speaking. (4.) It is here supposed that none of the Jews themselves would be able by might and power to force their way to Babylon; but it is promised that God will raise up a stranger from afar off, that shall fairly open the way for them, and now length he names the very man, many

scores of years before he was born or thought of (*v. 28*): *That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd*. Israel is his people, and the sheep of his pasture. These sheep are now in the midst of wolves, in the hands of the thief and robber; they are impounded for trespass. Now Cyrus shall be his shepherd, employed by him to release these sheep, and to take care of their return to their own green pastures again. "In this he shall perform all my pleasure, shall bring about what is purposed by me and will be highly pleasing to me." Note, [1.] The most contingent things are certain to the divine prescience. He knew who was the person, and what was his name, that should be the deliverer of his people, and, when he pleased, he could let his church know it, that, when they heard of such a name beginning to be talked of in the world, they might lift up their heads with joy, knowing that their redemption drew nigh. [2.] It is the greatest honour of the greatest men to be employed for God as instruments of his favour to his people. It was more the praise of Cyrus to be God's shepherd than to be emperor of Persia. [3.] God makes what use he pleases of men, of mighty men, of those that act with the greatest freedom; and, when they think to do as they please, he can overrule them, and make them do as he pleases. Nay, in those very things wherein they are serving themselves, and look no further than that, God is serving his own purposes by them and making them to perform all his pleasure. Rich princes shall do what poor prophets have foretold.

CHAP. XLV.

Cyrus was nominated, in the foregoing chapter, to be God's shepherd; more is said to him and more of him in this chapter, not only because he was to be instrumental in the release of the Jews out of their captivity, but because he was to be therein a type of the great Redeemer, and that release was to be typical of the great redemption from sin and death; for that was the salvation of which all the prophets witnessed. We have here, I. The great things which God would do for Cyrus, that he might be put into a capacity to release God's people, *ver. 1-4*. II. The proof God would hereby give of his eternal power and godhead, and his universal, incontestable, sovereignty, *ver. 5-7*. III. A prayer for the hastening of this deliverance, *ver. 8*. IV. A check to the unbelieving Jews, who quarrelled with God for the lengthening out of their captivity, *ver. 9, 10*. V. Encouragement given to the believing Jews, who trusted in God and continued instant in prayer, assuring them that God would in due time accomplish this work by the hand of Cyrus, *ver. 11-15*. VI. A challenge given to the worshippers of idols and their doom read, and satisfaction given to the worshippers of the true God and their comfort secured, with an eye to the Mediator, who is made of God to us both righteousness and sanctification, *ver. 16-25*. And here, as in many other parts of this prophecy, there is much of Christ and of gospel grace.

THUS saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; 2 I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder

the bars of iron: 3 And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. 4 For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.

Cyrus was a Mede, descended (as some say) from Astyages king of Media. The pagan writers are not agreed in their accounts of his origin. Some tell us that in his infancy he was an outcast, left exposed, and was saved from perishing by a herdsman's wife. However, it is agreed that, being a man of an active genius, he soon made himself very considerable, especially when Cræsus king of Lydia made a descent upon his country, which he not only repulsed, but revenged, prosecuting the advantages he had gained against Cræsus with such vigour that in a little time he took Sardis and made himself master of the rich kingdom of Lydia and the many provinces that then belonged to it. This made him very great (for Cræsus was rich to a proverb) and enabled him to pursue his victories in many countries; but it was nearly ten years afterwards that, in conjunction with his uncle Darius and with the forces of Persia, he made this famous attack upon Babylon, which is here foretold, and which we have the history of Dan. v. Babylon had now grown exorbitantly rich and strong. It was forty-five miles in compass (some say more): the walls were thirty-two feet thick and 100 cubits high. Some say, They were so thick that six chariots might drive abreast upon them; others say, They were fifty cubits thick and 200 high. Cyrus seems to have had a great ambition to make himself master of this place, and to have projected it long; and at last he performed it. Now here, 210 years before it came to pass, we are told,

1. What great things God would do for him, that he might put it into his power to release his people. In order to this he shall be a mighty conqueror and a wealthy monarch, and nations shall become tributaries to him and help him both with men and money. Now that which God here promised to do for Cyrus he could have done for Zerubbabel, or some of the Jews themselves; but the wealth and power of this world God has seldom seen fit to entrust his own people with much of, so many are the snares and temptations that attend them; but if there has been occasion, for the good of the church, to make use of them, God has been pleased rather to put them into the hands of others, to be employed for

them, than to venture them in their own hands. Cyrus is here called God's *anointed*, because he was both designed and qualified for this great service by the counsel of God and was to be herein a type of the Messiah. God engages to hold his right hand, not only to strengthen and sustain him, but to direct his motions and intentions, as Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands when he was to shoot his arrow against Syria, 2 Kings xiii. 16. Being under such direction,

1. He shall extend his conquests very far, and shall make nothing of the opposition that will be given him. Babylon is a strong place for a young hero to begeth with; and therefore, that he may be able to deal with that, great additions shall be made to his strength by other conquests. (1.) Proud kingdoms shall yield to him. *God will subdue nations before him*; when he is in the full career of his successes he shall make nothing of a nation's being born against him at once: yet it is not he that subdues them; it is God that subdues them for him in the battle is his, and therefore his is the victory. (2.) Potent kings shall fall before him: *I will loose the loins of kings*, either the girdle of their loins (divesting them of their power and dignity) or the strength of their loins, and then it was literally fulfilled in Belshazzar, for, when he was terrified at the handwriting on the wall, *the joints of his loins were loosed*, Dan. v. 6. (3.) Great cities shall surrender themselves into his hands, without giving him or themselves any trouble. God will incline the keeper of the city to open before him the two-leaved gates, not treacherously nor timorously, but from a full conviction that it is to no purpose to contend with him; and therefore the gates shall not be shut to keep him out as an enemy, but thrown open to admit him as a friend. (4.) The longest and most dangerous marches shall be made easy and ready to him: *I will go before thee*, to clear the way, and to conduct thee in it, and that the crooked places shall be made straight, or, as some read it, the hilly places shall be levelled and made even. Those will find ready road that have God going before them. (5.) No opposition shall stand before him. He that gives him his commission *will break in pieces the gates of brass* that are shut against him, and cut asunder bars of iron wherewith they are fastened. This was fulfilled in the letter, if that be true which Herodotus reports, that the walls of Babylon had 100 gates all of brass, with posts and hooks of the same metal.

2. He shall replenish his coffers with much (v. 3): *I will give thee the treasures of darkness*, treasures of gold and silver, that have been long kept close under lock and key and had not seen the light of many years, or had been buried under ground by the inhabitants, in their fright, upon the taking of the city. The riches of many

tions had been brought to Babylon, and Cyrus seized all together. *The hidden riches of secret places*, which belonged either to the crown or to private persons, shall all be a prey to Cyrus. Thus God, designing him to do piece of service to his church, paid him chiefly for it beforehand; and Cyrus very honestly owned God's goodness to him, and, in consideration of that, released the captives. *Ezra i. 2, God has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and thereby has obliged me to build him a house at Jerusalem.*

II. We are here told what God designed in doing all this for Cyrus. What Cyrus aimed at in undertaking his wars we may easily guess; but what God aimed at in giving him such wonderful success in his wars we are here told.

1. It was that the God of Israel might be glorified: "*That thou mayest know by all this that I the Lord am the God of Israel; or I have called thee by thy name long before thou wast born.*" When Cyrus should have his prophecy of Isaiah shown to him, and should there find his own name and his own achievements particularly described so long before, he should thereby be brought to acknowledge that the God of Israel was the Lord, Jehovah, the only living and true God, and that he continued to own his Israel though now in captivity. It is well when his men's prosperity brings them to the knowledge of God, for too often it makes them forget him.

2. It was that the Israel of God might be released, *v. 4.* Cyrus knew not God as he God of Israel. Having been trained up in the worship of idols, the true God was to him an unknown God. But, though he knew not God, God not only knew him when he came into being, but foreknew him, and bespoke him for his shepherd. He called him by his name, *Cyrus*, nay, which was yet a greater honour, he surnamed him and called him his *anointed*. And why did God do all this for Cyrus? Not for his own sake, be it known to him; whether he was a man of virtue or no is questioned. Xenophon indeed, when he would describe the heroic virtues of an excellent prince, made use of Cyrus's name, and many of the particulars of his story, in his *Cyropaedia*; but other historians represent him as haughty, cruel, and bloodthirsty. The reason why God preferred him was *for Jacob his servant's sake*. Note, (1.) In all the revolutions of states and kingdoms, the sudden falls of the great and strong, and the surprising advancements of the weak and obscure, God is designing the good of his church. (2.) It is therefore the wisdom of those to whom God has given wealth and power to use them for his glory, by showing kindness to his people. Cyrus is preferred that Israel may be released. He shall have a kingdom, only that God's people may have their liberty; for

their kingdom is not of this world, it is yet to come. In all this Cyrus was a type of Christ, who was made victorious over principalities and powers, and entrusted with unsearchable riches, for the use and benefit of God's servants, his elect. *When he ascended on high he led captivity captive, took those captives that had taken others captives, and opened the prison to those that were bound.*

5 *I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: 6 That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else. 7 I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things. 8 Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the LORD have created it. 9 Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands? 10 Woe unto him that saith unto his father, What begetteth thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth?*

God here asserts his sole and sovereign dominion, as that which he designed to prove and manifest to the world in all the great things he did for Cyrus and by him. Observe,

I. How this doctrine is here laid down concerning the sovereignty of the great Jehovah, in two things:—1. That he is God alone, and there is no God besides him. This is here inculcated as a fundamental truth, which, if it were firmly believed, would abolish idolatry out of the world. With what an awful, commanding, air of majesty and authority, bidding defiance, as it were, to all pretenders, does the great God here proclaim it to the world: *I am the Lord, I the Lord, Jehovah, and there is none else, there is no God besides me*, no other self-existent, self-sufficient, being, none infinite and eternal. And again (*v. 6*), *There is none besides me*; all that are set up in competition with me are counterfeits; they are all vanity and a lie, for *I am the Lord, and there is none else*. This is here said to Cyrus, not only to cure him of the sin of

his ancestors, which was the worshipping of idols, but to prevent his falling into the sin of some of his predecessors in victory and universal monarchy, which was the setting up of themselves for gods and being idolized, to which some attribute much of the origin of idolatry. Let Cyrus, when he becomes thus rich and great, remember that still he is but a man, and there is no God but one. 2. That he is Lord of all, and there is nothing done without him (v. 7): *I form the light*, which is grateful and pleasing, and *I create darkness*, which is grievous and unpleasing. *I make peace* (put here for all good) and *I create evil*, not the evil of sin (God is not the author of that), but the evil of punishment. *I the Lord* order, and direct, and *do all these things*. Observe, (1.) The very different events that befall the children of men. Light and darkness are opposite to each other, and yet, in the course of providence, they are sometimes intermixed, like the morning and evening twilights, *neither day nor night*, Zech. xiv. 6. There is a mixture of joys and sorrows in the same cup, allays to each other. Sometimes they are counterchanged, as noontide light and midnight darkness. In the revolution of every day each takes its turn, and there are short transitions from the one to the other, witness Job's case. (2.) The self-same cause of both, and that is he that is the first Cause of all: *I the Lord*, the fountain of all being, am the fountain of all power. He who formed the natural light (Gen. i. 3) still forms the providential light. He who at first made peace among the jarring seeds and principles of nature makes peace in the affairs of men. He who allowed the natural darkness, which was a mere privation, creates the providential darkness; for concerning troubles and afflictions he gives positive orders. Note, The wise God has the ordering and disposing of all our comforts, and all our crosses, in this world.

II. How this doctrine is here proved and published. 1. It is proved by that which God did for Cyrus: "*There is no God besides me*, for (v. 5) *I girded thee, though thou hast not known me*. It was not thy own idol, which thou didst know and worship, that girded thee for this expedition, that gave thee authority and ability for it. No, it was I that girded thee, I whom thou didst not know, nor seek to." By this it appears that the God of Israel is the only true God, that he manages and makes what use he pleases even of those that are strangers to him and pay their homage to other gods. 2. It is published to all the world by the word of God, by his providence, and by the testimony of the suffering Jews in Babylon, that all may know from the east and from the west, sunrise and sun-set, that the Lord is God and there is none else. The wonderful deliver-

ance of the Israel of God proclaimed to all the world that *there is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, that rides on the heavens for their help*.

III. How this doctrine is here improved and applied.

1. For the comfort of those that earnestly longed, and yet quietly waited, for the redemption of Israel (v. 8): *Drop down, ye heavens, from above*. Some take this as the saints' prayer for the deliverance. I rather take it as God's precept concerning it; for he is said to *command deliverances*, Ps. xlv. 4. Now the precept is directed to heaven and earth, and all the hosts of both, as royal precepts commonly run—*To all officers civil and military*. All the creatures shall be made in their places to contribute to the carrying on of this great work, when God will have it done. If men will not be aiding, and assisting, God will produce it without them, as he does the dews of heaven and the grass of the earth, which *tarry not for man, nor wait for the sons of men*, Mic. v. 7. Observe, (1.) The method of this great deliverance that is to be wrought for Israel. *Righteousness* must first be wrought in them; they must be brought to repent of their sins, to renounce their idolatries, to return to God, and reform their lives, and then the salvation shall be wrought for them and not till then. We must not expect salvation without righteousness, for they spring up together and together the Lord hath created them; what he has joined together let not us therefore put asunder. See Ps. lxxxv. 9—11. Christ died to save us from our sins, not in our sins, and is made redemption to us by being made to us righteousness and sanctification. (2.) The manner of this great deliverance. Rather than it shall fail, when the set time for it shall come, *the heavens shall drop down righteousness, and the earth shall open to bring forth salvation*, and both concur to the reformation, and so to the restoration, of God's Israel. It is from heaven, from above the skies, that righteousness drops down, to every grace and good gift is from above; nay, since the more plentiful effusion of the Spirit it is now poured down, and, if our hearts be open to receive it, the product will be the fruits of righteousness and the great salvation.

2. For reproof to those of the church's enemies that opposed this salvation, or those of her friends that despaired of it (v. 9): *Woe unto him that strives with his Maker*. God is the Maker of all things, and therefore our Maker, which is a reason why we should always submit to him and never contend with him. (1.) Let not the proud oppressors, in the elevation of their spirits oppose God's designs concerning the deliverance of his people, nor think to detain them any longer when the time shall come for their release. *Woe to the insulting Baby-*

ionians that set God at defiance, as Pharaoh did, and will not let his people go! (2.) Let not the poor oppressed, in the dejection of their spirits, murmur and quarrel with God for the prolonging of their captivity, as if he dealt unjustly or unkindly with them, or think to force their way out before God's time shall come. Note, Those will find themselves in a woeful condition that strive with their Maker; for none ever hardened his heart against God and prospered. Sinful man is indeed a quarrelsome creature; but *let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth.* Men are but earthen pots, nay, they are broken potsherds, and are made so very much by their mutual contentions. They are dashed in pieces one against another; and, if they are disposed to strive, let them strive with one another, let them meddle with their match; but let them not dare to contend with him that is infinitely above them, which is as senseless and absurd as, [1.] For the clay to find fault with the potter: *Shall the clay say to him that forms it, "What makest thou? Why dost thou make me of this shape and not that?"* Nay, it is as if the clay should be in such a heat and passion with the potter as to tell him that *he has no hands*, or that he works as awkwardly as if he had none. "Shall the clay pretend to be wiser than the potter and therefore to advise him, or mightier than the potter and therefore to control him?" He that gave us being, that gave us this being, may design concerning us, and dispose of us, as he pleases; and it is impudent presumption for us to prescribe to him. Shall we impeach God's wisdom, or question his power, who are ourselves so curiously, so wonderfully, made? Shall we say, *He has no hands*, whose hands made us and in whose hands we are? The doctrine of God's sovereignty has enough in it to silence all our discontents and objections against the methods of his providence and grace, Rom. ix. 20, 21. [2.] It is as unnatural as for the child to find fault with the parents, to say to the father, *What begottest thou?* or to the mother, *"What hast thou brought forth?"* Why was I not begotten and born an angel, exempt from the infirmities of human nature and the calamities of human life?" Must not those who are children of men expect to share in the common lot and to fare as others fare? If God is our Father, where is the honour we owe to him by submitting to his will?

11 Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me. 12 I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, *even* my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all

their host have I commanded. 13 I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the LORD of hosts. 14 Thus saith the LORD, The labour of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall come after thee; in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, *saying*, Surely God is in thee; and *there is* none else, *there is* no god. 15 Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour. 16 They shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them: they shall go to confusion together *that are* makers of idols. 17 But Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end. 18 For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: *I am* the LORD; and *there is* none else. 19 I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.

The people of God in captivity, who reconciled themselves to the will of God in their affliction and were content to wait his time for their deliverance, are here assured that they should not wait in vain.

I. They are invited to enquire concerning the issue of their troubles, v. 11. *The Holy One of Israel, and his Maker*, though he does not allow them to strive with him, yet encourages them, 1. To consult his word: "*Ask of me things to come*"; have recourse to the prophets and their prophecies, and see what they say concerning these things. Ask the watchmen, What of the night? Ask them, How long?" Things to come, as far as they are revealed, belong to us and to our children, and we must not be strangers to them. 2. To seek unto him by prayer: "*Concerning my sons and concerning the work of my hands*, which as becomes them submit to the will of their Father, the will of their potter, com-

mand you me, not by way of prescription, but by way of petition. Be earnest in your requests, and confident in your expectations, as far as both are guided by and grounded upon the promise." We may not strive with our Maker by passionate complaints, but we may wrestle with him by faithful and fervent prayer. *My sons, and the work of my hands, commend to me* (so some read it), bring them to me and leave them with me. See the power of prayer, and its prevalency with God: *Thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am; what would you that I should do unto you?* Some read it with an interrogation, as carrying on the reproof (v. 9, 10): *Do you question me concerning things to come?* and am I bound to give you an account? *And concerning my children, even concerning the work of my hands, will you command me, or prescribe to me? Dare you do so? Shall any teach God knowledge, or give law to him?* Those that complain of God do in effect assume an authority over him.

II. They are encouraged to depend upon the power of God when they are brought very low and are utterly incapable of helping themselves, v. 12. *Their help stands in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth*, which he mentions here, not only for his own glory, but for their comfort. The heavens and earth shall contribute, if he please, to the deliverance of the church (v. 8); for he created both, and therefore has both at command. 1. *He made the earth, and created man upon it*, for it was intended to be a habitation for man, Ps. cxv. 16. He has therefore not only authority, but wisdom and power sufficient to govern man here on this earth and to make what use he pleases of him. 2. *His hands have stretched out the heavens, and all their hosts he commanded into being at first, and therefore still governs all their motions and influences.* It is good news to God's Israel that their God is the creator and governor of the world.

III. They are particularly told what God would do for them, that they might know what to depend upon; and this shall lead them to expect a more glorious Redeemer and redemption, of whom, and of which, Cyrus and their deliverance by him were types and figures.

1. Liberty shall be proclaimed to them, v. 13. Cyrus is the man that shall proclaim it; and, in order hereunto, God will put power into his hands: *I have raised him up in righteousness*, that is, in pursuance and performance of my promises and to plead my people's just but injured cause. He will give him success in all his enterprises, particularly that against Babylon: *I will direct all his ways*; and then it follows that he will prosper him, for those must needs speed well that are under a divine direction. God will make plain the way of those whom he designs to employ for him. Two things Cyrus must do for God:—(1.) Jerusalem is God's

city, but it is now in ruins, and he must rebuild it, that is, he must give orders for the rebuilding of it, and give wherewithal to do it. (2.) Israel is God's people, but they are now captives, and he must release them freely and generously, not demanding any ransom nor compounding with them for price or reward. And Christ is anointed to do that of poor captive souls which Cyrus was to do for the captive Jews, to proclaim the opening of the prison to those that were bound (ch. lxi. 1), enlargement from a worse bondage than that in Babylon.

2. Provision shall be made for them. They went out poor, and unable to bear the expenses of their return and re-establishment; and therefore it is promised that the labour of Egypt and other nations should come over to them and be theirs, v. 14. Cyrus having conquered those countries, out of their spoils provided for the returning Jews, and he ordered his subjects to furnish them with necessaries (Ezra i. 4), so that they did not go out empty from Babylon any more than from Egypt. Those that are redeemed by Christ shall be not only provided for, but enriched. Those whose spirits God stirs up to go to the heavenly Zion may depend upon him to bear their charges. The world is theirs as far as is good for them.

3. Proselytes shall be brought over to them: *Men of stature shall come after thee in chains; they shall fall down to thee, saying, Surely God is in thee.* This was in part fulfilled when many of the people of the land became Jews (Esther viii. 17), and said, *We will go with you, humbly begging leave to do so, for we have heard that God is with you* (Zech. viii. 23). The restoration would be a means of the conviction of many and the conversion of some. Perhaps many of the Chaldeans who were now themselves conquered by Cyrus, when they saw the Jews going back in triumph, came and begged pardon for the affronts and abuses they had given them, owned that God was among them and that he was God alone, and therefore desired to join themselves to them. But this promise was to have its full accomplishment in the gospel church,—where the Gentiles shall become obedient by word and deed to the faith of Christ (Rom. xv. 18), as willing captives to the church (Ps. cx. 3), glad to wear her chains,—where an infidel, beholding the public worship of Christians, shall own himself convinced that *God is with them of a truth* (1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25) and shall assay to join himself to them—and when those that had been of the synagogue of Satan shall come and worship before the church's feet, and be made to know that *God has loved her* (Rev. iii. 9), and the *king of the earth and the nations shall bring their glory into the gospel Jerusalem* (Rev. xxi. 2). Note, It is good to be with those, though he be in chains, that have God with them.

IV. They are taught to trust God further

than they can see him. The prophet puts this word into their mouths, and goes before them in saying it (v. 15): *Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself.* 1. God hid himself when he brought them into the trouble, *hid himself and was wroth*, ch. lvii. 17. Note, Though God be his people's God and Saviour, yet sometimes, when they provoke him, he hides himself from them in displeasure, suspends his favours, and lays them under his frowns: but let them wait upon the Lord that hides his face, ch. viii. 17. 2. He hid himself when he was bringing them out of the trouble. Note, When God is acting as Israel's God and Saviour commonly *his way is in the sea*, Ps. lxxvii. 19. The salvation of the church is carried on in a mysterious way, by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts working on men's spirits (Zech. iv. 6), by weak and unlikely instruments, small and accidental occurrences, and not wrought till the last extremity; but this is our comfort, though God hide himself, we are sure he is the God of Israel, the Saviour. See Job xxxv. 14.

V. They are instructed to triumph over idolaters and all the worshippers of other gods (v. 16): *Those who are makers of idols, not only who frame them, but who make gods of them by praying to them, shall be ashamed and confounded*, when they shall be convinced of their mistakes and shall be forced to acknowledge that the God of Israel is the only true God, and when they shall be disappointed in their expectations from their idols, under whose protection they had put themselves. They shall go to confusion when they shall find that they can neither excuse the sin nor escape the punishment of it, Ps. xcvii. 7. It is not here and there one more timorous than the rest that shall thus shrink, and give up the cause, but *all of them*; nay, though they appear in a body, though hand join in hand, and they do all they can to keep one another in countenance, yet *they shall go to confusion together*. Bind them in bundles, to burn them.

VI. They are assured that those who trust in God shall never be made ashamed of their confidence in him, v. 17. Now that God was about to deliver them out of Babylon he directed them by his prophet, 1. To look up to him as the author of their salvation: *Israel shall be saved in the Lord*. Not only their salvation shall be wrought out by his power, but it shall be treasured up for them in his grace and promise, and so secured to them. They shall be saved in him; for his name shall be their strong tower, into which they shall run, and in which they shall be safe. 2. To look beyond this temporal deliverance to that which is spiritual and has reference to another world, to think of that salvation by the Messiah which is an everlasting salvation, the salvation of the soul, a rescue from everlasting misery and a restoration to everlasting bliss. "Give diligence

to make that sure, for it may be made sure, so sure that *you shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end*. You shall not only be delivered from the *everlasting shame and contempt* which will be the portion of idolaters (Dan. xii. 2), but you shall have everlasting honour and glory." [1.] There is a world without end; and it will be well or ill with us according as it will be with us in that world. [2.] Those who are saved with the everlasting salvation shall never be ashamed of what they did or suffered in the hopes of it; for it will so far outdo their expectations as to be a more abundant reimbursement. The returning captives owned that to them did *belong confusion of face* (Dan. ix. 7, 8); yet God tells them that they shall not be confounded, but shall have assurance for ever. Those who are confounded as penitents for their own sin shall not be confounded as believers in God's promise and power.

VII. They are engaged for ever to cleave to God, and never to desert him, never to distrust him. What had been often inculcated before is here again repeated, for the encouragement of his people to continue faithful to him, and to hope that he would be so to them: *I am the Lord, and there is none else*. That the Lord we serve and trust in is God alone appears by the two great lights, that of nature and that of revelation.

1. It appears by the light of nature; for he made the world, and therefore may justly demand its homage (v. 18): "*Thus saith the Lord, that created the heavens and formed the earth, I am the Lord, the sovereign Lord of all, and there is none else.*" The gods of the heathen did not do this, nay, they did not pretend to do it. He here mentions the creation of the heavens, but enlarges more upon that of the earth, because that is the part of the creation which we have the nearest view of and are most conversant with. It is here observed, (1.) That he formed it. It is not a rude and indigested chaos, but cast into the most proper shape and size by Infinite Wisdom. (2.) That he fixed it. When he had made it he established it, *founded it on the seas* (Ps. xxiv. 2), *hung it on nothing* (Job xxvi. 7) as at first he made it of nothing, and yet made it substantial and hung it fast, *ponderibus librata suis—poised by its own weight*. (3.) That he fitted it for use, and for the service of man, to whom he designed to give it. *He created it not in vain*, merely to be a proof of his power; but *he formed it to be inhabited by the children of men*, and for that end he drew the waters off from it, with which it was at first covered, and made the *dry land appear*, Ps. civ. 6, 7. Be it observed here, to the honour of God's wisdom, that he made nothing in vain, but intended every thing for some end and fitted it to answer the intention. If any man prove to have been made in vain, it is his own fault. It should also be observed to the

honour of God's goodness and his favour to man, that he reckoned that not made in vain which serves for his use and benefit, to be a habitation and maintenance for him.

2. It appears by the light of revelation. As the works of God abundantly prove that he is God alone, so does his word, and the discovery he has made of himself and of his mind and will by it. His oracles far exceed those of the Pagan deities, as well as his operations, v. 19. The preference is here placed in three things:—All that God has said is plain, satisfactory, and just. (1.) In the manner of the delivery of it it is plain and open: *I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth.* The Pagan deities delivered their oracles out of dens and caverns, with a low and hollow voice, and in ambiguous expressions; those that had familiar spirits whispered and muttered (*ch. viii. 19*); but God delivered his law from the top of Mount Sinai before all the thousands of Israel, in distinct, audible, and intelligible sounds. *Wisdom cries in the chief places of concourse*, Prov. i. 20, 21; viii. 1—3. The vision is written, and made plain, so that he who runs may read it; if it be obscure to any, they may thank themselves. Christ pleaded in his own defence what God says here, *In secret have I said nothing*, John xviii. 20. (2.) In the use and benefit of it it was highly satisfactory: *I said not unto the seed of Jacob*, who consulted these oracles and governed themselves by them, *Seek you me in vain*, as the false gods did to their worshippers, who sought *for the living to the dead*, *ch. viii. 19*. This includes all the gracious answers that God gave both to those who consulted him (his word is to them a faithful guide) and to those that prayed to him. The seed of Jacob are a praying people; it is the *generation of those that seek him*, Ps. xxiv. 6. And, as he has in his word invited them to seek him, so he never denied their believing prayers nor disappointed their believing expectations. He said not to them, to any of them, *Seek you me in vain*; for, if he did not think fit to give them the particular thing they prayed for, yet he gave them such a sufficiency of grace and such comfort and satisfaction of soul as were equivalent. What we say of winter is true of prayer, It never rots in the skies. God not only gives a gracious answer to those that diligently seek him, but will be their bountiful rewarder. (3.) In the matter of it it was incontestably just, and there was no iniquity in it: *I the Lord speak righteousness, I declare things that are right*, and consonant to the eternal rules and reasons of good and evil. The heathen deities dictated those things to their worshippers which were the reproach of human nature and tended to the extirpation of virtue; but God speaks righteousness, dictates that which is right in itself and tends to make men righteous; and therefore he is God, and there is none else.

20 Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye *that are* escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god *that* cannot save. 21 Tell ye, and bring *them* near; yea, let them take counsel together: Who hath declared this from ancient time? *Who* hath told it from that time? *Have* not I the LORD? And *there is* no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; *there is* none beside me. 22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for *I am* God, and *there is* none else. 23 I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth *in* righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. 24 Surely, shall *one* say, In the LORD have I righteousness and strength: *even* to him shall *men* come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. 25 In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.

What is here said is intended, as before,

I. For the conviction of idolaters, to show them their folly in worshipping gods that cannot help them, and neglecting a God that can. Let all *that have escaped of the nations*, not only the people of the Jews, but those of other nations that were by Cyrus released out of captivity in Babylon, let them come, and hear what is to be said against the worshipping of idols, that they may be cured of it as well as the Jews, that Babylon, which had of old been the womb of idolatry might now become the grave of it. Let the refugees assemble themselves and come together; God has something to say to them for their own good, and it is this, that idolatry is a foolish sottish thing, upon two accounts:—

1. It is setting up a refuge of lies for themselves: *They set up the wood of their graven image*; for that is the *substratum*. Though they overlay it with gold, deck it with ornaments, and make a god of it, yet still it is but wood. *They pray to a god that cannot save*; for he cannot hear, he cannot help, he can do nothing. How do those disparage themselves who give honour to that as a god which cannot, as a god, give good to them! How do those deceive themselves who pray for relief to that which is in no capacity at all to relieve them! Certainly those have no knowledge, or are brutish in their knowledge, who take so much pains, and do so much penance, in seeking the favour of a god that has no power

2. It is setting up a rival with God, the only living and true God (v. 21): "Summon them all; tell them that the great cause shall again be tried, though once adjudged, between God and Baal. *Bring them near, and let them take counsel together* what to say in defence of themselves and their idols. It shall, as before, be put upon this issue: let them show when any of their gods did with any certainty foretel future events, as the God of Israel has done, and it shall be acknowledged that they have some colour for their pretensions. But none of them ever did; their prophets were lying prophets; but *I the Lord have told it from that time, long before it came to pass; therefore you must own there is no other God besides me.*"

(1.) None besides is fit to rule. He is a just God, and rules in justice, and will execute justice for those that are oppressed.

(2.) None besides is able to help. As he is a just God, so he is the Saviour, who can save without the assistance of any, but without whom none can save. Those therefore have no sense of truth and falsehood, good and evil, no, nor of their own interest, that set up any in competition with him.

II. For the comfort and encouragement of all God's faithful worshippers, whoever they are, v. 22. Those that worship idols pray to gods that cannot save; but the God of Israel says it to all the ends of the earth, to his people, though they are scattered into the utmost corners of the world and seem to be lost and forgotten in their dispersion, "Let them but look to me by faith and prayer, look above instruments and second causes, look off from all pretenders, and look up to me, and they shall be saved." It seems to refer further to the conversion of the Gentiles that live in the ends of the earth, the most distant nations, when the standard of the gospel is set up. *To it shall the Gentiles seek.* When Christ is lifted up from the earth, as the brazen serpent upon the pole, he shall draw the eyes of all men to him. They shall all be invited to look unto him, as the stung Israelites did to the brazen serpent; and so strong is the eye of faith that by divine grace it will reach the Saviour and fetch in salvation by him even from the ends of the earth; for he is God, and there is none else. Two things are here promised, for the abundant satisfaction of all that by faith look to the Saviour:—

1. That the glory of the God they serve shall be greatly advanced; and this will be good news to all the Lord's people, that, how much soever they and their names are depressed, God will be exalted, v. 23. This is confirmed by an oath, that we might have strong consolation: *I have sworn by myself* (and God can swear by no greater, Heb. vi. 13); *the word has gone out of my mouth,* and shall neither be recalled nor return empty; it has gone forth in righteousness, for it is the most reasonable equitable thing

in the world that he who made all should be Lord of all, that, since all beings are derived from him, they should all be devoted to him. He has said it, and it shall be made good, *I will be exalted*, Ps. xlv. 10. He has assured us, (1.) That he will be universally submitted to, that the kingdoms of the world shall become his kingdom. They shall do him homage—*Unto me every knee shall bow*; and they shall bind themselves by an oath of allegiance to him—*Unto me every tongue shall swear.* This is applied to the dominion of our Lord Jesus, Rom. xiv. 10, 11. *We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ* and give account to him, for it is written, *As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me and every tongue shall confess to God*; and it seems to be referred to, Ps. ii. 9, 10. If the heart be brought into obedience to Christ, and made willing in the day of his power, the knee will bow to him in humble adorations and addresses, and in cheerful obedience to his commands, submission to his disposals, and compliance with his will in both; and the tongue will swear to him, will lay a bond upon the soul to engage it for ever to him; for he that bears an honest mind never startles at assurances.

(2) That he will be universally sought unto, and application shall be made to him from all parts of the world: *Unto him shall men of distant countries come*, to implore his favour. *Unto thee shall all flesh come* with their request, Ps. lxxv. 2. And, when Christ was lifted up from the earth, he drew all men to him. (3.) That it will be to no purpose to make opposition to him. *All that are incensed against him*, that rage at his bonds and cords—the nations that are angry because he has taken to himself his great power and has reigned, that have been incensed at the strictness of his laws, the success of his gospel, and the spiritual nature of his kingdom—they shall be ashamed; some shall be brought to a penitential shame for it, others to a remediless ruin. One way or other, sooner or later, all that are uneasy at Christ's government and victories will be made ashamed of their folly and obstinacy. Blessed be God for the assurance here given us that, whatever becomes of us and our interests, *the Lord will reign for ever!*

2. That the welfare of the souls they are concerned for shall be effectually secured. *Surely shall one say*, and another shall learn by his example to say the same, so that all the seed of Israel, according to the Spirit, shall say, and stand to it, (1.) That God has a sufficiency for them and that in Christ there is enough to supply all their needs. *In the Lord is all righteousness and strength* (so the margin reads it); he is himself righteous and strong. He can do every thing, and yet will do nothing but what is unquestionably just and equitable. He has also wherewithal to supply the needs of those that seek to him and depend upon him, upon

the equity of his providence and the treasures of his grace; nay, we may say, not only "He has it," but, "In him we have it," because he has said that he will be to us a God. In the Lord the captive Jews had righteousness (that is, grace both to sanctify their afflictions to them and to qualify them for deliverance) and strength for their support and escape. In the Lord Jesus we have righteousness to recommend us to the good-will of God towards us, and strength to begin and carry on the good work of God in us. He is the fountain of both, and on him we must depend for both, must go forth in his strength, and make mention of his righteousness, Ps. lxxi. 16. (2.) That they shall have an abundant bliss and satisfaction in this. [1.] The people of the Jews shall in the Lord be justified before men and openly glory in their God. The oppressors reproached them, loaded them with calumny, and boasted even of a right to oppress them, as abandoned by their God; but, when God shall work out their deliverance, that shall be their justification from these hard censures, and therefore they shall glory in it. [2.] All true Christians, that depend upon Christ for strength and righteousness, in him shall be justified and shall glory in that. Observe, *First*, All believers are the seed of Israel, an upright praying seed. *Secondly*, The great privilege they enjoy by Jesus Christ is that in him, and for his sake, they are justified before God, Christ being made of God to them righteousness. All that are justified will own it is in Christ that they are justified, nor could they be justified by any other; and those who are justified shall be glorified. And therefore, *Thirdly*, The great duty believers owe to Christ is to glory in him, and to make their boast of him. Therefore he is made all in all to us, that *whoso glories may glory in the Lord*; and let us comply with this intention.

CHAP. XLVI.

God, by the prophet here, designing shortly to deliver them out of their captivity, prepares them for that deliverance by possessing them with a detestation of idols and with a believing confidence in God, even their own God. I. Let them not be afraid of the idols of Babylon, as if they could in any way obstruct their deliverance, for they should be defaced (ver. 1, 2); but let them trust in that God who had often delivered them to do it still, to do it now, ver. 3, 4. II. Let them not think to make idols of their own, images of the God of Israel, by them to worship him, as the Babylonians worship their gods, ver. 5-7. Let them not be so sottish (ver. 8), but have an eye to God in his word, not in an image; let them depend upon that, and upon the promises and predictions of it, and God's power to accomplish them all, ver. 9-11. And let them know that the unbelief of man shall not make the word of God of no effect, ver. 12, 13.

BEL boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle: your carriages were heavy loaden; they are a burden to the weary beast. 2 They stoop, they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity. 3 Hearken unto me, O house of Ja-

cob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne *by me* from the belly, which are carried from the womb: 4 And *even to your old age* I am he; and *even to hoar hairs* will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.

We are here told,

I. That the false gods will certainly fail their worshippers when they have most need of them, v. 1, 2. Bel and Nebo were two celebrated idols of Babylon. Some make Bel to be a contraction of Baal; others rather think not, but that it was Belus, one of their first kings, who after his death was deified. As Bel was a deified prince, so (some think) Nebo was a deified prophet for so Nebo signifies; so that Bel and Nebo were their Jupiter and their Mercury or Apollo. Barnabas and Paul passed at Lystra for Jupiter and Mercury. The names of these idols were taken into the names of their princes, Bel into Belshazzar's, Nebo into Nebuchadnezzar's and Nebuzaradan's, &c. These gods they had long worshipped, and in their revels praised them for their successes (as appears, Dan. v. 4); and they insulted over Israel as if Bel and Nebo were too hard for Jehovah and could detain them in captivity in defiance of their God. Now that this might be no discouragement to the poor captives, God here tells them what shall become of these idols, which they threaten with. When Cyrus takes Babylon down, go the idols. It was usual then with conquerors to destroy the gods of the place and people they conquered, and to put the gods of their own nation in the room of them, ch. xxxvii. 19. Cyrus will do so; and then Bel and Nebo, that were set up on high and looked great; bold, and erect, shall stoop and bow down at the feet of the soldier that plunders their temples. And because there is a great deal of gold and silver upon them, which was intended to adorn them, but serves to expose them, they carry them away with the rest of the spoil. The carriers' horses, or mules, are laden with them and their other idols, to be sent among other lumber (for so it seems they accounted them rather than treasure) into Persia. So far are they from being able to support the worshippers that they are themselves a heavy load in the waggon, and a burden to the weary beast. The idols cannot help one another (v. 2): They stoop, they bow down together. They are all alike, tottering things, and their day has come to fall. Their worshippers cannot help them: They could not deliver the burden out of the enemy's hand, but themselves (both the idols and the idolaters) have gone into captivity. Let not therefore God's people be afraid of either. When God's ark was taken prisoner by the

Philistines it proved a burden, not to the beasts, but to the conquerors, who were forced to return it; but, when Bel and Nebo have gone into captivity, their worshippers may even give their good word with them: they will never recover themselves.

II. That the true God will never fail his worshippers: "You hear what has become of Bel and Nebo, now *hearken to me, O house of Jacob!* v. 3, 4. Am I such a god as these? No; though you are brought low, and the house of Israel is but a remnant, your God has been, is, and ever will be, your powerful and faithful protector."

1. Let God's Israel do him the justice to own that he has hitherto been kind to them, careful of them, tender over them, and has all along done well for them. Let them own, (1.) That he bore them at first: *I have made.* Out of what womb came they, but that of his mercy, and grace, and promise? He formed them into a people and gave them their constitution. Every good man is what God makes him. (2.) That he bore them up all along: You have been *borne by me from the belly, and carried from the womb.* God began betimes to do them good, as soon as ever they were formed into a nation, nay, when as yet they were very few, and strangers. God took them under a special protection, and *suffered no man to do them wrong*, Ps. cv. 12—14. In the infancy of their state, when they were not only foolish and helpless, as children, but froward and peevish, God carried them in the arms of his power and love, bore them *as upon eagles' wings*, Exod. xix. 4; Deut. xxxii. 11. Moses must not patience to *carry them as the nursing father does the sucking child* (Num. xi. 12), but God bore them, and bore their manners, Acts xiii. 18. And as God began early to do them good (when *Israel was a child, then I loved him*); so he had constantly continued to do them good: he had carried them from the womb to this day. And we may all witness for God that he has been thus gracious to us: We have been borne by him from the belly, from the womb, else we should have died from the womb and given up the ghost when we came out of the belly. We have been the constant care of his kind providence, carried in the arms of his power and in the bosom of his love and pity. The new man is so; all that in us which is born of God is borne up by him, else it would soon fail. Our spiritual life is sustained by his grace as necessarily and constantly as our natural life by his providence. The saints have acknowledged that God has carried them from the womb, and have encouraged themselves with the consideration of it in their greatest straits, Ps. xxii. 9, 10; lxxi. 5, 6, 17.

2. He will then do them the kindness to promise that he will never leave them: He that was their first will be their last; he that was the author will be the finisher of

their well-being (v. 4): "You have been *borne by me from the belly*, nursed when you were children; and *even to your old age I am he*, when, by reason of your decays and infirmities, you will need help as much as in your infancy." Israel were now growing old, so was their covenant by which they were incorporated, Heb. viii. 13. *Gray hairs were here and there upon them*, Hos. vii. 9. And they had hastened their old age, and the calamities of it, by their irregularities. But God will not cast them off now, will not fail them when their strength fails; he is still their God, will still carry them in the same everlasting arms that were laid under them in Moses's time, Deut. xxxiii. 27. He has made them and owns his interest in them, and therefore he will bear them, will bear with their infirmities, and bear them up under their afflictions: "Even *I will carry and will deliver them*; I will now bear them upon eagles' wings out of Babylon, as in their infancy I bore them out of Egypt." This promise to aged Israel is applicable to every aged Israelite. God has graciously engaged to support and comfort his faithful servants, even in their old age: "Even *to your old age*, when you grow unfit for business, when you are compassed with infirmities, and perhaps your relations begin to grow weary of you, yet *I am he*—he that I am, he that I have been—the very same by whom you have been borne from the belly and carried from the womb. You change, but I am the same. I am he that I have promised to be, he that you have found me, and he that you would have me to be. *I will carry you, I will bear*, will bear you up and bear you out, and will carry you on in your way and carry you home at last."

5 To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like? 6 They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith; and he maketh it a god: they fall down, yea, they worship. 7 They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth; from his place shall he not remove: yea, one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble. 8 Remember this, and show yourselves men: bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors. 9 Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me; 10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall

stand, and I will do all my pleasure :
 11 Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country : yea, I have spoken *it*, I will also bring it to pass ; I have purposed *it*, I will also do it.
 12 Harken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that *are* far from righteousness : 13 I bring near my righteousness ; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry : and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory.

The deliverance of Israel by the destruction of Babylon (the general subject of all these chapters) is here insisted upon, and again promised, for the conviction both of idolaters who set up as rivals with God, and of oppressors who were enemies to the people of God.

1. For the conviction of those who made and worshipped idols, especially those of Israel who did so, who would have images of their God, as the Babylonians had of theirs,

1. He challenges them either to frame an image that should be thought a resemblance of him or to set up any being that should stand in competition with him (v. 5) : *To whom will you liken me?* It is absurd to think of representing an infinite and eternal Spirit by the figure of any creature whatsoever. It is to change his truth into a lie and to turn his glory into shame. None ever saw any similitude of him, nor can see his face and live. *To whom then can we liken God?* ch. xl. 18, 25. It is likewise absurd to think of making any creature equal with the Creator, who is infinitely above the noblest creatures, yea, or to make any comparison between the creature and the Creator, since between infinite and finite there is no proportion.

2. He exposes the folly of those who made idols and then prayed to them, v. 6, 7. (1.) They were at great charge upon their idols and spared no cost to fit them for their purpose : *They lavish gold out of the bag ;* no little will serve, and they do not care how much goes, though they pinch their families and weaken their estates by it. How does the profuseness of idolaters shame the niggardliness of many who call themselves God's servants but are for a religion that will cost them nothing ! *Some lavish gold out of the bag* to make an idol of it in the house, while others *hoard up gold in the bag* to make an idol of it in the heart ; for *covetousness is idolatry*, as dangerous, though not as scandalous, as the other. *They weigh silver in the balance*, either to be the matter of their idol (for even those that were most sottish had so much sense as to think that God should be served with the best they had, the best they could possibly afford ; those that represented him by a calf made it

a golden one) or to pay the workmen's wages. The service of sin often proves very expensive. (2.) They were in great care about their idols and took no little pains about them (v. 7) : *They bear him upon their own shoulders*, and do not hire porters to do it ; *they carry him, and set him in his place*, more like a dead corpse than a living God. They set him on a pedestal, *and he stands*. They take a great deal of pains to fasten him, and *from his place he shall not remove*, that they may know where to find him, though at the same time they know he can neither move a hand nor stir a step to do them any kindness. (3.) After all, they paid great respect to their idols, though they were but the works of their own hands and the creatures of their own fancies. When the goldsmith has made it that which they please to call a god *they fall down, yea, they worship it*. If they magnified themselves too much in pretending to make a god, as if they would atone for that, they vilified themselves as much in prostrating themselves to a god that they knew the original of. And, if they were deceived by the custom of their country in making such gods as these, they did no less deceive themselves when they cried unto them, though they knew they could not answer them, could not understand what they said to them, nor so much as reply *Yea, or No*, much less could they *save them out of their trouble*. Now shall any that have some knowledge of, and interest in, the true and living God, thus make fools of themselves ?

3. He puts it to themselves, and their own reason, let that judge in the case (v. 8) : *"Remember this, that has been often told you, what senseless helpless things idols are, and show yourselves men—men and not brutes, men and not babes. Act with reason ; act with resolution ; act for your own interest. Do a wise thing ; do a brave thing ; and scorn to disparage your own judgment as you do when you worship idols."* Note, Sinners would become saints if they would but show themselves men, if they would but support the dignity of their nature and use aright its powers and capacities. "Many things you have been reminded of ; bring them again to mind, recal them into your memories, and revolve them there. *O ! you transgressors, consider your ways ; remember whence you have fallen, and repent, and so recover yourselves.*"

4. He again produces incontestable proofs that he is God, that he and none besides is so (v. 9) : *I am God, and there is none else, none besides me ; I am God, and there is none like me*. This is that which we have need to be reminded of again and again ; for proof of it he refers, (1.) To the sacred history : *"Remember the former things of old, what the God of Israel did for his people in their beginnings, whether he did not that for them which no one else could, and which the false gods did not, nor could do, for*

their worshippers. Remember those things, and you will own that *I am God and there is none else.*" This is a good reason why we should give glory to him as a nonsuch, and why we should not give that glory to any other which is due to him alone, *Exod. xv. 11.* (2.) To the sacred prophecy. He is God alone, for it is he only that *declares the end from the beginning, v. 10.* From the beginning of time he declared the end of time, the end of all things. Enoch prophesied, *Behold, the Lord comes.* From the beginning of a nation he declares what the end of it will be. He told Israel what should befall them in the *latter days*, what *their end should be*, and wished they were so wise as to consider it, *Deut. xxxii. 20, 29.* From the beginning of an event he declares what the end of it will be. *Known unto God are all his works*, and, when he pleases, he makes them known. Further than prophecy guides us it is impossible for us to find out the work that God makes from the beginning to the end, *Eccl. iii. 11.* He declares from ancient times the things that are not yet done. Many scripture prophecies which were delivered long ago are not yet accomplished; but the accomplishment of some in the mean time is an earnest of the accomplishment of the rest in due time. By this it appears that he is God, and none else; it is he, and none besides, that can say, and make his words good, "*My counsel shall stand*, and all the powers of hell and earth cannot control or counterminn it nor all their policies correct or counterminn it." As God's operations are all according to his counsels, so his counsels shall all be fulfilled in his operations, and none of his measures shall be broken, none of his designs shall miscarry. This yields abundant satisfaction to those who have bound up all their comforts in God's counsels, that his counsel shall undoubtedly stand; and, if we are brought to this, that whatever pleases God pleases us, nothing can contribute more to make us easy than to be assured of this, that *God will do all his pleasure, Ps. cxxxv. 6.* The accomplishment of this particular prophecy, which relates to the elevation of Cyrus and his agency in the deliverance of God's people out of their captivity, is mentioned for the confirmation of this truth, that the Lord is God and there is none else; and this is a thing which shall shortly come to pass, *v. 11.* God by his counsel calls a *ravenous bird from the east*, a bird of prey, Cyrus, who (they say) had a nose like the beak of a hawk or eagle, to which some think this alludes, or (as others say) to the eagle which was his standard, as it was afterwards that of the Romans, to which there is supposed to be a reference, *Matt. xxiv. 28.* Cyrus came from the east at God's call: for God is Lord of hosts and of those that have hosts at command. And, if God give him a call, he will give him success. He is the man that shall *execute God's*

counsel, though he comes from a far country and knows nothing of the matter. Note, Even those that know not, and mind not, God's revealed will, are made use of to fulfil the counsels of his secret will, which shall all be punctually accomplished in their season by what hand he pleases. That which is here added, to ratify this particular prediction, may abundantly show to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel: "*I have spoken it by my servants the prophets, and what I have spoken is just the same with what I have purposed.*" For, though God has many things in his purposes which are not in his prophecies, he has nothing in his prophecies but what are in his purposes. And he *will do it*, for he will never change his mind; he *will bring it to pass*, for it is not in the power of any creature to control him. Observe with what majesty he says it, as one having authority: *I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass. Dictum, factum—no sooner said than done. I have purposed it*, and he does not say, "*I will take care it shall be done,*" but, "*I will do it.*" Heaven and earth shall pass away sooner than one tittle of the word of God.

II. For the conviction of those that daringly opposed the counsels of God assurance is here given not only that they shall be accomplished, but that they shall be accomplished very shortly, *v. 12, 13.*

1. This is addressed to the *stout-hearted*, that is, either, (1.) The proud and obstinate Babylonians, *that are far from righteousness*, far from doing justice or showing mercy to those they have power over, that say they will never let the oppressed go free, but will still detain them in spite of their petitions or God's predictions, that are far from any thing of clemency or compassion to the miserable. Or, (2.) The unhumiliated Jews, that have been long under the hammer, long in the furnace, but are not broken, are not melted, that, like the unbelieving murmuring Israelites in the wilderness, think themselves far from God's righteousness (that is, from the performance of his promise, and his appearing to judge for them), and by their distrusts set themselves at a yet further distance from it, and keep good things from themselves, as their fathers, who could not enter into the land of promise because of unbelief. This is applicable to the Jewish nation when they rejected the gospel of Christ; though they followed after the law of righteousness, they attained not to righteousness, because they sought it not by faith, *Rom. ix. 31, 32.* They perished far from righteousness; and it was because they were *stout-hearted, Rom. x. 3.*

2. Now to them God says that, whatever they think, the one in presumption, the other in despair, (1.) Salvation shall be certainly wrought for God's people. If men will not do them justice, God will, and his righteousness shall effect that for them which men's

righteousness would not reach to. He will *not* see salvation in Zion, that is, he will make Jerusalem a place of safety and defence to all those who will plant themselves there; thence shall salvation go forth for Israel his glory. God glories in his Israel; and he will be glorified in the salvation he designs to work out for them; it shall redound greatly to his honour. This salvation shall be in Zion; for thence the gospel shall take rise (*ch. ii. 3*), thither the Redeemer comes (*ch. lix. 20*, *Rom. xi. 26*), and it is Zion's King that has salvation, *Zech. ix. 9*. (2.) It shall be very shortly wrought. This is especially insisted on with those who thought it at a distance: "*I bring near my righteousness, nearer than you think of; perhaps it is nearest of all when your straits are greatest and your enemies most injurious; it shall not be far off when there is occasion for it, Ps. lxxxv. 9. Behold, the Judge stands before the door. My salvation shall not tarry any longer than till it is ripe and you are ready for it; and therefore, though it tarry, wait for it; wait patiently, for he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.*"

CHAP. XLVII.

Infinite Wisdom could have ordered things so that Israel might have been released and yet Babylon unhurt; but if they will harden their hearts, and will not let the people go, they must thank themselves that their ruin is made to pave the way to Israel's release. That ruin is here, in this chapter, largely foretold, not to gratify a spirit of revenge in the people of God, who had been used barbarously by them, but to encourage their faith and hope concerning their own deliverance, and to be a type of the downfall of that great enemy of the New-Testament church which, in the Revelations, goes under the name of "Babylon." In this chapter we have, I. The greatness of the ruin threatened, that Babylon should be brought down to the dust, and made completely miserable, should fall from the height of prosperity into the depth of adversity, *ver. 1-5*. II. The sins that provoked God to bring this ruin upon them. 1. Their cruelty to the people of God, *ver. 6*. 2. Their pride and carnal security, *ver. 7-9*. 3. Their confidence in themselves and contempt of God, *ver. 10*. 4. Their use of magic arts and their dependence upon enchantments and sorceries, which should be so far from standing them in any stead that they should but hasten their ruin, *ver. 11-15*.

COME down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground: *there is no throne*, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate. 2 Take the millstones, and grind meal: uncover thy locks, make bare the leg, uncover the thigh, pass over the rivers. 3 Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen: I will take vengeance, and I will not meet thee as a man. 4 As for our redeemer, the LORD of hosts is his name, the Holy One of Israel. 5 Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms. 6 I was wroth with my people, I have polluted mine inheritance, and given them into thine hand: thou

didst show them no mercy; upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke.

In these verses God by the prophet sends a messenger even to Babylon, like that of Jonah to Nineveh: "The time is at hand when Babylon shall be destroyed." Fair warning is thus given her, that she may by repentance prevent the ruin and there may be a lengthening of her tranquillity. We may observe here,

I. God's controversy with Babylon. We will begin with that, for there all the calamity begins; she has made God her enemy, and then who can befriend her: Let her know that the righteous Judge, to whom vengeance belongs, has said (*v. 3*), *I will take vengeance*. She has provoked God, and shall be reckoned with for it when the measure of her iniquities is full. Woe to those on whom God comes to take vengeance; for who knows the power of his anger and what a fearful thing it is to fall into his hands? Were it a man like ourselves who would be revenged on us, we might hope to be a match for him, either to make our escape from him or to make our part good with him. But he says, "*I will not meet thee as a man*, not with the compassions of a man, but I will be to thee as a lion, and a young lion" (*Hos. v. 14*); or, rather, not with the strength of a man, which is easily resisted, but with the power of a God, which cannot be resisted. Not with the justice of a man, which may be bribed, or biassed, or mollified by a foolish pity, but with the justice of a God, which is strict and severe, and can never be evaded. As in pardoning the penitent, so in punishing the impenitent, he is God and not man, *Hos. xi. 9*.

II. The particular ground of this controversy. We are sure that there is cause for it, and it is a just cause; it is the *vengeance of his temple* (*Jer. l. 28*); it is for *violence done to Zion*, *Jer. li. 35*. God will plead his people's cause against them. It is acknowledged (*v. 6*) that God had, in wrath, delivered his people into the hands of the Babylonians, had made use of them for the correction of his children, and had by their means polluted his inheritance, had left his peculiar people exposed to suffer in common with the rest of the nations, had suffered the heathen, who should have been kept at a distance, to come into his sanctuary and defile his temple, *Ps. lxxix. 1*. Herein God was righteous; but the Babylonians carried the matter too far; and, when they had them in their hands (triumphing to see a people that had been so much in reputation for wisdom, holiness, and honour, brought thus low), with a base and servile spirit they trampled upon them, and showed them no mercy, no, not the common instances of humanity which the miserable are entitled to purely by their misery. They used them

barbarously, and with an air of contempt, nay, and of complacency in their calamities. They were brought under the yoke; but, as if that were not enough, they *laid the yoke on very heavily*, adding affliction to the afflicted. Nay, they laid it *on the ancient*—the elders in years, who were past their labour, and must sink under a yoke which those in their youthful strength would easily bear—the elders in office, those that had been judges and magistrates, and persons of the first rank. They took a pride in putting these to the meanest hardest drudgery. Jeremiah laments this, that the *faces of elders were not honoured*, Lam. v. 12. Nothing brings a surer or a sorer ruin upon any people than cruelty, especially to God's Israel.

III. The terror of this controversy. She has reason to tremble when she is told who it is that has this quarrel with her (v. 4): "*As for our Redeemer, our Goël, that undertakes to plead our cause as the avenger of our blood, he has two names which speak not only comfort to us, but terror to our adversaries.*" 1. "*He is the Lord of hosts, that has all the creatures at his command, and therefore has all power both in heaven and in earth.*" Woe to those against whom the Lord fights, for the whole creation is at war with them. 2. "*He is the Holy One of Israel, a God in covenant with us, who has his residence among us, and will faithfully perform all the promises he has made to us.*" God's power and holiness are engaged against Babylon and for Zion. This may fitly be applied to Christ, our great Redeemer. He is both Lord of hosts and the Holy One of Israel.

IV. The consequences of it to Babylon. She is called a *virgin*, because so she thought herself, though she was the mother of harlots. She was beautiful as a virgin, and courted by all about her; she had been called *tender and delicate* (v. 1), and the *lady of kingdoms* (v. 5); but now the case is altered. 1. Her honour is gone, and she must bid farewell to all her dignity. She that had sat at the upper end of the world, sat in state and sat at ease, must now *come down and sit in the dust*, as very mean and a deep mourner, must *sit on the ground*, for she shall be so emptied and impoverished that she shall not have a seat left her to sit upon. 2. Her power is gone, and she must bid farewell to all her dominion. She shall rule no more as she has done, nor give law as she has done to her neighbours: *There is no throne, none for thee, O daughter of the Chaldeans!* Note, Those that abuse their honour or power provoke God to deprive them of it, and to make them *come down and sit in the dust*. 3. Her ease and pleasures are gone: "*She shall no more be called tender and delicate* as she has been, for she shall not only be deprived of all those things with which she pampered herself, but shall

be put to hard service and made to feel both want and pain, which will be more than doubly grievous to her who formerly *would not venture to set so much as the sole of her foot to the ground for tenderness and for delicacy*," Deut. xxviii. 56. It is our wisdom not to use ourselves to be tender and delicate, because we know not how hardly others may use us before we die nor what straits we may be reduced to. 4. Her liberty is gone, and she is brought into a state of servitude and as sore a bondage as she in her prosperity had brought others to. Even the great men of Babylon must now receive the same law from the conquerors that they used to give to the conquered: "*Take the mill-stones and grind meal* (v. 2), set to work, to hard labour" (like beating hemp in Bridewell), "*which will make thee sweat so that thou must throw off all thy head-dresses, and uncover thy locks.*" When they were driven from one place to another, at the capricious humours of their masters, they must be forced to wade up to the middle through the waters, to *make bare the leg and uncover the thigh*, that they might *pass over the rivers*, which would be a great mortification to those that used to ride in state. But let them not complain, for just thus they had formerly used their captives; and *with what measure they then meted it is now measured to them again*. Let those that have power use it with temper and moderation, considering that the spoke which is uppermost will be under. 5. All her glory, and all her glorying, are gone. Instead of glory, she has ignominy (v. 3): *Thy nakedness shall be uncovered and thy shame shall be seen*, according to the base and barbarous usage they commonly gave their captives, to whom, for covetousness of their clothes, they did not leave rags sufficient to cover their nakedness, so void were they of the modesty as well as of the pity due to the human nature. Instead of glorying she *sits silently, and gets into darkness* (v. 5), ashamed to show her face, for she has quite lost her credit and *shall no more be called the lady of kingdoms*. Note, God can make those sit silently that used to make the greatest noise in the world, and send those into darkness that used to make the greatest figure. Let him that glories, therefore, glory in a God that changes not, and not in any worldly wealth, pleasure, or honour, which are subject to change.

7 And thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever: so that thou didst not lay these *things* to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it. 8 Therefore hear now this; *thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall*

I know the loss of children: 9 But these two *things* shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection for the multitude of thy sorceries, and for the great abundance of thine enchantments. 10 For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, *I am, and none else beside me.* 11 Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, *which* thou shalt not know. 12 Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. 13 Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from *these things* that shall come upon thee. 14 Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: *there shall not be* a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it. 15 Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured, *even* thy merchants, from thy youth: they shall wander every one to his quarter; none shall save thee.

Babylon, now doomed to ruin, is here justly upbraided with her pride, luxury, and security, in the day of her prosperity, and the confidence she had in her own wisdom and forecast, and particularly in the prognostications and counsels of the astrologers. These things are mentioned both to justify God in bringing these judgments upon her and to mortify her, and put her to so much the greater shame, under these judgments; for, when God comes forth to take vengeance, glory belongs to him, but confusion to the sinner.

I. The Babylonians are here upbraided with their pride and haughtiness, and the great conceit they had of themselves, because of their wealth and power, and the

vast extent of their dominion; it was the language both of the government and of the body of the people: *Thou sayest in thy heart* (and God, who searches all hearts, can tell men what they say there, though they never speak it out) *I am, and none else besides me,* v. 8 and 10. The repetition of this part of the charge intimates that they said it often, and that it was very offensive to God. It is the very word that God has often said concerning himself, *I am, and none else besides me,* denoting his self-existence, his infinite and incomparable perfections, and his sole supremacy. All this Babylon pretends to; and no wonder if she that assumed a power to make what gods and goddesses she pleased for the people to worship made herself one among the rest. It is presumption to say of any creature, "It is, and there is not its like, there is none besides it" (for creatures stand very nearly upon a level with one another); but it is insufferable arrogance for any to say so of themselves, and an evidence of their self-ignorance.

II. They are upbraided with their luxury and love of ease (v. 8): "*Thou that art given to pleasures, art a slave to them, art in them as in thy element, and, that thou mayest enjoy them without disturbance or interruption, dwellest carelessly and layest nothing to heart.*" Great wealth and plenty are great temptations to sensuality, and, where there is fulness of bread, there is commonly abundance of idleness. But if those that are given to pleasures, and dwell carelessly, would but hear this, that *for all these things God will bring them into judgment,* it would be a damp to their mirth, an allay to their pleasure, and would find them something to be in care about.

III. They are upbraided with their carnal security and their vain confidence of the perpetuity of their pomps and pleasures. This is much insisted on here. Observe,

1. The cause of their security. They thought themselves safe and out of danger, not because they were ignorant of the uncertainty of all earthly enjoyments and the inevitable fate that attends states and kingdoms as well as particular persons, but *because they did not lay this to heart,* did not apply it to themselves, nor give it a due consideration. They lulled themselves asleep in ease and pleasure, and dreamt of nothing else but that *to-morrow should be as this day, and much more abundant.* They did not remember the latter end of it—the latter end of their prosperity, that it is a fading flower, and will wither—the latter end of their iniquity, that it will be bitterness, that the day will come when their injustice and oppression must be reckoned for and punished. *She did not remember her latter end* (so some read it); she forgot that her day would come to fall and what would be in the end hereof. It was the ruin of Jerusalem (Lam.

1. 9) that *she remembered not her last end, therefore she came down wonderfully*; and it was Babylon's ruin too. The children of men are easy, and think themselves safe, in their sinful ways, only because they never think of death, and judgment, and their future state.

2. The ground of their security. They trusted in their wickedness and in their wisdom, v. 10. (1.) Their power and wealth, which they had gotten by fraud and oppression, were their confidence: *Thou hast trusted in thy wickedness*, as Doeg, Ps. lii. 7. Many have so debauched their own consciences, and have got to such a pitch of daring wickedness, that they stick at nothing; and this they trust to carry them through those difficulties which embarrass men who make conscience of what they say and do. They doubt not but they shall be too hard for all their enemies, because they dare lie, and kill, and forswear themselves, and do any thing for their interest. Thus they trust in their wickedness to secure them, which is the only thing that will ruin them. (2.) Their policy and craft, which they called their *wisdom*, were their confidence. They thought they could outwit all mankind, and therefore might set all their enemies at defiance. But their *wisdom and knowledge perverted them*, and turned them out of the way, made them forget themselves, and the preparation necessary to be made for hereafter.

3. The expressions of their security. Three things this proud and haughty monarchy said, in her security:—(1.) “*I shall be a lady for ever*,” v. 7. She looked upon the patent of her honour to be not merely during the pleasure of the sovereign Lord, the fountain of honour, or during her own good behaviour, but to be perpetual to the present generation and their heirs and successors for ever. She was not only proud that she was a lady, but confident that she should be a lady for ever. Thus the New-Testament Babylon says, *I sit as a queen, and shall see no sorrow*, Rev. xviii. 7. Those ladies mistake themselves, and consider not their latter end, who think they shall be ladies for ever; for death will shortly lay their honour with them in the dust. Saints will be saints for ever, but lords and ladies will not be so for ever. (2.) “*I shall not sit as a widow*, in solitude and sorrow, shall never lose the power and wealth I am thus wedded to; the monarchy shall never want a monarch to espouse and protect it, and be a husband to the state; *nor shall I know the loss of children*,” v. 8. She was as confident of the continuance of the numbers of her people as of the dignity of her prince, and had no fear of being either deposed or depopulated. Those that are in the height of prosperity are apt to fancy themselves out of the reach of adverse fate. (3.) “*No one sees me when I do amiss, and therefore*

there will be none to call me to an account,” v. 10. It is common for sinners to promise themselves impunity, because they promise themselves secrecy, in their wicked ways. They trust to their wicked arts and designs to stand them in stead, because they think they have carried them on so plausibly that none can discern the wickedness and deceit of them.

4. The punishment of their security. It shall be their ruin; and it will be, (1.) A complete ruin, the ruin of all their comforts and confidences: “*These two things shall come upon thee* (the very two things that thou didst set at defiance), *loss of children and widowhood*,” v. 9. Both thy princes and thy people shall be cut off, so that thou shalt be no more a government, no more a nation.” Note, God often brings upon secure sinners those very mischiefs which they least feared and thought themselves in least danger of. “*They shall come upon thee in their perfection*, with all their aggravating circumstances and without any thing to allay or mitigate them.” Afflictions to God's children are not afflictions in perfection. Widowhood is not to them a calamity in perfection, for they have this to comfort themselves with, that their Maker is their husband; loss of children is not, for he is better to them than ten sons. But on his enemies they come in perfection. Widowhood and loss of children are either of them great griefs, but both together great indeed. Naomi thinks she may well be called *Marah* when she is *left both of her sons and of her husband* (Ruth i. 5); and yet on her these evils did not come in perfection, for she had two daughters-in-law left, that were comforts to her. But on Babylon they come in perfection; she has no comfort remaining. (2.) It will be a sudden and surprising ruin. The evil shall come *in one day, nay, in a moment*, which will make it much the more terrible, especially to those that were so very secure. “*Evil shall come upon thee* (v. 11) and thou shalt have neither time nor way to provide against it, or to prepare for it; *for thou shalt not know whence it rises*, and therefore shalt not know where to stand upon thy guard.” *Thou shalt not know the morning thereof*; so the Hebrew phrase is. We know just when and where the day will break and the sun rise, but we know not what the day, when it comes, will bring forth, nor when or where trouble will arise; perhaps the storm may come from that point of the compass which we little thought of. Babylon pretended to great wisdom and knowledge (v. 10), but with all her knowledge she cannot foresee, nor with all her wisdom prevent, the ruin threatened: “*Desolation shall come upon thee suddenly*, as a thief in the night, *which thou shalt not know*, that is, which thou little thoughtest of.” Fair warning was indeed given them, by

Isaiah and other prophets of the Lord, of this desolation; but they slighted that notice, and would give no credit to it, and therefore justly is it so ordered that they should have no other notice of it, but that partly through their own security, and partly through the swiftness and subtlety of the enemy, when it came it should be a perfect surprise to them. Those that slight the warnings of the written word, let them not expect any other premonitions. (3.) It will be an irresistible ruin, and such as they will have no fence against: "*Mischief shall come upon thee so suddenly that thou shalt have no time to turn thee in, so strongly that thou shalt not be able to make head against it and to put it off and save thyself.*" There is no opposing the judgments of God when they come with commission. Babylon herself, with all her wealth, and power, and multitude, is not able to put off the mischief that comes.

IV. They are upbraided with their divinations, their magical and astrological arts and sciences, which the Chaldeans, above any other nation, were notorious for, and from them other nations borrowed all their learning of that kind.

1. This is here spoken of as one of their provoking sins, which would bring the judgments of God upon them, v. 9. "These evils shall come upon thee to punish thee *for the multitude of thy sorceries, and the great abundance of thy enchantments.*" Witchcraft is a sin in its own nature exceedingly heinous; it is giving that honour to the devil which is due to God only, making God's enemy our guide and the father of lies our oracle. In Babylon it was a national sin, and had the protection and countenance of the government; conjurors, for aught that appears, were their privy counsellors and prime ministers of state. And shall not God visit for these things? Observe what a multitude, what a great abundance, of sorceries and enchantments there were among them. Such a bewitching sin this was that when it was once admitted it spread like wildfire, and they never knew any end of it; the deceived and the deceivers both increased strangely.

2. It is here spoken of as one of their vain confidences, which they relied much upon, but should be deceived in, for it would not serve so much as to give them notice of the judgments coming, much less to guard against them. (1.) They are here upbraided with the mighty pains they had taken about their sorceries and enchantments: Thou hast laboured in them *from thy youth*, v. 12. They trained up their young men in these studies, and those that applied themselves to them were indefatigable in their labours about them—reading books, making observations, trying experiments. Well, let them stand up now with their enchantments, and try their skill in the critical

moment. Let them make a stand, if they can, in opposition to the invading enemy; let them stand to offer their service to their country; but to what purpose? "*Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels* of this kind (v. 13); thou hast advised with them all, but hast received no satisfaction from them; the different schemes they have erected, and the different judgments they have given, have but increased thy perplexity and tired thee out." In the multitude of such counsellors there is no safety. (2.) They are upbraided with the variety they had of such kinds of people among them, v. 13. They had their *astrologers*, or viewers of the heavens, that did not consider them, as David, to behold the wisdom and power of God in them; but, under pretence of foretelling future events by them, they viewed the heavens and forgot him that made them and set their *dominion on the earth* (Job xxxviii. 33), and has himself dominion over them, for he rides on the heavens. They had their *star-gazers*, who by the motions of the stars, their conjunctions and oppositions, read the doom of states and kingdoms. They had their *monthly prognosticators*, their almanac-makers, that told what weather it should be or what news they should have each month. The great stock they had of these was what they valued themselves much upon; but they were all cheats, and their art was a sham. I confess I see not how the judicial astrology which some now pretend to, by the rules of which they undertake to prophecy concerning things to come, can be distinguished from that of the Chaldeans, nor therefore how it can escape the censure and contempt which this text lays that under; yet I fear there are some who study their almanacs, and regard them and their prognostications, more than their Bibles and the prophecies there. (3.) They are upbraided with the utter inability and insufficiency of all these pretenders to do them any kindness in the day of their distress. Let them see whether with the help of their enchantments they can prevail against their enemies, or profit themselves, inspirit their own forces or dispirit those that come against them, v. 12. Let them see what service those can do them who make a trade of divination: "*Let them stand up*, and either by their power save thee from these evils that are coming upon thee or by their foresight make such a discovery of them beforehand that thou mayest by needful precautions save thyself;" as Elisha, by notifying to the king of Israel the motions of the Syrian army, enabled him to *save himself, not once nor twice*, 2 Kings vi. 10. This baffling of the diviners was literally fulfilled when, the night that Babylon was taken and Belshazzar slain, all his astrologers, soothsayers, and wise men, were quite nonplussed with the handwriting on the wall that pro-

nounced the fatal sentence, Dan. v. 8. (4.) They are upbraided with the fall of the wise men themselves in the common ruin, v. 14. Those are unlikely to stand their friends in any stead who cannot secure themselves; they are as stubble at the best, worthless and useless, and *they shall be as stubble before a consuming fire.* The Persians, to make room for their own wise men, will cut off those of Babylon; that *fire shall burn them, and they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame.* Those can expect no other than to be devoured who by their sins make themselves fuel to a devouring fire. When God kindles a fire among them it shall not be a coal to warm at, and a fire to sit before, but a coal to burn them. Or, rather, it denotes that they shall be utterly consumed by the judgments of God, burnt quite to ashes, and there shall not remain one live coal to do any body any service; for *when God judges he will overcome.* (5.) They are upbraided with their merchants, and those they dealt with (v. 15), such as they dealt with from their youth, either, [1.] In a way of consultation. These astrologers, that dealt in the black art, they always loved to be dealing with, and they were in effect their merchants; fortune-telling was one of the best trades in Babylon, and those that followed that trade probably lived as splendidly and got as much money as the richest merchants; yet, when some of them were devoured, others fled their country, *every one to his quarter,* and there was none to save Babylon. Miserable comforters are they all. Or, [2.] In a way of commerce. As their astrologers, with whom they had laboured, failed them, so did their merchants; they took care to secure their own effects, and then valued not what became of Babylon. *They wandered every one to his own quarter;* each man shifted for his own safety, but none would offer to lend a helping hand, no, not to a city by which they had got so much money. Every one was for himself, but few for his friends. The New-Testament Babylon is lamented by the merchants that were made rich by her, but they very prudently stand afar off to lament her (Rev. xviii. 15), not willing to attempt any thing for her succour. Happy are those who by faith and prayer deal with one that will be a *very present help in time of trouble!*

CHAP. XLVIII.

God, having in the foregoing chapter reckoned with the Babylonians, and shown them their sins and the desolation that was coming upon them for their sins, to show that he hates sin wherever he finds it and will not connive at it in his own people, comes, in this chapter, to show the house of Jacob their sins, but, withal, the mercy God had in store for them notwithstanding; and he therefore sets their sins in order before them, that by their repentance and reformation they might be prepared for that mercy. I. He charges them with hypocrisy in that which is good and obstinacy in that which is evil, especially in their idolatry, notwithstanding the many convincing proofs God had given them that he is God alone, ver. 1—8. II. He assures them that their deliverance would be wrought purely for the sake of God's own name and not for any merit of theirs, ver. 9—11. III. He encourages them to depend purely upon God's power and promises for this

deliverance, ver. 12—15. IV. He shows them that, as it was by their own sin that they brought themselves into captivity, so it would be only by the grace of God that they would obtain the necessary preparations for their enlargement, ver. 16—19. V. He proclaims their release, yet with a proviso that the wicked shall have no benefit by it, ver. 20—22.

HEAR ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the LORD, and make mention of the God of Israel, *but not in truth, nor in righteousness.* 2 For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel; the LORD of hosts *is* his name. 3 I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I showed them; I did *them* suddenly, and they came to pass. 4 Because I knew that thou *art* obstinate, and thy neck *is* an iron sinew, and thy brow brass; 5 I have even from the beginning declared *it* to thee; before it came to pass I showed *it* thee: lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them. 6 Thou hast heard, see all this; and will not ye declare *it*? I have showed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them. 7 They are created now, and not from the beginning; even before the day when thou heardest them not; lest thou shouldest say, Behold, I knew them. 8 Yea, thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea, from that time *that* thine ear was not opened: for I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb.

We may observe here,

I. The hypocritical profession which many of the Jews made of religion and relation to God. To those who made such a profession the prophet is here ordered to address himself, for their conviction and humiliation, that they might own God's justice in what he had brought upon them. Now observe here,

1. How high their profession of religion soared, what a fair show they made in the flesh and how far they went towards heaven, what a good livery they wore and what a good face they put upon a very bad heart. (1.) They were the *house of Jacob*: they had a place and a name in the visible

church. *Jacob have I loved.* Jacob is God's chosen; and they are not only retainers to his family, but descendants from him. (2.) They were called by the name of *Israel*, an honourable name; they were of that people to whom pertained both the giving of the law and the promises. *Israel* signifies a *prince with God*; and they prided themselves in being of that princely race. (3.) *They came forth out of the waters of Judah*, and thence were called *Jews*; they were of the royal tribe, the tribe of which Shiloh was to come, the tribe that adhered to God when the rest revolted. (4.) *They swore by the name of the Lord*, and thereby owned him to be the true God, and their God, and gave glory to him as the righteous Judge of all. *They swore to the name of the Lord* (so it may be read); they took an oath of allegiance to him as their King and joined themselves to him in covenant. (5.) *They made mention of the God of Israel* in their prayers and praises; they often spoke of him, observed his memorials, and pretended to be very mindful of him. (6.) *They called themselves of the holy city*, and, when they were captives in Babylon, purely from a principle of honour, and jealousy for their native country, they valued themselves upon their interest in it. Many, who are themselves unholy, are proud of their relation to the church, the holy city. (7.) *They stayed themselves upon the God of Israel*, and boasted of his promises and his covenant with them; they *leaned on the Lord*, Mic. iii. 11. And, if they were asked concerning their God, they could say, "*The Lord of hosts is his name, the Lord of all*;" happy are we therefore, and very great, who have relation to him!

2. How low their profession of religion sunk, notwithstanding all this. It was all in vain; for it was all a jest; it was *not in truth and righteousness*. Their hearts were not true nor right in these professions. Note, All our religious professions avail nothing further than they are made in truth and righteousness. If we be not sincere in them, we do but *take the name of the Lord our God in vain*.

II. The means God used, and the method he took, to keep them close to himself, and to prevent their turning aside to idolatry. The many excellent laws he gave them, with their sanctions, and the hedges about them, it seems, would not serve to restrain them from that sin which did most easily beset them, and therefore to those God added remarkable prophecies, and remarkable providences in pursuance of those prophecies, which were all designed to convince them that their God was the only true God and that it was therefore both their duty and interest to adhere to him. 1. He both dignified and favoured them with remarkable prophecies (v. 3). *I have declared the former things from the beginning*. Nothing material happened to their nation from its original

which was not prophesied of before—their bondage in Egypt, their deliverance thence, the situation of their tribes in Canaan, &c. All these things *went forth out of God's mouth and he showed them*. Herein they were honoured above any nation, and even their curiosity was gratified. Their prophecies were such as they could rely upon, and such as concerned themselves and their own nation; and they were all verified by the accomplishment of them. *I did them suddenly*, when they were least expected by themselves or others, and therefore could not be foreseen by any but a divine prescience. *I did them and they came to pass*, for what God does he does effectually. The very calamities they were now groaning under in Babylon God did from the beginning declare to them by Moses, as the certain consequences of their apostasy from God, Lev. xxvi. 31, &c.; Deut. xxviii. 36, &c.; xxix. 28. He also declared to them their return to God, and to their own land again, Deut. xxx. 4, &c.; Lev. xxvi. 44, 45. Thus he showed them how he would deal with them long before it came to pass. Let them compare their present state together with the deliverance they had now in prospect with what was written in the law, and they would find the scripture exactly fulfilled. 2. He both dignified and favoured them with remarkable providences (v. 6): *I have shown thee new things from this time*. Besides the general view given from the beginning of God's proceedings with them, he showed them new things by the prophets of their own day, and created them. They were *hidden things*, which they could not otherwise know, as the prophecy concerning Cyrus and the exact time of their release out of Babylon. These things God *created now*, v. 7. Their restoration was in effect their creation, and they had a promise of it not from the beginning, but of late; for to prevent their apostasy from God, or to recover them, prophecy was kept up among them. Yet it was told them when they could not come to the knowledge of it in any other way than by divine revelation. "Consider," says God, "how much soever it is talked of now among you and expected, it was told you by the prophets, when it was the furthest thing from your thoughts, when you had not heard it, when you had not known it, nor had any reason to expect it, and when your ear was not opened concerning it (v. 7, 8), when the thing seemed utterly impossible, and you would scarcely have given any one the hearing who should have told you of it." God had shown them hidden things which were out of the reach of their knowledge, and done for them great things, out of the reach of their power: "Now," says he (v. 6), "*thou hast heard; see all this*. Thou hast heard the prophecy; see the accomplishment of it, and observe whether the word and works of God do not

actly agree; *and will you not declare it*, that as you have heard so you have seen? Will you not own that the Lord is the true God, the only true God, that he has the knowledge and power which no creature has and which none of the gods of the nations can pretend to? Will you not own that your God has been a good God to you? Declare this to his honour, and your own shame, who have dealt so deceitfully with him and preferred others before him."

III. The reasons why God would take his method with them.

1. Because he would anticipate their boastings of themselves and their idols.

1.) God by his prophets told them beforehand of their deliverance, lest they should attribute the accomplishment of it to their idols. Thus he saw it necessary to secure the glory of it to himself, which otherwise would have been given by some of them to their graven images: "I spoke of it," says God, "*lest thou shouldst say, My idol has done it or has commanded it to be done,*" v. 5. There were those that would be apt to say so, and so would be confirmed in their idolatry by that which was intended to cure them of it. But they would now be for ever precluded from saying this; for, if the idols had done it, the prophets of the idols would have foretold it; but, the prophets of the Lord having foretold it, it was no doubt the power of the Lord that effected it. (2.) God foretold it by his prophets, lest they should assume the foresight of it to themselves. Those that were not so profane as to have ascribed the thing itself to an idol were yet so proud as to have pretended that by their own sagacity they foresaw it; if God had not been beforehand with them and spoken first: *Lest thou shouldst say, Behold, I knew them,* v. 7. Thus vain men, who would be thought wise, commonly undervalue a thing which is really great and surprising with his suggestion, that it was no more than they expected and they knew it would come so this. To anticipate this, and that this boasting might for ever be excluded, God told them of it before the day, when as yet they dreamed not of it. God has said and done enough to prevent men's boastings of themselves, and that *no flesh may glory in his presence*, and, if it have not the intended effect, it will aggravate the sin and ruin of the proud; and, sooner or later, *every mouth shall be stopped, and all flesh shall become silent before God.*

2. Because he would leave them inexcusable in their obstinacy. *Therefore* he took this pains with them, because he knew they were obstinate, v. 4. He knew they were so obstinate and perverse that, if he had not supported the doctrine of providence by prophecy, they would have had the impudence to deny it, and would have said that their idol had done that which God did. He knew very well, (1.) How

wilful they would be, and how fully bent they would be upon that which is evil: *I knew that thou wast hard*; so the word is. There were prophecies as well as precepts which God gave them because of the hardness of their hearts: "*Thy neck is an iron sinew*, unapt to yield and submit to the yoke of God's commandments, unapt to turn and look back upon his dealings with thee or look up to his displeasure against thee; not flexible to the will of God, nor pliable to his intentions, nor manageable by his word or providence. *Thy brow is brass*; thou art impudent and canst not blush, insolent and wilt not fear or give back, but wilt thrust on in the way of thy heart." God uses means to bring sinners to comply with him, though he knows they are obstinate. (2.) How deceitful they would be and how insincere in that which is good, v. 8. God sent his prophets to them, but they did not hear, they would not know, and it was no more than was expected, considering what they had been. *Thou wast called*, and not mis-called, *a transgressor from the womb*. Ever since they were first formed into a people they were prone to idolatry; they brought with them out of Egypt a strange addictedness to that sin; and they were murmurers as soon as ever they began their march to Canaan. They were justly upbraided with it then, Deut. ix. 7, 24. *Therefore I knew that thou wouldst deal very treacherously*. God foresaw their apostasy, and gave this reason for it, that he had always found them false and fickle, Deut. xxxi. 16, 27, 29. This is applicable to particular persons. We are all born children of disobedience; we were called *transgressors from the womb*, and therefore it is easy to foresee that we shall deal treacherously, very treacherously. Where original sin is actual sin will follow of course. God knows it, and yet deals not with us according to our deserts.

9 For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off. 10 Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. 11 For mine own sake, *even* for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should *my name* be polluted? And I will not give my glory unto another. 12 Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I *am* he; I *am* the first, I also *am* the last. 13 Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens: *when* I call unto them, they stand up together. 14 All ye, assemble yourselves,

and hear; which among them hath declared these *things*? The LORD hath loved him: he will do his pleasure on Babylon, and his arm *shall be on* the Chaldeans. 15 *I, even I,* have spoken; yea, I have called him: I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous.

The deliverance of God's people out of their captivity in Babylon was a thing upon many accounts so improbable that there was need of line upon line for the encouragement of the faith and hope of God's people concerning it. Two things were discouraging to them—their own unworthiness that God should do it for them and the many difficulties in the thing itself; now, in these verses, both these discouragements are removed, for here is,

I. A reason why God would do it for them, though they were unworthy; not for their sake, be it known to them, but *for his name's sake, for his own sake, v. 9—11.*

1. It is true they had been very provoking, and God had been justly angry with them. Their captivity was the punishment of their iniquity; and if, when he had them in Babylon, he had left them to pine away and perish there, and made the desolations of their country perpetual, he would only have dealt with them according to their sins, and it was what such a sinful people might expect from an angry God. "But," says God, "*I will defer my anger*" (or, rather, *stifle and suppress it*); "I will make it appear that I am slow to wrath, and will refrain from thee, not pour upon thee what I justly might, that I should cut thee off from being a people." And why will God thus stay his hand? *For my name's sake*; because this people was called by his name, and made profession of his name, and, if they were cut off, the enemies would blaspheme his name. *It is for my praise*; because it would redound to the honour of his mercy to spare and reprove them, and, if he continued them to be to him a people, they might be to him for a name and a praise.

2. It is true they were very corrupt and ill-disposed, but God would himself refine them, and make them fit for the mercy he intended for them: "*I have refined thee, that thou mightest be made a vessel of honour.*" Though he does not find them meet for his favour, he will make them so. And this accounts for his bringing them into the trouble, and continuing them in it so long as he did. It was not to cut them off, but to do them good. It was to refine them, *but not as silver, or with silver*, not so thoroughly as men refine their silver, which they continue in the furnace till all the dross is separated from it; if God should take that course with them, they would be always in the furnace; for they are all dross, and,

as such, might justly be put away (Ps. cxl. 119) as reprobate silver, Jer. vi. 30. He therefore takes them as they are, refined in part only, and not thoroughly. "*I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction*, this is, I have made thee a choice one by the good which the affliction has done thee, and then designed thee for great things. Many have been brought home to God by chosen vessels and a good work of grace has been begun in them in the furnace of affliction. Affliction is no bar to God's choice, but subservient to his purposes. 3. It is true they could not pretend merit at God's hand, so great a favour, their deliverance out of Babylon, which would put such an honour upon them as bring them so much joy; therefore, says God, *For my own sake, even for my name's sake, will I do it, v. 11.* See how the emphasis is laid upon that; for it is a reason that cannot fail, and therefore the resolution grounded upon it cannot fall to the ground. God will do it, not because he owes them such a favour; but to save the honour of his own name, that that may not be polluted by the insolent triumphs of the heathen, who in triumphing over Israel, thought they triumphed over the God of Israel, and imagined their gods too hard for him. This was plainly the language of Belshazzar, when he profaned the holy vessels of God's temple at the same time that he praised his idols (Dan. v. 2, 4), and of the Babylonians' demand (Ps. cxxxvii. 3), *Sing us one of the songs of Zion.* God will therefore deliver his people, because he will not suffer his glory to be thus given to another. Moses pleaded this often with God: *Lord, what will the Egyptians say?* Note, God is jealous for the honour of his own name, and will not suffer the wrath of man to proceed any further than he will make it turn to his praise. And it is matter of comfort to God's people that, whatever becomes of them, God will secure his own honour, and, as far as is necessary to that, God will work deliverance for them.

II. Here is a proof that God could do for them, though they were unable to help themselves and the thing seemed altogether impracticable. Let Jacob and Israel hearken to this, and believe it, and take the comfort of it. They are God's called, *called according to his purpose*, called by him out of Egypt (Hos. xi. 1) and now out of Babylon, a people whom with a distinguishing favour he calls by name, and to whom he calls. They are his called, for they are called by him, called by his name, and called by him, and therefore he will look after them, and they may be assured that, as he will deliver them for his own sake, so he will deliver them by his own strength. They need not fear then, for, 1. He is God alone, and the eternal God (v. 12): "*I am he who can do what I will and will do what is best,*"

from none can compare with much less stand with. *I am the first; I also am the last.* Who can be too quick for him that is the first, or anticipate him? Who can be too good for him that is the last, and will keep the field against all opposers, and will reign in them they are all made his footstool? What then is left to doubt of their deliverance when he undertakes it whose designs are not but be well laid, for he is the first, and well executed, for he is the last. As of this God, his work is perfect. 2. He is the God that made the world, and he that can do any thing, v. 13. Look we upon? We see the earth firm under us, and feel it so; it was his hand that *laid the foundation* of it. Look we up? We see the heavens spread out as a canopy over our heads, and it was his hand that spread them, and *spanned* them, that stretched them out, and did it by an exact measure, as the workman sometimes metes out his work by fathoms. This intimates that God has a vast reach and can compass designs of the greatest extent. *If the palm of his right hand* (so the margin reads it) has gone so far as to stretch out the heavens, what will he do to his outstretched arm? Yet this is not all: he has not only made the heavens and the earth, and therefore he in whom our hope and help is omnipotent (Ps. cxxiv. 8), but he has the command of all the hosts of heaven; when he calls them into his service, they go on his errands, they stand up together, they come at the call, they answer to their names: "Here we are; what wilt thou have us to do?" They stand up, not only in reverence to their Creator, but in a readiness to execute his orders: *They stand up together*, unanimously concurring, and helping one another in the service of their Maker. If God therefore will deliver his people, he cannot be at a loss for instruments to be employed in effecting their deliverance. 3. He has already foretold it, and, having infinite knowledge, so that he foresaw it, no doubt he has almighty power to effect it: "*All you of the house of Jacob, assemble yourselves, and hear this for your comfort, Which among them, among the gods of the heathen, or their wise men, has declared these things, or could declare them?*" 14. They had no foresight of them at all, but those who consulted them were very confident that Babylon should be a lady for ever and Israel a perpetual slave; and their oracles did not give them the least hint to the contrary, to undeceive them; whereas God by his prophets had given notice to the Jews, long before, of their captivity and the destruction of Jerusalem, as he had now likewise given them notice of their release (v. 15): *I, even I, have spoken*; and he could not have spoken it if he could not have made it good: none could out-see him, and therefore we may be sure that none could outdo him. 4. The person is pitched

upon who is to be employed in this service, and the measures are concerted in the divine counsels, which are unalterable: Cyrus is the man who must do it; and it tends much to strengthen our assurance that a thing shall be done when we are particularly informed how and by whom. It is not left at uncertainty who shall do it, but the matter is fixed. (1.) It is one whom God is well pleased in; upon this account, because he is designed for this service: *The Lord has loved him* (v. 14); he has done him this favour, this honour, to make him an instrument in the redemption of his people and therein a type of the great Redeemer, God's beloved Son, *in whom he was well pleased*. Those God does a great kindness to, and has a great kindness for, whom he makes serviceable to his church. (2.) It is one to whom God will give authority and commission: *I have called him*, have given him a sufficient warrant, and therefore will bear him out. (3.) It is one whom God will by a series of providences lead to this service: "*I have brought him from a far country, brought him to engage against Babylon, brought him step by step, quite beyond his own intentions.*" Whom God calls he will bring, will *cause them to come* (so the word is), to come at the call. (4.) It is one whom God will own and give success to. Cyrus will *do God's pleasure on Babylon*, that which it is his pleasure should be done and which he will be pleased with the doing of, though Cyrus has ends of his own to serve and has no regard either to the will of God or to his favour in the doing of it. *His arm* (Cyrus's army, and in it God's arm) *shall come, and be upon the Chaldeans, to bring them down* (v. 14); for, if God call him and bring him, he will certainly *make his way prosperous*, v. 15. Then we may hope to prosper in our way when we follow a divine call and guidance.

16 Come ye near unto me; hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there *am I*; and now the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me. 17 Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; *I am the Lord thy God* which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way *that* thou shouldest go. 18 O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea. 19 Thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof; his name should not have been cut off nor destroyed from before me. 20 Go ye

forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it *even* to the end of the earth; say ye, The LORD hath redeemed his servant Jacob. 21 And they thirsted not *when* he led them through the deserts: he caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them: he clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out. 22 *There is* no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked.

Here, as before, Jacob and Israel are summoned to hearken to the prophet speaking in God's name, or rather to God speaking in and by the prophet, and that as a type of the great prophet by whom God has in these last days spoken unto us, and that is sufficient: *Come near* therefore, and hear this. Note, Those that would hear and understand what God says must come near, and approach to him; let them come as near as they can. Let those that have hearkened to the tempter now come near, and hear this, that they may be confirmed in their resolutions to serve God. Those that draw nigh to God may depend upon this, that his secret shall be with them. Here,

I. God refers them to what he had both said to them and done for them formerly, which if they would reflect upon, they might thence fetch great encouragement to trust in God at this time. 1. He had always spoken plainly to them *from the beginning*, by Moses and all the prophets: *I have not spoken in secret*, but publicly, from the top of Mount Sinai, and in the chief places of concourse, the solemn assemblies of their tribes; he did not deliver his oracles obscurely and ambiguously, but so that they might be understood, Hab. ii. 2. 2. He had always acted wonderfully for them: *"From the time that they were first formed into a people there am I, there have I been resident among them and presiding in their affairs (he sent them prophets, raised them up judges, and frequently appeared for them), and therefore there I will be still."* He that has been with his people hitherto will be to the end.

II. The prophet himself, as a type of the great prophet, asserts his own commission to deliver this message: *Now the Lord God* (the same that spoke from the beginning and did not speak in secret) *has by his Spirit sent me*, v. 16. The Spirit of God is here spoken of as a person distinct from the Father and the Son, and having a divine authority to send prophets. Note, Whom God sends the Spirit sends. Those whom God commissions for any service the Spirit in some measure qualifies for it; and those may speak boldly, and must be heard obediently, whom God and his Spirit send. As that which the prophet says to the same

purport with this (*ch. lxi. 1*) is applied Christ (Luke iv. 21), so may this be; the Lord God sent him, and he had the Spirit without measure.

III. God by the prophet sends them a gracious message for their support and comfort under their affliction. The preface to this message is both awful and encouraging (*v. 17*): *Thus saith Jehovah*, the eternal God, *thy Redeemer*, that has often been so that has engaged to be so, and will be faithful to the engagement, for he is *the Holy One*, that cannot deceive, *the Holy One of Israel*, that will not deceive them. The same words that introduce the law, and give authority to that, introduce the promise, and give validity to that: *"I am the Lord thy God, whom thou mayest depend upon as in relation to thee and in covenant with thee."*

1. Here is the good work which God undertakes to fulfil in them. He that is the Redeemer, in order to that, will be, (1.) Their instructor: *"I am thy God that teach thee to profit*, that is, teaches thee such things as are profitable for thee, things that belong to thy peace." By this God shows himself to be a God in covenant with us, by his *teaching us* (Heb. viii. 10, 11); and now teaches like him, for he gives an understanding. Whom God redeems he teaches; whom he designs to deliver out of their affliction he first teaches to profit by their afflictions; makes them partakers of his holiness, that is the *profit for which he chastens us* (Heb. xii. 10). (2.) Their guide: *He leads them to the way and in the way by which they should go*. He not only enlightens their eyes, but directs their steps. By his grace he leads them in the way of duty, by his providence he leads them in the way of deliverance. Happy are those that are under such a guidance!

2. Here is the good-will which God declares he had for them by his good wishes concerning them, v. 18, 19. He had indeed brought them into captivity, but it was owing to themselves, nor did he afflict them willingly. (1.) As when he gave them his law he earnestly wished they might be obedient (*O that there were such a heart in them*, Deut. v. 29. *O that they were wise!* Deut. xxxii. 29), so, when he had punished them for the breach of his law, he wished they had been obedient: *O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments!* v. 18. *O that my people had hearkened unto me!* Ps. lxxxi. 13. This confirms what God had said and sworn, that he has *no pleasure in the death of sinners*. (2.) He assures them that, if they had been obedient, that would not only have prevented their captivity, but would have advanced and perpetuated their prosperity. He had abundance of good things ready to bestow upon them if their sins had not *turned them away*, *ch. lix. 1, 2*. [1.] They should have been carried on in a constant

uninterrupted stream of prosperity: "*Thy peace should have been as a river; thou shouldst have enjoyed a series of mercies, one continually following another, as the waters of a river, which always last.*" *Laetatur, et labetur in omne volubilis ævum—It flows, and will for ever flow; not like the waters of a land-flood, which are soon gone.*

[2.] Their virtue and honour, and the justice of their cause, should in all cases have borne down opposition by their own strength, *as the waves of the sea.* Such should their righteousness have been that nothing should have stood before it; whereas, now they had been disobedient, the current of their prosperity was interrupted, and their righteousness overpowered. [3.] The rising generation should have been very numerous and very prosperous; whereas they were now very few, as appears by the small number of the returning captives (Ezra ii. 64), not so many as of one tribe when they came out of Egypt. They should have been *numberless as the sand*, according to the promise (Gen. xxii. 17), which they had forfeited the benefit of: "*The offspring of thy bowels would have been innumerable, like the gravel of the sea*, if thy righteousness had been irresistible and unconquerable as the waves of the sea." [4.] The honour of Israel should still have been unstained, untouched: *His name should not have been cut off*, as now it is in the land of Israel, which is either desolate or inhabited by strangers; nor should it have been *destroyed from before God.* We cannot reckon the name either of a family or of a kingdom destroyed till it is destroyed from before God, till it ceases to be a name in his holy place. Now God tells them thus what he would have done for them if they had persevered in their obedience, *First*, that they might be the more humbled for their sins, by which they had forfeited such rich mercies. Note, *This* should engage us (I might say, enrage us) against sin, that it has not only deprived us of the good things we have enjoyed, but prevented the good things God had in store for us. It will make the misery of the disobedient the more intolerable to think how happy they might have been. *Secondly*, That his mercy might appear the more illustrious in working deliverance for them, though they had forfeited it and rendered themselves unworthy of it. Nothing but a prerogative of mercy would have saved them.

3. Here is assurance given of the great work which God designed to work for them, even their salvation out of their captivity, when he had accomplished his work in them.

(1.) Here is a commission granted them to leave Babylon. God proclaimed, long before Cyrus did, that whoever would might return to his own land (v. 20): "*You have a full discharge sent you: Go you forth out of Babylon*; the prison-doors are thrown open, and the trumpet sounds, proclaiming

a release." Perhaps with this word, as a means, the Spirit of the Lord stirred up the spirits of those that did take the benefit of Cyrus's proclamation (Ezra i. 5): *Flee you from the Chaldeans*, not with an ignominious stolen flight, as Jacob fled from Laban, but with a holy disdain, as scorning to stay any longer among them; flee you, not silently and sorrowfully, but with a voice, with a voice of singing, as they fled of old out of Egypt, Exod. xv. 1.

(2.) Here is the news of this sent to all parts: "Let it be declared; let it be told; let it be uttered; make it to be heard by the most remote, by the most remiss; send the tidings of it by word of mouth; send it by writing, from city to city, from kingdom to kingdom, even to the utmost regions, *to the ends of the earth.*" This was a figure of the publishing of the gospel to all the world; but that brings glad tidings which all the world is concerned in, this only that which it is fit all should take notice of, that they may be invited by it to forsake their idols and come into the service of the God of Israel. Let them all know then, [1.] That those whom God owns for his are such as he has dearly bought and paid for: *The Lord has redeemed his servant Jacob*; he has done it formerly, when he brought them out of Egypt, and now he is about to do it again. Jacob was God's servant, and therefore he redeemed him; for what had other masters to do with God's servants? Israel is God's son, therefore Pharaoh must let him go. God redeemed Jacob, and therefore it was fit that he should be his servant (Ps. cxvi. 16); the bonds God had loosed tied them the faster to him. He that redeemed us has an unquestionable right to us. [2.] That those whom God designs to bring home to himself he will take care of, that they want not for the necessary expenses of their journey. When he brought them out of Egypt, and led them *through the deserts*, they *thirsted not* (v. 21), for in all their removals the water out of the rock followed them; thence *he caused the waters to flow*, and, since rock-water is the clearest and finest, *God clave the rock, and the waters gushed out*; for he can fetch in necessary supplies for his people in a way that they think the least likely. This refers to what he did for them when he brought them out of Egypt; when all this was literally true. But it should now be in effect done again, in their return out of Babylon, so well provided for should they and theirs be in their return. God does his work as effectually by marvellous providences as by miracles, though perhaps they are not so much taken notice of. This is applicable to those treasures of grace laid up for us in Jesus Christ, from which all good flows to us as the water did to Israel out of the rock, for that rock is Christ.

(3.) Here is a caveat put in against the wicked who go on still in their trespasses.

Let not them think to have any benefit among God's people. Though in show and profession they herd themselves among them, let them not expect to come in sharers; no (v. 22), though God's thoughts concerning the body of that people were thoughts of peace; yet to those among them that were wicked and hated to be reformed *there is no peace*, no peace with God or their own consciences, no real good, who even is pretended to. What have those to do with peace who are enemies to God? Their false prophets cried Peace to those to whom it did not belong; but God tells them that there shall be no peace, nor any thing like it, to the wicked. The quarrel sinners have commenced with God, if not taken up in time by repentance, will be an everlasting quarrel.

CHAP. XLIX.

Glorious things had been spoken in the previous chapters concerning the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon; but yet any should think, when it was accomplished, that it looked much greater and brighter in the prophecy than in the performance, and that the return of about 40,000 Jews in a poor condition out of Babylon to Jerusalem was not an event sufficiently answering to the height and grandeur of the expressions used in the prophecy, he here comes to show that the prophecy had a further intention, and was to have its full accomplishment in a redemption that should as far outdo these expressions as the other seemed to come short of them, even the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, of whom not only Cyrus, who was God's servant in working the Jews' deliverance, but Isaiah too, who was God's servant in foretelling it, was a type. In this chapter we have, I. The designation of Christ, under the type of Isaiah, to his office as Mediator, ver. 1—3. II. The assurance given him of the success of his undertaking among the Gentiles, ver. 4—8. III. The redemption that should be wrought by him, and the progress of that redemption, ver. 9—12. IV. The encouragement given hence to the afflicted church, ver. 13—17. V. The addition of many to it, and the setting up of a church among the Gentiles, ver. 18—23. VI. A ratification of the prophecy of the Jews' release out of Babylon, which was to be the figure and type of all these blessings, ver. 24—26. If this chapter be rightly understood, we shall see ourselves to be more concerned in the prophecies relating to the Jews' deliverance out of Babylon than we thought we were.

LISTEN, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name. 2 And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me; 3 And said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified. 4 Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God. 5 And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength. 6 And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my

servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

Here, I. An auditory is summoned together and attention demanded. The sermon in the foregoing chapter was directed to the house of Jacob and the people of Israel v. 1, 12. But this is directed to the isles (that is, the Gentiles, for they are called the isles of the Gentiles, Gen. x. 5) and to the people from far, that were strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, and afar off. Let these listen (v. 1) as to a thing at a distance, which yet they are to hear with desire and attention. Note, 1. The tidings of a Redeemer are sent to the Gentiles, and to those that lie most remote; and they are concerned to listen to them. 2. The Gentiles listened to the gospel when the Jews were deaf to it.

II. The great author and publisher of the redemption produces his authority from heaven for the work he had undertaken. 1. God had appointed him and set him apart for it: *The Lord has called me from the womb to this office and made mention of my name*, nominated me to be the Saviour. By an angel he called him *Jesus—a Saviour*, who should save his people from their sins. Matt. i. 21. Nay, from the womb of the divine counsels, before all worlds, he was called to this service, and help was laid upon him; and he came at the call, for he said, *Lo, I come*, with an eye to what was written of him in the volume of the book. This was said of some of the prophets, as types of him, Jer. i. 5. Paul was separated to the apostleship from his mother's womb, Gal. i. 15. 2. God had fitted and qualified him for the service to which he designed him. He made his mouth like a sharp sword, and made him like a polished shaft, or a bright arrow, furnished him with every thing necessary to fight God's battles against the powers of darkness, to conquer Satan, and bring back God's revolted subjects to their allegiance, by his word: that is the two-edged sword (Heb. iv. 12) which comes out of his mouth, Rev. xix. 15. The convictions of the word are the arrows that shall be sharp in the hearts of sinners, Ps. xlv. 5. 3. God had preferred him to the service for which he had reserved him: *He has hidden me in the shadow of his hand* and in his quiver, which denotes, (1.) Concealment. The gospel of Christ, and the calling in of the Gentiles by it, were long hidden from ages and generations, hidden in God (Eph. iii. 5, Rom. xvi. 25), hidden in the shadow of the ceremonial law and the Old-Testament types. (2.) Protection. The house of David was the particular care of the divine Providence, because that blessing was in it.

Christ in his infancy was sheltered from the rage of Herod. 4. God had owned him, and said unto him, "*Thou art my servant, whom I have employed and will prosper; thou art Israel, in effect, the prince with God, hast wrestled and prevailed; and in me I will be glorified.*" The people of God are *Israel*, and they are all gathered together, and summed up, as it were, in Christ, the great representative of all Israel, as the high priest who had the names of all the tribes on his breastplate; and in him God dwells and will be glorified; so he said by a voice from heaven, John xii. 27, 28. Some read the words in two clauses: *Thou art my servant* (so Christ is, ch. xlii. 1); *it is Israel in whom I will be glorified by thee*; it is the spiritual Israel, the elect, in the salvation of whom by Jesus Christ God will be glorified, and his free grace for ever admired.

III. He is assured of the good success of his undertaking; for whom God calls he will prosper. And as to this,

1. He objects the discouragement he had met with at his first setting out (v. 4): "Then I said, with a sad heart, *I have laboured in vain*; those that were ignorant, and careless, and strangers to God, are so still: *I have called, and they have refused; I have stretched out my hands to a gainsaying people.*" This was Isaiah's complaint, but it was no more than he was told to expect, ch. vi. 9. The same was a temptation to Jeremiah to resolve he would labour no more, Jer. xx. 9. It is the complaint of many a faithful minister, that has not loitered, but laboured, not spared, but spent, his strength, and himself with it, and yet, as to many, it is all in vain and for nought; they will not be prevailed with to repent and believe. But here it seems to point at the obstinacy of the Jews, among whom Christ went in person preaching the gospel of the kingdom, laboured and spent his strength, and yet the rulers and the body of the nation rejected him and his doctrine; so very few were brought in, when one would think none should have stood out, that he might well say, "*I have laboured in vain, preached so many sermons, wrought so many miracles, in vain.*" Let not the ministers think it strange that they are slighted when the Master himself was.

2. He comforts himself under this discouragement with this consideration, that it was the cause of God in which he was engaged and the call of God that engaged him in it: *Yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, who is the Judge of all, and my work with my God, whose servant I am.* His comfort is, and it may be the comfort of all faithful ministers, when they see little success of their labours, (1.) That, however it be, it is a righteous cause that they are pleading. They are with God, and for God; they are on his side, and workers together with him. They like not their judgment, the rule they go by, nor their work,

the business they are employed in, ever the worse for this. The unbelief of men gives them no cause to suspect the truth of their doctrine, Rom. iii. 3. (2.) That their management of this cause, and their prosecution of this work, were known to God, and they could appeal to him concerning their sincerity, and that it was not through any neglect of theirs that they laboured in vain.

He knows the way that I take; my judgment is with the Lord, to determine whether I have not delivered my soul and left the blood of those that perish on their own heads."

(3.) Though the labour be in vain as to those that are laboured with, yet not as to the labourer himself, if he be faithful: his judgment is with the Lord, who will justify him and bear him out, though men condemn him and run him down; and his work (the reward of his work) is with his God, who will take care he shall be no loser, no, not by his lost labour. (4.) Though the judgment be not yet brought forth unto victory, nor the work to perfection, yet both are with the Lord, to carry them on and give them success, according to his purpose, in his own way and time.

3. He receives from God a further answer to this objection, v. 5, 6. He knew very well that God had set him on work, had formed him from the womb to be his servant, had not only called him so early to it (v. 1), but begun so early to fit him for it and dispose him to it. Those whom God designs to employ as his servants he is fashioning and preparing to be so long before, when perhaps neither themselves nor others are aware of it. It is he that forms the spirit of man within him. Christ was to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, that had treacherously departed from him. The seed of Jacob therefore, according to the flesh, must first be dealt with, and means used to bring them back. Christ, and the word of salvation by him, are sent to them first; nay, Christ comes in person to them only, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But what if Jacob will not be brought back to God and Israel will not be gathered? So it proved; but this is a satisfaction in that case, (1.) Christ will be glorious in the eyes of the Lord; and those are truly glorious that are so in God's eyes. Though few of the Jewish nation were converted by Christ's preaching and miracles, and many of them loaded him with ignominy and disgrace, yet God put honour upon him, and made him glorious, at his baptism, and in his transfiguration, spoke to him from heaven, sent angels to minister to him, made even his shameful death glorious by the many prodigies that attended it, much more his resurrection. (2.) In his sufferings God was his strength, so that though he met with all the discouragement imaginable, by the contempts of a people whom he had done so much to oblige; yet he did not fail nor was

discouraged. An angel was sent from heaven to strengthen him, Luke xiii. 43. Faithful ministers, though they see not the fruit of their labours, shall yet be accepted of God, and in that they shall be truly glorious, for his favour is our honour; and they shall be assisted to proceed and persevere in their labours notwithstanding. This weakens their hands, but their God will be their strength. (2.) The gospel shall be glorious in the eyes of the world; though it be not so in the eyes of the Jews, yet it shall be entertained by the nations, v. 6. The Messiah seemed as if he had been primarily designed to bring Jacob back, v. 5. But he is here told that it is comparatively but a small matter; a higher orb of honour than that, and a larger sphere of usefulness, are designed him: "It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob to the dignity and dominion they expect by the Messiah, and to restore the preserved of Israel, and make them a flourishing church and state as formerly" (nay, considering what a little handful of people they are, it would be but a small matter, in comparison, for the Messiah to be the Saviour of them only); "and therefore I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles (many great and mighty nations by the gospel of Christ shall be brought to the knowledge and worship of the true God), that thou mayest be my salvation, the author of that salvation which I have designed for lost man, and this to the end of the earth, to nations at the greatest distance." Hence Simeon learned to call Christ a light to lighten the Gentiles (Luke ii. 32), and St. Paul's exposition of this text is what we ought to abide by, and it serves for a key to the context, Acts xiii. 47. Therefore, says he, we turn to the Gentiles, to preach the gospel to them, because so has the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light to the Gentiles. In this the Redeemer was truly glorious, though Israel was not gathered; the setting up of his kingdom in the Gentile world was more his honour than if he had raised up all the tribes of Jacob. This promise is in part fulfilled already, and will have a further accomplishment, if that time be yet to come which the apostle speaks of, when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be brought in. Observe, God calls it his salvation, which some think intimates how well pleased he was with it, how he gloried in it, and (if I may so say) how much his heart was upon it. They further observe that Christ is given for a light to all those to whom he is given for salvation. It is in darkness that men perish. Christ enlightens men's eyes, and so makes them holy and happy.

7 Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and

arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee. 8 Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish thee on earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; 9 That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to the blind that are in darkness, Show yourselves. They shall feed in the way, and their pastures shall be in all high places. 10 They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat of sun smite them: for he that has mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them. 11 And I will make of my mountains a way, and my high ways shall be exalted. 12 Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.

In these verses we have,

I. The humiliation and exaltation of the Messiah (v. 7): *The Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and Israel's Holy One*, who had always taken care of the Jewish church and wrought out for them those deliverances that were typical of the great salvation, speaks here of him, who was the undertaker of that salvation. And, 1. He takes notice of his humiliation, the instances of which were uncommon, nay, unparalleled. He was one whom man despised. He is despised and rejected of men, ch. liii. 3. To be despised by so mean a creature (man, who is himself a worm) bespeaks the lowest and most contemptible condition imaginable. Man, whom he came to save and to put honour upon, yet despised him and put contempt upon him; a wretchedly ungrateful were his persecutors. The ignominy he underwent was not the least of his sufferings. They not only made him despicable, but odious. He was one whom the nation abhorred; they treated him as the worst of men, and cried out, Crucify him, crucify him. The nation did it, the Gentiles as well as Jews, and the Jews here in worse than Gentiles; for his cross was to the one a stumbling-block and to the other foolishness. He was a servant of rulers; he was trampled upon, abused, scourged, and crucified as a slave. Pilate boasted of his power over him, John xix. 10. This he submitted to for our salvation. 2. He promises him his exaltation. Honour was done him

ren in the depth of his humiliation. Herod the king stood in awe of him, saying, *It is John the Baptist*; noblemen, rulers, centurions came and kneeled to him. But this was more fully accomplished when kings received his gospel, and submitted to his yoke, and joined in the worship of him, and called themselves the vassals of Christ. Not that Christ values the rich more than the poor (they stand upon a level with him), but it is for the honour of his kingdom among men when the great ones of the earth appear for him and do homage to him. This shall be the accomplishment of God's promise, and he will give him the heathen and his inheritance, and therefore it shall be so, *because of the Lord who is faithful* and true to his promise; and this shall be an evidence that Christ had a commission or what he did, and that God had chosen him, and would own the choice he had made.

II. The blessings he has in store for all those to whom he is made salvation.

1. God will own and stand by him in his undertaking (r. 8): *In an acceptable time have I heard thee*, that is, I will hear thee. Christ, *in the days of his flesh, offered up strong cries, and was heard*, Heb. v. 7. He knew that the Father heard him always (John i. 42), heard him for himself (for, though the cup might not pass from him, yet he was enabled to drink it), heard him for all that are his, and therefore he interceded for them as one having authority. *Father, I will*, John xvii. 24. All our happiness results from the Son's interest in the Father and the prevalency of his intercession, that he always heard him; and this makes the gospel time an acceptable time, welcome to us, because we are accepted of God, both reconciled and recommended to him, that God hears the Redeemer for us, Heb. vii. 25. Nor will he hear him only, but help him to go through with his undertaking. The Father was always with him at his right hand, and did not leave him when his disciples did. Violent attacks were made upon our Lord Jesus by the powers of darkness, when it was their hour, to drive him off from his undertakings, but God promises to preserve him and enable him to persevere in it; on that *one stone were seven eyes*, Zech. iii. 9. God would preserve him, would preserve his interest, his kingdom among men, though fought against on all sides. Christ is preserved while Christianity is.

2. God will authorize him to apply to his church the benefits of the redemption he is to work out: God's preserving and helping him was to make the day of his gospel a day of salvation. And so the apostle understands it: *Behold, now is the day of salvation*, now the word of reconciliation by Christ is preached, 2 Cor. vi. 2.

(1.) He shall be guarantee of the treaty of peace between God and man: *I will give thee for a covenant of the people*. This we

had before (ch. xlii. 6), and it is here repeated as faithful, and well worthy of all acceptance and observation. He is given for a covenant, that is, for a pledge of all the blessings of the covenant. It was in him that God was *reconciling the world to himself*; and he that *spared not his own Son* will deny us nothing. He is given for a covenant, not only as he is the Mediator of the covenant, the blessed *days-man who has laid his hand upon us both*, but as he is all in all in the covenant. All the duty of the covenant is summed up in our being his; and all the privilege and happiness of the covenant are summed up in his being ours.

(2.) He shall repair the decays of the church and build it upon a rock. He shall *establish the earth*, or rather the *land*, the land of Judea, a type of the church. He shall *cause the desolate heritages to be inherited*; so the cities of Judah were after the return out of captivity, and so the church, which in the last and degenerate ages of the Jewish nation had been as a country laid waste, but was again replenished by the fruits of the preaching of the gospel.

(3.) He shall free the souls of men from the bondage of guilt and corruption and bring them into the glorious liberty of God's children. He shall *say to the prisoners* that were bound over to the justice of God, and bound under the power of Satan, *Go forth*, r. 9. Pardoning mercy is a release from the curse of the law, and renewing grace is a release from the dominion of sin. Both are from Christ, and are branches of the great salvation. It is he that says, *Go forth*; it is the Son that makes us free, and then we are free indeed. He saith to *those that are in darkness, Show yourselves*; "not only see, but be seen, to the glory of God and your own comfort." When he discharged the lepers from their confinement, he said, *Go show yourselves to the priest*. When we see the light, let our light shine.

(4.) He shall provide for the comfortable passage of those whom he sets at liberty to the place of their rest and happy settlement, r. 9—11. These verses refer to the provision made for the Jews' return out of their captivity, who were taken under the particular care of the divine Providence, as favourites of Heaven, and now so in a special manner; but they are applicable to that guidance of divine grace which all God's spiritual Israel are under, from their release out of bondage to their settlement in the heavenly Canaan. [1.] They shall have their charges borne and shall be fed at free cost with food convenient: *They shall feed in the ways*, as sheep; for now, as formerly, *God leads Joseph like a flock*. When God pleases even highway ground shall be good ground for the sheep of his pasture to feed in. Their pastures shall be not only in the valleys, but in *all high places*, which are commonly dry and barren. Wherever God

brings his people he will take care they shall want nothing that is good for them, Ps. xxxiv. 10. And so well shall they be provided for that they shall not hunger nor thirst, for what they need they shall have seasonably, before their need of it comes to an extremity. [2.] They shall be sheltered and protected from every thing that would incommode them: *Neither shall the heat nor sun smite them*, for God causes *his flock to rest at noon*, Cant. i. 7. No evil thing shall befall those that put themselves under a divine protection; they shall be enabled to *bear the burden and heat of the day*. [3.] They shall be under God's gracious guidance: *He that has mercy on them, in bringing them out of their captivity, shall lead them*, as he did their fathers in the wilderness, by a pillar of cloud and fire. *Even by springs of water*, which will be ready to them in their march, *shall he guide them*. God will furnish them with suitable and seasonable comforts, not like the pools of rain-water in the valley of Baca, but like the water out of the rock which followed Israel. Those who are under a divine guidance, and follow that closely, while they do so, may, upon good grounds, hope for divine comforts and cordials. The world leads its followers by broken cisterns, or brooks that fail in summer; but God leads those that are his by springs of water. And those whom God guides shall find a ready road and all obstacles removed (v. 11): *I will make all my mountains a way*. He that in times past made the sea a way, now with as much ease will make the mountains a way, though they seemed impassable. The highway, or causeway, shall be raised, to make it both the plainer and the fairer. Note, The ways in which God leads his people he himself will be the overseer of, and will take care that they be well mended and kept in repair, as of old the ways that led to the cities of refuge. The levelling of the roads from Babylon, as it was foretold (ch. xl. 2, 3), was applied to gospel work, and so may this be. Though there be difficulties in the way to heaven, which we cannot by our own strength get over, yet the grace of God shall be sufficient to help us over them and to make even the mountains a way, ch. xxxv. 8.

(5.) He shall bring them all together from all parts, that they may return in a body, that they may encourage one another and be the more taken notice of. They were dispersed into several parts of the country of Babylon, as their enemies pleased, to prevent any combination among themselves. But, when God's time shall come to bring them home together, one spirit shall animate them all, all that lie at the greatest distance from each other, and those also that had taken shelter in other countries shall meet them in the land of Judah, v. 12. Here shall a party come from far, some from the north, some from the west, some from the land of Sinim,

which probably is some province of Babylon not elsewhere named in scripture, but so make it to be a country belonging to one of the chief cities of Egypt, called *Sin*, of which we read, Ezek. xxx. 15, 16. Now this promise was to have a further accomplishment in the great confluence of converts to the gospel church, and its full accomplishment when God's chosen shall come from the east and from the west to sit down with the patriarchs in the kingdom of God, Matt. viii. 11.

13 Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth in singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted. But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. 15 Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea; they may forget yet will I not forget thee. 16 Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me. 17 Thy children shall make haste; thy destroyers and they that made thee waste shall go forth of thee.

The scope of these verses is to show the return of the people of God out of the captivity, and the eternal redemption to be wrought out by Christ (of which that was type), would be great occasions of joy to the church and great proofs of the tender care God has of the church.

I. Nothing can furnish us with better matter for songs of praise and thanksgiving, v. 13. Let the whole creation join with us in songs of joy, for it shares with us the benefits of the redemption, and as they can contribute to this sacred melody little enough in return for such inestimable favours, Ps. xcvi. 11. Let there be joy in heaven, and let the angels of God celebrate the praises of the great Redeemer; let the earth and the mountains, particularly the great ones of the earth, *be joyful, and break forth into singing, for the earnest expectation of the creature that waits for the glorious liberty of the children of God*. (Rom. viii. 19, 21) shall now be abundantly answered. God's people are the blessings and ornaments of the world, and therefore let there be universal joy, for *God has comforted his people that were in sorrow and he will have mercy upon the afflicted* because of his compassion, upon his afflicted because of his covenant.

II. Nothing can furnish us with more convincing arguments to prove the more tender and affectionate concern God has for his church, and her interests and comforts.

1. The troubles of the church have given some occasion to question God's care and

concern for it, *v. 14. Zion, in distress, said, The Lord has forsaken me, and looks after me no more; my Lord has forgotten me, and will look after me no more.* See how deplorable the case of God's people may be sometimes, such that they may seem to be forsaken and forgotten of their God; and at such a time their temptations may be alarmingly violent. Infidels, in their presumption, say *God has forsaken the earth* (Ezek. viii. 12), and has *forgotten their sins*, Ps. x. 11. Weak believers, in their despondency, are ready to say, "God has forsaken his church and forgotten the sorrows of his people." But we have no more reason to question his promise and grace than we have to question his providence and justice. He is as sure a rewarder as he is a revenger. Away therefore with these distrusts and jealousies, which are the bane of friendship.

2. The triumphs of the church, after her troubles, will in due time put the matter out of question.

(1.) What God will do for Zion we are told, *v. 17. [1.]* Her friends, who had deserted her, shall be gathered to her, and shall contribute their utmost to her assistance and comfort: *Thy children shall make haste.* Converts to the faith of Christ are the children of the church; they shall join themselves to her with great readiness and cheerfulness, and flock into the communion of saints; as doves to their windows. "*Thy builders shall make haste*" (so some read it), "who shall build up thy houses, thy walls, especially thy temple; they shall do it with expedition." Church work is usually slow work; but, when God's time shall come, it shall be done suddenly. [2.] Her enemies, who had threatened and assaulted her, shall be forced to withdraw from her: *Thy destroyers, and those who made thee waste, who had made themselves masters of the country and ravaged it, shall go forth of thee.* By Christ the prince of this world, the great destroyer, is cast out, is dispossessed, has his power broken and his attempts quite baffled.

(2.) Now by this it will appear that Zion's suggestions were altogether groundless, that God has not forsaken her, nor forgotten her, nor ever will. Be assured, [1.] That God has a tender affection for his church and people, *v. 15.* In answer to Zion's fears, God speaks as one concerned for his own glory (he takes himself to be reflected upon if Zion say, *The Lord has forsaken me*, and he will clear himself), as one concerned also for his people's comfort; he would not have them droop, and be discouraged, and give way to any uneasy thoughts. "You think that I have forgotten you. *Can a woman forget her sucking child?*" First, It is not likely that she should. A woman, whose honour it is to be of the tender sex as well as the fair one, cannot but have compassion for a child, which, being both harmless and helpless, is a proper object of compassion.

A mother, especially, cannot but be concerned for her own child; for it is her own, a piece of herself, and very lately one with her. A nursing mother, most of all, cannot but be tender of her sucking child; her own breasts will soon put her in mind of it if she should forget it. But, *Secondly,* It is possible that she may forget. A woman may perhaps be so unhappy as not to be able to remember her sucking child (she may be sick, and dying, and going to the land of forgetfulness), or she may be so unnatural as not to have compassion on the son of her womb, as those who, to conceal their shame, are the death of their children as soon as they are their life, Lam. iv. 10; Deut. xxviii. 57. But, says God, *I will not forget thee.* Note, God's compassions to his people infinitely exceed those of the tenderest parents towards their children. What are the affections of nature to those of the God of nature! [2.] That he has a constant care of his church and people (*v. 16*): *I have engraven thee upon the palms of my hands.* This does not allude to the foolish art of palmistry, which imagines every man's fate to be engraved in the palms of his hands and to be legible in the lines there, but to the custom of those who tie a string upon their hands or fingers to put them in mind of things which they are afraid they shall forget, or to the wearing of signet or locket-rings in remembrance of some dear friend. His setting them thus as a seal upon his arm denotes his setting them as a seal upon his heart, and his being ever mindful of them and their interests, Cant. viii. 6. If we bind God's law as a sign upon our hand (Deut. vi. 8, 11, 18), he will engrave our interests as a sign on his hand, and will look upon that and remember the covenant. He adds, "*Thy walls shall be continually before me; thy ruined walls, though no pleasing spectacle, shall be in my thoughts of compassion.*" Do Zion's friends favour her dust? Ps. cii. 14. So does her God. Or, "The plan and model of thy walls, that are to be rebuilt, is before me, and they shall certainly be built according to it." Or, "Thy walls (that is, thy safety) are my continual care; so are the watchmen on thy walls." Some apply his engraving his church on the palms of his hands to the wounds in Christ's hands when he was crucified; he will look on the marks of them, and remember those for whom he suffered and died.

18 Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the LORD, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth. 19 For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even

now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away. 20 The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell. 21 Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where *had* they *been*? 22 Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in *their* arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon *their* shoulders. 23 And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with *their* face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.

Two things are here promised, which were to be in part accomplished in the reviving of the Jewish church after its return out of captivity, but more fully in the planting of the Christian church by the preaching of the gospel of Christ; and we may take the comfort of these promises.

I. That the church shall be replenished with great numbers added to it. It was promised (v. 17) that *her children should make haste*; that promise is here enlarged upon, and is made very encouraging. It is promised,

1. That multitudes shall flock to the church from all parts. *Look round, and see how they gather themselves to thee* (v. 18), by a local accession to the Jewish church. They come to Jerusalem from all the adjacent countries, for that was then the centre of their unity; but, under the gospel, it is by a spiritual accession to the mystical body of Christ in faith and love. Those that come to *Jesus as the Mediator of the new covenant* do thereby come to the Mount Zion, the church of the first-born, Heb. xii. 22, 23. *Lift up thy eyes, and behold how the fields are white unto the harvest*, John iv. 35. Note, It is matter of joy to the church to see a multitude of converts to Christ.

2. That such as are added to the church shall not be a burden and blemish to her, but her strength and ornament. This part

of the promise is confirmed with an oath. *As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thyself with them all.* The addition of such numbers to the church shall complete her clothing; and, when all that were chosen are effectually called, then the bride, the Lamb's wife, shall have made herself ready, shall be quite dressed, Rev. xix. 7. The church shall make her to appear comely and considerable; and she shall therefore bind the church on with as much care and complacency as a bride does her ornaments. When those that are added to the church are serious, and holy, and exemplary in their conversation, they are an ornament to it.

3. That thus the country which was waste and desolate, and *without inhabitant* (ch. 9; vi. 11), shall be again peopled, nay, shall be over-peopled (v. 19): "*Thy waste and thy desolate places, that have long lain so, and the land of thy destruction, that lay of thine which was destroyed with thee and which nobody cared for dwelling in, shall now be so full of people that there shall be no room for the inhabitants.*" Here is a blessing poured out till there be not room enough to receive it, Mal. iii. 10. Not that they shall be crowded by their enemies, but straitened for room, as Abraham and Lot were, because of the Canaanite in the land. "*No, those that swallow thee up, and too possession of thy land when thy possession of it was discontinued, shall be far away.*" Thy people shall be numerous, and there shall be no stranger, no enemy, among them." Thus the kingdom of God among men, which had been impoverished and almost depopulated, partly by the corruptions of the Jewish church and partly by the abominations of the Gentile world, was again peopled and enriched by the setting up of the Christian church, and by its graces and glories.

4. That the new converts shall strangely increase and multiply. Jerusalem, after she has lost abundance of her children by the sword, famine, and captivity, shall have a new family growing up instead of them, children which she *shall have after she has lost the other* (v. 20), as Seth, who was appointed another seed instead of Abel, and Job's children, which God blessed him with instead of those that were killed in the ruin of the house. God will repair his church's losses and secure to himself a seed to serve him in it. It is promised to the Jews after their return, that *Jerusalem shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets*, Zech. viii. 5. The church, after it has lost the Jews, who will be cut off by their own infidelity, shall have abundance of children still, more than she had when the Jews belonged to her. See Gal. iv. 27. The church shall be so numerous that, (1.) The children shall complain for want of room; they shall say (and it is a good hearing), "Our numbers increase so fast that the place is too

rat for us;" as the sons of the prophets complained, 2 Kings vi. 1. But, strait as the place is, still more shall desire to be admitted, and the church shall gladly admit them, and the inconvenient straitness of the place shall be no hindrance to either; for it will be found, whatever we think, that even when the *poor and the maimed, the halt and the blind*, are brought in, yet *there is room, room enough* for those that are in and room for more, Luke xiv. 22. (2.) The mother shall stand amazed at the increase of her family, v. 21. She shall say, *Who has begotten me these?* and, *Who has brought up these?* They come to her with all the duty, affection, and submission of children; and yet she never feels any pain for them, nor took any pains with them, but has them ready reared to her hand. This gives her a pleasing surprise, and she cannot but be astonished at it, considering what her condition had been very lately and very long. The Jewish nation had left her children; they were cut off. She had been desolate, without ark, and altar, and temple-service, those tokens of God's espousals to them; nay, she had been a captive, and continually removing to and fro, in an unsettled condition, and not used to bring up children either for God or herself. She was left alone in obscurity (*this is Zion whom no man seeks after*), left in all the solitude and sorrow of a widowed state. How then came she to be thus replenished? See here, [1.] That the church is not perpetually visible, but there are times when it is desolate, and left alone, and made few in number. [2.] That yet on the other side its desolations shall not be perpetual, or will it be found too hard for God to repair them, and out of stones to raise up children unto Abraham. [3.] That sometimes this is done in a very surprising way, as when a nation is born at once, *ch. xvi. 8*.

5. That this shall be done with the help of the Gentiles, v. 22. The Jews were cast off, among whom it was expected that the church should be built up; but God will *show it to himself in the earth*, and will thence reap a plentiful crop, Hos. ii. 23. Observe, (1.) How the Gentiles shall be called in. God will *lift up his hand to them*, to invite and beckon them, having all the day stretched out in vain to the Jews, *ch. lxxv. 2*. Or denotes the exerting of an almighty power, that of his Spirit and grace, to compel them to come in, to make them willing. And he will *set up his standard to them*, the preaching of the everlasting gospel, to which they shall gather, and under which they shall enlist themselves. (2.) How they shall come: *They shall bring thy sons in their arms*. They shall assist the sons of Zion, which are found among them, in their return to their own country, and shall forward them with as much tenderness as ever

any parent carried a child that was weak and helpless. God can raise up friends for returning Israelites even among Gentiles. *The earth helped the woman*, Rev. xii. 16. Or, "When they come themselves, they shall bring their children, and make them thy children;" compare *ch. lx. 4*. "Do not thou ask, *Who has begotten and brought up these?* Know that they were begotten and brought up among the Gentiles, but they are now brought into thy family." Let all that are concerned about young converts, and young beginners in religion, learn hence to deal very tenderly and carefully with them, as Christ does with the lambs which he *gathers with his arms and carries in his bosom*.

II. That the church shall have a great and prevailing interest in the nations, v. 22, 23. 1. Some of the princes of the nations shall become patrons and protectors to the church: *Kings shall be thy nursing fathers*, to carry thy sons in their arms (as Moses, Num. xi. 12); and, because women are the most proper nurses, *their queens shall be thy nursing mothers*. This promise was in part fulfilled to the Jews, after their return out of captivity. Several of the kings of Persia were very tender of their interests, countenanced and encouraged them, as Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes; Esther the queen was a nursing mother to the Jews that remained in their captivity, putting her life in her hand to snatch the child out of the flames. The Christian church, after a long captivity, was happy in some such kings and queens as Constantine and his mother Helena, and afterwards Theodosius, and others, who nursed the church with all possible care and tenderness. Whenever the sceptre of government is put into the hands of religious princes, then this promise is fulfilled. The church in this world is in an infant state, and it is in the power of princes and magistrates to do it a great deal of service; it is happy when they do so, when their power is a praise to those that do well. 2. Others of them, who stand it out against the church's interests, will be forced to yield and to repent of their opposition: *They shall bow down to thee and lick the dust*. The promise to the church of Philadelphia seems to be borrowed from this (Rev. iii. 9): *I will make those of the synagogue of Satan to come and worship before thy feet*. Or it may be meant of the willing subjection which kings and kingdoms shall pay to Christ the church's King, as he manifests himself in the church (Ps. lxxii. 11): *All kings shall fall down before him*. And by all this it shall be made to appear, (1.) That God is the Lord, the sovereign Lord of all, against whom there is no standing out nor rising up. (2.) That those who wait for him, in a dependence upon his promise and a resignation to his will, shall not be made ashamed of their hope; for the vision of peace

is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak and shall not lie.

24 Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? 25 But thus saith the LORD, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children. 26 And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.

Here is, I. An objection started against the promise of the Jews' release out of their captivity in Babylon, suggesting that it was a thing not to be expected; for (v. 24) they were a prey in the hand of the mighty, of such as were then the greatest potentates on earth, and therefore it was not likely they should be rescued by force. Yet that was not all: they were lawful captives; by the law of God, having offended, they were justly delivered into captivity; and by the law of nations, being taken in war, they were justly detained in captivity till they should be ransomed or exchanged. Now this is spoken either, 1. By the enemies, as justifying themselves in their refusal to let them go. They plead both might and right. Proud men think all their own that they can lay their hands on and their title good if they have but the longest sword. Or, 2. By their friends, either in a way of distrust, despairing of the deliverance ("for who is able to deal with those that detain us, either by force of arms or a treaty of peace?"), or in a way of thankfulness, admiring the deliverance. "Who would have thought that ever the prey should be taken from the mighty? Yet it is done." This is applicable to our redemption by Christ. As to Satan, we were a prey in the hand of the mighty, and yet delivered even from him that had the power of death, by him that had the power of life. As to the justice of God, we were lawful captives, and yet delivered by a price of inestimable value.

II. This objection answered by an express promise, and a further promise; for God's promises being all yea, and amen, they may well serve to corroborate one another. 1. Here is an express promise with a *non-obstante*—*notwithstanding* to the strength of the enemy (v. 25): "*Even the captives of the mighty, though they are mighty, shall be taken away, and it is to no purpose for them to oppose it; and the prey of the terrible, though they are terrible, shall be delivered;*

and, as they cannot with all their strength outforce, so they cannot with all their prudence outface, the deliverance, and counsels of God concerning it." *The Lord saith thus, who, having all power and hearts in his hands is able to make his will good.* 2. Here is a further promise, showing how, and in what way, God will bring about the deliverance. He will bring judgments upon the oppressors, and so will salvation for the oppressed: "*I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, I will plead thy cause against those that justify themselves in oppressing thee; who, if it be, though but a single person, that contends with thee, he shall know that it is at his peril, and thus I will save thy children.*" The captives shall be delivered by *delivering captivity captive*, that is, sending them into captivity that had held God's people captive, Rev. xiii. 10. Nay, they shall be paid blood for blood (v. 26): "*I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh, and they shall be drunken with their own blood.*" Proud Babylonians shall become not only easy, but an acceptable prey to one another; God will send a dividing spirit among them and their ruin, which was begun by a foreign invasion, shall be completed by their intestine divisions. They shall bit, and devour one another, till they are consumed one by another. They shall greedily and with delight prey upon those that are their own flesh and blood." God can make the oppressors of his church to be their own tormentors and their own destroyers. The New-Testament Babylon, having made herself drunk with the blood of the saints, shall have blood given her to drink, for she is worthy. See how cruel men sometimes are to themselves and to one another; and those who are so to others are so to themselves, for God's justice and men's revenge will mete to them what they have measured to others. They not only thirst after blood but drink it so greedily that they are drunk with it, and with as much pleasure as were sweet wine. If God had not more mercy on sinners than they would have, upon another were their passions let loose, the world would be soon an *Aceldama*, a desolation.

III. See what will be the effect of Babylon's ruin: *All flesh shall know that I the Lord am thy Saviour.* God will make it appear, to the conviction of all the world, that, though Israel seem lost and cast, they have a Redeemer, and, though they are made a prey to the mighty, Jacob has a mighty One, who is able to deal with all enemies. God intends, by the deliverance of his church, both to notify and to magnify his own name.

CHAP. L.

In this chapter, I. Those to whom God sends are justly charged with bringing all the troubles they were in upon themselves, by their wilfulness and obstinacy, it being made to appear that they were able and ready to help them if they had been fit for it.

ance, ver. 1-3. II. He by whom God sends produces his commission (ver. 4), alleges his own readiness to submit to all the services and sufferings he was called to in the execution of it (ver. 5), and assures himself that God, who sent him, would stand by him and bear him out against all opposition, ver. 7-9. III. The message that is sent is life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse, comfort to desponding saints and terror to presuming sinners, ver. 10, 11. Now all this seems to have a double reference, 1. to the unbelieving Jews in Babylon, who quarrelled with God for his dealings with them, and to the prophet Isaiah, who, though dead long before the captivity, yet prophesying so fully and fully of it, saw fit to produce his credentials, to justify what he had said. 2. To the unbelieving Jews in our Saviour's time, whose own fault it was that they were rejected, Christ having preached much to them, and suffered much from them, and being herein borne up by a divine power. The "contents" of this chapter, in our Bibles, give this sense of it, very concisely, thus:—"Christ shows that the dereliction of the Jews is not to be imputed to him, by his ability to save, by his obedience in that work, and by his confidence in divine assistance." The prophet concludes with an exhortation to trust in God and not in our eyes.

THUS saith the LORD, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? Or which of my creditors is it to whom have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away. 2 Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? When I called, was there none to answer? Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver? Behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh, because there is no water, and dieth for thirst.

I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering.

Those who have professed to be the people of God, and yet seem to be dealt severely with, are apt to complain of God, and to lay the fault upon him, as if he had been hard with them. But, in answer to their murmurings, we have here,

I. A challenge given them to prove, or produce any evidence, that the quarrel began on God's side, v. 1. They could not say that he had done them any wrong or had acted arbitrarily. 1. He had been a husband to them; and husbands were then allowed a power to put away their wives upon any little disgust: if their wives found not favour in their eyes, they made nothing of giving them a bill of divorce, Deut. xxiv. 1; Matt. xix. 7. But they could not say that God had dealt so with them. It is true they were now separated from him, and had abode many days without ephod, altar, or sacrifice; but whose fault was that? They could not say that God had given their mother a bill of divorce; let them produce it if they can, for a bill of divorce was given into the hand of her that was divorced. 2. He had been a father to them; and fathers had then a power to sell their children for slaves to their creditors, in satisfaction for the debts they were not otherwise able to pay. Now it is true the Jews were sold to the Baby-

lonians then, and afterwards to the Romans; but did God sell them for payment of his debts? No, he was not indebted to any of those to whom they were sold, or, if he had sold them, he did not increase his wealth by their price, Ps. xlv. 12. When God chastens his children, it is neither for his pleasure (Heb. xii. 10) nor for his profit. All that are saved are saved by a prerogative of grace, but those that perish are cut off by an act of divine holiness and justice, not of absolute sovereignty.

II. A charge exhibited against them, showing them that they were themselves the authors of their own ruin: "Behold, for your iniquities, for the pleasure of them and the gratification of your own base lusts, you have sold yourselves, for your iniquities you are sold; not as children are sold by their parents, to pay their debts, but as malefactors are sold by the judges, to punish them for their crimes. You sold yourselves to work wickedness, and therefore God justly sold you into the hands of your enemies, 2 Chron. xii. 5, 8. It is for your transgressions that your mother is put away, for her whoredoms and adulteries," which were always allowed to be a just cause of divorce. The Jews were sent into Babylon for their idolatry, a sin which broke the marriage covenant, and were at last rejected for crucifying the Lord of glory; these were the iniquities for which they were sold and put away.

III. The confirmation of this challenge and this charge: 1. It is plain that it was owing to themselves that they were cast off; for God came and offered them his favour, offered them his helping hand, either to prevent their trouble or to deliver them out of it, but they slighted him and all the tenders of his grace. "Do you lay it upon me?" (says God); "tell me, then, wherefore, when I came, was there no man to meet me, when I called, was there none to answer me?" v. 2. God came to them by his servants the prophets, demanding the fruits of his vineyard (Matt. xxi. 34); he sent them his messengers, rising up betimes and sending them (Jer. xxxv. 15); he called to them to leave their sins, and so prevent their own ruin; but was there no man, or next to none, that had any regard to the warnings which the prophets gave them, none that answered the calls of God, or complied with the messages he sent them; and this was it for which they were sold and put away. Because they mocked the messengers of the Lord, therefore God brought upon them the king of the Chaldeans, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16, 17. Last of all he sent unto them his Son. He came to his own, but his own received him not; he called them to himself, but there were none that answered; he would have gathered Jerusalem's children together, but they would not; they knew not, because they would not know, the things that belonged to their

peace, nor the day of their visitation, and for that transgression it was that they were put away and their house was left desolate, Matt. xxi. 41; xxiii. 37, 38; Luke xix. 41, 42. When God calls men to happiness, and they will not answer, they are justly left to be miserable. 2. It is plain that it was not owing to a want of power in God, for he is almighty, and could have recovered them from so great a death; nor was it owing to a want of power in Christ, for he is *able to save to the uttermost*. The unbelieving Jews in Babylon thought they were not delivered because their God was not able to deliver them; and those in Christ's time were ready to ask, in scorn, *Can this man save us?* For himself he cannot save. "But" (says God) "*is my hand shortened at all, or is it weakened?*" Can any limits be set to Omnipotence? Cannot he redeem who is the great Redeemer? Has he no power to deliver whose all power is? To put to silence, and for ever to put to shame, their doubts concerning his power, he here gives unquestionable proofs of it. (1.) He can, when he pleases, *dry up the seas*, and make the rivers a wilderness. He did so for Israel when he redeemed them out of Egypt, and he can do so again for their redemption out of Babylon. It is done at his rebuke, as easily as with a word's speaking. He can so dry up the rivers as to leave the fish to die for want of water, and to putrefy. When God *turned the waters of Egypt into blood he slew the fish*, Ps. cv. 29. The expression our Saviour sometimes used concerning the power of faith, that it will *remove mountains and plant sycamores in the sea*, is not unlike this; if their faith could do that, no doubt their faith would save them, and therefore they were inexcusable if they perished in unbelief. (2.) He can, when he pleases, eclipse the lights of heaven, *clothe them with blackness, and make sackcloth their covering* (v. 3) by thick and dark clouds interposing, which he balances, Job xxxvi. 32; xxxvii. 16.

4 The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to *him that is weary*: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. 5 The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. 6 I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. 7 For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know

that I shall not be ashamed. 8 He near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? Let us stand together who *is* mine adversary? Let him come near to me. 9 Behold the Lord God will help me; who *is* he that shall condemn me? Lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up.

Our Lord Jesus, having proved himself able to save, here shows himself as willing as he is able. We suppose the prophet Isaiah to say something of himself in these verses, engaging and encouraging himself to go on in his work as a prophet, notwithstanding the many hardships he met with, not doubting but that God would stand by him and strengthen him; but, like David, he speaks of himself as a type of Christ, who is here prophesied of and promised to be the Saviour.

I. As an acceptable preacher. Isaiah, as a prophet, was qualified for the work to which he was called, so were the rest of God's prophets, and others whom he employed as his messengers; but Christ was anointed with the Spirit above his fellows. To make the man of God perfect, he has 1. *The tongue of the learned*, to know how to give instruction, *how to speak a word in season to him that is weary*, v. 4. God, who made man's mouth, gave Moses the tongue of the learned, to speak for the terror and conviction of Pharaoh, Exod. iv. 11, 12. He gave to Christ the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season for the comfort of those that are weary and heavily laden under the burden of sin, Matt. xi. 28. *Grace was poured into his lips*, and they are said to *drop sweet-smelling myrrh*. See what is the best learning of a minister, to know how to comfort troubled consciences, and to speak pertinently, properly, and plainly, to the various cases of poor souls. An ability to do this is God's gift, and it is one of the best gifts, which we should covet earnestly. Let us repose ourselves in the many comfortable words which Christ has spoken to the weary. 2. The ear of the learned, to receive instruction. Prophets have as much need of this as of the tongue of the learned for they must deliver what they are taught and no other, must hear the word from God's mouth diligently and attentively, that they may speak it exactly, Ezek. iii. 17. Christ himself received that he might give. None must undertake to be teachers who have not first been learners. Christ's apostles were first disciples, *scribes instructed unto the kingdom of heaven*, Matt. xiii. 52. Nor is it enough to hear, but we must *hear as the learned*, hear and understand, hear and remember, hear as those that would learn by what we hear. Those that would hear as the learned must be awake, and

Wakeful; for we are naturally drowsy and sleepy, and unapt to hear at all, or we hear by the halves, hear and do not heed. Our ears need to be awakened; we need to have something said to rouse us, to awaken us out of our spiritual slumbers, that we may hear as for our lives. We need to be awakened *morning by morning*, as duly as the day returns, to be awakened to do the work of the day in its day. Our case calls for continual fresh supplies of divine grace, to free us from the dulness we contract daily. The morning, when our spirits are most lively, is a proper time for communion with God; then we are in the best frame both to speak to him (*my voice shalt thou hear in the morning*) and to hear from him. The people came *early in the morning* to hear Christ in the temple (Luke xxi. 38), for, it seems, his were morning lectures. And it is God that awakens us morning by morning. If we do any thing to purpose in his service, it is he who, as our Master, calls us up; and we should doze perpetually if he did not waken us morning by morning.

II. As a patient sufferer, *v. 5, 6*. One would think that he who was commissioned and qualified to speak comfort to the weary should meet with no difficulty in his work, but universal acceptance. It is however quite otherwise; he has both hard work to do and hard usage to undergo; and here he tells us with what undaunted constancy he went through with it. We have no reason to question but that the prophet Isaiah went resolutely in the work to which God had called him, though we read not of his undergoing any such hardships as are here supposed; but we are sure that the prediction was abundantly verified in Jesus Christ: and here we have, 1. His patient obedience in his doing work. "The Lord God has not only awakened my ear to hear what he says, but has opened my ear to receive it, and comply with it" (Ps. xl. 6, 7, *My ear hast thou opened; then said I, Lo, I come*); for when he adds, *I was not rebellious, neither turned away back*, more is implied than expressed—that he was willing, that though he foresaw a great deal of difficulty and discouragement, though he was to take pains and give constant attendance as a servant, though he was to empty himself of that which was very great and humble himself to that which was very mean, yet he did not fly off, did not fail, nor was discouraged. He continued very free and forward to his work even when he came to the hardest part of it. Note, As a good understanding in the truths of God, so a good will to the work and service of God, is from the grace of God. 2. His obedient patience in his suffering work. I call it obedient patience because he was patient with an eye to his Father's will, thus pleading with himself, *This commandment have I received of my Father*, and thus submitting to God,

Not as I will, but as thou wilt. In this submission he resigned himself, (1.) To be scourged: *I gave my back to the smiters*; and that not only by submitting to the indignity when he was smitten, but by permitting it (or admitting it rather) among the other instances of pain and shame which he would voluntarily undergo for us. (2.) To be buffeted: *I gave my cheeks to those that not only smote them, but plucked off the hair of the beard*, which was a greater degree both of pain and of ignominy. (3.) To be spit upon: *I hid not my face from shame and spitting*. He could have hidden his face from it, could have avoided it, but he would not, because he was made a reproach of men, and thus he would answer to the type of Job, that man of sorrows, of whom it is said that they *smote him on the cheek reproachfully* (Job xvi. 10) and *spared not to spit in his face* (Job xxx. 10), which was an expression not only of contempt, but of abhorrence and indignation. All this Christ underwent for us, and voluntarily, to convince us of his willingness to save us.

III. As a courageous champion, *v. 7—9*. The Redeemer is as famous for his boldness as for his humility and patience, and though he yields, yet he is more than a conqueror. Observe, 1. The dependence he has upon God. What was the prophet Isaiah's support was the support of Christ himself (*v. 7*): *The Lord God will help me*; and again, *v. 9*. Those whom God employs he will assist, and will take care they want not any help that they or their work call for. God, having laid help upon his Son for us, gave help to him, and his hand was all along *with the man of his right hand*. Nor will he only assist him in his work, but accept of him (*v. 8*): *He is near that justifieth me*. Isaiah, no doubt, was falsely accused and loaded with reproach and calumny, as other prophets were; but he despised the reproach, knowing that God would roll it away and bring forth his righteousness as the light, perhaps in this world (Ps. xxxvii. 6), at furthest in the great day, when there will be a resurrection of names as well as bodies, and the righteous shall shine forth as the morning sun. And so it was verified in Christ; by his resurrection he was proved to be not the man that he was represented, not a blasphemer, not a deceiver, not an enemy to Cæsar. The judge that condemned him owned he found no fault in him; the centurion, or sheriff, that had charge of his execution, declared him a righteous man: so near was he that justified him. But it was true of him in a further and more peculiar sense: the Father justified him when he accepted the satisfaction he made for the sin of man, and constituted him *the Lord our righteousness*, who was made sin for us. He was *justified in the Spirit*, 1 Tim. iii. 16. He was near who did it; for his resurrection, by which he was justified, soon followed

his condemnation and crucifixion. He was straightway glorified, John xiii. 32. 2. The confidence he thereupon has of success in his undertaking: "If God will help me, if he will justify me, will stand by me and bear me out, *I shall not be confounded*, as those are that come short of the end they aimed at and the satisfaction they promised themselves: *I know that I shall not be ashamed.*" Though his enemies did all they could to put him to shame, yet he kept his ground, he kept his countenance, and was not ashamed of the work he had undertaken. Note, Work for God is work that we should not be ashamed of; and hope in God is hope that we shall not be ashamed of. Those that trust in God for help shall not be disappointed; they know whom they have trusted, and therefore know they shall not be ashamed. 3. The defiance which in this confidence he bids to all opposers and opposition: God will help me, and *therefore have I set my face like a flint.*" The prophet did so; he was bold in reproving sin, in warning sinners (Ezek. iii. 8, 9), and in asserting the truth of his predictions. Christ did so; he went on in his work, as Mediator, with unshaken constancy and undaunted resolution; he did not fail nor was discouraged; and here he challenges all his opposers, (1.) To enter the lists with him: *Who will contend with me*, either in law or by the sword? *Let us stand together* as combatants, or as the plaintiff and defendant. *Who is my adversary?* Who is the master of my cause? so the word is. "Who will pretend to enter an action against me? Let him appear, and come near to me, for I will not abscond." Many offered to dispute with Christ, but he put them to silence. The prophet speaks this in the name of all faithful ministers; those who keep close to the pure word of God, in delivering their message, need not fear contradiction; the scriptures will bear them out, whoever contends with them. *Great is the truth and will prevail.* Christ speaks this in the name of all believers, speaks it as their champion. Who dares be an enemy to those whom he is a friend to, or contend with those for whom he is an advocate? Thus St. Paul applies it (Rom. viii. 33): *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?* (2.) He challenges them to prove any crime upon him (v. 9): *Who is he that shall condemn me?* The prophet perhaps was condemned to die; Christ we are sure was; and yet both could say, *Who is he that shall condemn?* For there is no condemnation to those whom God justifies. There were those that did condemn them, but what became of them? *They all shall wax old as a garment.* The righteous cause of Christ and his prophets shall outlive all opposition. The moth shall eat them up silently and insensibly; a little thing will serve to destroy them. But the roaring lion himself shall not prevail

against God's witnesses. All believers are enabled to make this challenge, *Who is that shall condemn? It is Christ that died.*

10 Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God. 11 Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.

The prophet, having the tongue of the learned given him, that he might give every one his portion, here makes use of rightly dividing the word of truth. It is the summary of the gospel. *He that believeth shall be saved* (he that trusts in the name of the Lord shall be comforted, though for while he walk in darkness and have no light, but *he that believeth not shall be damned* though for a while he walk in the light of his own fire, yet he shall lie down in sorrow.

I. Comfort is here spoken to disconsolate saints, and they are encouraged to trust in God's grace, v. 10. Here observe, 1. Who is always the character of a child of God. He is one that fears the Lord with a true fear, that stands in awe of his majesty and is afraid of incurring his displeasure. This is a grace that usually appears most in godly people when they walk in darkness, when other graces appear not. They then tremble at his word (ch. lvi. 2) and are afraid of his judgments, Ps. cxix. 120. He is one that obeys the voice of God's servant, is willing to be ruled by the Lord Jesus, as God's servant in the great work of man's redemption, one that yields a sincere obedience to the law of Christ and cheerfully comes to the terms of his covenant. Those that truly fear God will obey the voice of Christ. 2. What is sometimes the case of a child of God. It is supposed that though he has his heart the fear of God, and faith in Christ, yet for a time he walks in darkness and hath no light, is disquieted and has little or no comfort. Who is there that does so? This intimates that it is a case which sometimes happens among the professors of religion, yet not very often; but, whenever it happens, God takes notice of it. It is no new thing for the children and heirs of light sometimes to walk in darkness, and for a time not to have any glimpse or gleam of light. This is not meant so much of the comforts of this life (those that fear God, when they have ever so great an abundance of them, do not walk in them as their light) as of their spiritual comforts, which relate to their souls. They walk in darkness when their evidence

for heaven are clouded, their joy in God is interrupted, the testimony of the Spirit is suspended, and the light of God's countenance is eclipsed. Pensive Christians are apt to be melancholy, and those who fear always are apt to fear too much. 3. What is likely to be an effectual cure in this sad case. He that is thus in the dark, (1.) *Let him trust in the name of the Lord*, in the goodness of his nature, and that which he has made known of himself, his wisdom, power, and goodness. *The name of the Lord is a strong tower*, let him run into that. Let him depend upon it that if he walk before God, which a man may do though he walk in the dark, he shall find God all-sufficient to him. (2.) *Let him stay himself upon his God*, his in covenant; let him keep hold of his covenant-relation to God, and call God *his God*, as Christ on the cross, *My God, My God*. Let him stay himself upon the promises of the covenant, and build his hopes on them. When a child of God is ready to sink he will find enough in God to stay himself upon. Let him trust in Christ, for *God's name is in him* (Exod. xxiii. 21), trust in that name of his, *The Lord our righteousness*, and stay himself upon God as his God, in and through a Mediator.

II. Conviction is here spoken to presuming sinners, and they are warned not to trust in themselves, *v. 11*. Observe, 1. The description given of them. They *kindle a fire*, and *walk in the light of that fire*. They depend upon their own righteousness, offer all their sacrifices, and burn all their incense, with that fire (as Nadab and Abihu) and not with the fire from heaven. In their hope of acceptance with God they have no regard to the righteousness of Christ. They refresh and please themselves with a conceit of their own merit and sufficiency, and warm themselves with that. It is both light and heat to them. They *compass themselves about with sparks of their own kindling*. As they trust in their own righteousness, and not in the righteousness of Christ, so they place their happiness in their worldly possessions and enjoyments, and not in the favour of God. Creature-comforts are as sparks, short-lived and soon gone; yet the children of this world, while they last, warm themselves by them, and walk with pride and pleasure in the light of them. 2. The doom passed upon them. They are ironically told to *walk in the light of their own fire*. "Make your best of it, while it lasts. But what will be in the end thereof, what will it come to at last? This shall you have of my hand (says Christ, for to him the judgment is committed), *you shall lie down in sorrow, shall go to bed in the dark*." See Job xviii. 5, 6. *His candle shall be put out with him*. Those that make the world their comfort, and their own righteousness their confidence, will certainly meet with a fatal disappointment, which will be bitterness in the end. A

godly man's way may be melancholy, but his end shall be peace and everlasting light. A wicked man's way may be pleasant, but his end and endless abode will be utter darkness

CHAP. LI.

This chapter is designed for the comfort and encouragement of those that fear God and keep his commandments, even when they walk in darkness and have no light. Whether it was intended primarily for the support of the captives in Babylon is not certain, probably it was; but comforts thus generally expressed ought not to be so confined. Whenever the church of God is in distress her friends and well-wishers may comfort themselves and one another with these words, I. That God, who raised his church at first out of nothing, will take care that it shall not perish, ver. 1—5. II. That the righteousness and salvation he designs for his church are sure and near, very near and very sure, ver. 4—6. III. That the persecutors of the church are weak and dying creatures, ver. 7, 8. IV. That the same power which did wonders for the church formerly is now engaged and employed for her protection and deliverance, ver. 9—11. V. That God himself, the Maker of the world, had undertaken both to deliver his people out of their distress and to comfort them under it, and sent his prophet to assure them of it, ver. 12—16. VI. That, deplorable as the condition of the church now was (ver. 17—20), to the same woful circumstances her persecutors and oppressors should shortly be reduced, and worse, ver. 21—23. The first three paragraphs of this chapter begin with, "Hearken unto me," and they are God's people that are all along called to hearken; for even when comforts are spoken to them sometimes they "hearken not, through anguish of spirit" (Exod. vi. 9); therefore they are again and again called to hearken, ver. 1, 3, 7. The two other paragraphs of this chapter begin with "Awake, awake;" in the former (ver. 9) God's people call upon him to awake and help them; in the latter (ver. 17) God calls upon them to awake and help themselves.

HEARKEN to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. 2 Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him. 3 For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

Observe, 1. How the people of God are here described, to whom the word of this consolation is sent and who are called upon to hearken to it, *v. 1*. They are such as follow after righteousness, such as are very desirous and solicitous both to be justified and to be sanctified, are pressing hard after this, to have the favour of God restored to them and the image of God renewed on them. These are those that seek the Lord, for it is only in the way of righteousness that we can seek him with any hope of finding him. 2. How they are here directed to look back to their original, and the smallness of their beginning: "Look unto the rock whence you were hewn" (the idolatrous family in Ur of the Chaldees, out of which Abraham was taken, the generation of slaves which the heads and fathers of their tribes were in Egypt); "look unto the hole of the pit out of which you were digged, as clay, when God formed you into a people." Note, It is good for those that are privileged by a new birth to consider what they were

by their first birth, how they were conceived *in iniquity and shapen in sin*. That which is *born of the flesh is flesh*. How hard was that rock out of which we were hewn, unapt to receive impressions, and how miserable the *hole of that pit out of which we were digged*! The consideration of this should fill us with low thoughts of ourselves and high thoughts of divine grace. Those that are now advanced would do well to remember how low they began (v. 2): "*Look unto Abraham your father*, the father of all the faithful, of all that follow after the righteousness of faith as he did (Rom. iv. 11), and unto Sarah that *bore you*, and whose daughters you all are as long as you do well. Think how Abraham was *called alone*, and yet was *blessed and multiplied*; and let that encourage you to depend upon the promise of God even when a sentence of death seems to be upon all the means that lead to the performance of it. Particularly let it encourage the captives in Babylon, though they are reduced to a small number, and few of them left, to hope that yet they shall increase so as to replenish their own land again." When Jacob is very small, yet he is not so small as Abraham was, who yet became father of many nations. "*Look unto Abraham*, and see what he got by trusting in the promise of God, and take example by him to follow God with an implicit faith."

3. How they are here assured that their present seedness of tears should at length end in a harvest of joys, v. 3. The church of God on earth, even the gospel Zion, has sometimes had her deserts and waste places, many parts of the church, through either corruption or persecution, made like a wilderness, unfruitful to God or uncomfortable to the inhabitants; but God will find out a time and way to *comfort Zion*, not only by speaking comfortably to her, but by acting graciously for her. God has comforts in store even for the *waste places* of his church, for those parts of it that seem not regarded or valued. (1.) He will make them fruitful, and so give them cause to rejoice; her wildernesses shall put on a new face, and look pleasant as Eden, and abound in all good fruits, *as the garden of the Lord*. Note, It is the greatest comfort of the church to be made serviceable to the glory of God, and to be as his garden in which he delights. (2.) He will make them cheerful, and so give them hearts to rejoice. With the *fruits of righteousness, joy and gladness shall be found therein*; for the more holiness men have, and the more good they do, the more gladness they have. And where there is gladness, to their satisfaction, it is fit that there should be thanksgiving, to God's honour; for whatever is the matter of our rejoicing ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving; and the returns of God's favour ought to be celebrated with the voice of melody, which will be the more melodious when God gives *songs in the night*, songs in the desert.

4 Hearken unto me, my people; and give ear unto me, O my nation: for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people. 5 My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust. 6 Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished. 7 Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. 8 For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.

Both these proclamations, as I may call them, end alike with an assurance of the perpetuity of God's righteousness and his salvation; and therefore we put them together, both being designed for the comfort of God's people. Observe,

I. Who they are to whom this comfort belongs: "*My people, and my nation*, that I have set apart for myself, that own me and are owned by me." Those are God's people and his nation who are subject to him as their King and their God, pay allegiance to him, and put themselves under his protection accordingly. They are a people who *know righteousness*, who not only have the means of knowledge, and to whom righteousness is made known, but who improve those means, and are able to form a right judgment of truth and falsehood, good and evil. And, as they have good heads, so they have good hearts, for they have the law of God in them, written and ruling there. Those God owns for his people in whose hearts his law is. Even those who know righteousness, and have the law of God in their hearts, may yet be in great distress and sorrow, and loaded with reproach and contempt; but their God will comfort them with the righteousness they know and the law they have in their hearts.

II. What the comfort is that belongs to God's people. 1. That the gospel of Christ shall be preached and published to the world: *A law shall proceed from me*, an evangelical law, the law of Christ, the law

f faith, *ch. ii. 3.* This law is his judgment; for it is that law of liberty by which the world shall be governed and judged. This shall not only go forth, but shall continue and rest, it shall take firm footing and deep root in the world. It shall rest, not only for the benefit of the Jews, who had the first notice of it, but for a *light of the people* of the nations. It is this law, this judgment, that we are required to hearken and give ear to, at our peril; for how shall we escape if we neglect it and turn a deaf ear to it? When a law proceeds from God, *he that has ears to hear, let him hear.* 2. That this law and judgment shall bring with them righteousness and salvation, shall open a ready way to the children of men, that they may be justified and saved, *v. 5.* These are called *God's righteousness and his salvation*, because of his contriving and bringing them about. The former is a righteousness which he will accept for us and accept us for, and righteousness which he will work in us and graciously accept of. The latter is the *salvation of the Lord*, for it arises from him and terminates in him. Observe, There is no salvation without righteousness; and, wherever there is the *righteousness of God*, there shall be his salvation. All those, and those only, that are justified and sanctified shall be glorified. 3. That this righteousness and salvation shall very shortly appear: *My righteousness is near.* It is near in time; behold, all things are now ready. It is near in place, not far to seek, but the word is nigh to us, and Christ in the word, righteousness in the word, *Rom. x. 8.* *My salvation has gone forth.* The decree has gone forth concerning it; it shall as certainly be introduced as if it had gone forth already, and the time or it is at hand. 4. That this evangelical righteousness and salvation shall not be confined to the Jewish nation, but shall be extended to the Gentiles: *My arms shall judge the people.* Those that will not yield to the judgments of God's mouth shall be crushed by the judgments of his hand. Some shall thus be judged by the gospel, or for judgment Christ came into this world; but others, and those of the isles, shall wait upon him, and bid his gospel, and the commands as well as the comforts of it, welcome. It was a comfort to God's people, to his nation, that multitudes should be added to them, and the increase of their number should be the increase of their strength and beauty. It is added, *And on my arm shall they trust, that arm of the Lord* which is revealed in Christ, *ch. liii. 1.* Observe, God's arm shall judge the people that are impenitent, and yet on his arm shall others trust and be saved by it; for it is to us as we make it, a savour of life or of death. 5. That this righteousness and salvation shall be for ever, and shall never be abolished, *v. 8.* It is an everlasting righteousness that the Messiah brings in (*Dan. ix. 24*), an eternal redemp-

tion that he is the author of, *Heb. v. 9.* As it shall spread through all the nations of the earth, so it shall last through all the ages of the world. We must never expect any other way of salvation, any other covenant of peace or rule of righteousness, than what we have in the gospel, and what we have there shall continue to the end, *Matt. xxviii. 20.* It is for ever; for the consequences of it shall be to eternity, and by this law of liberty men's everlasting state will be determined. This perpetuity of the gospel and the blessed things it brings in is illustrated by the fading and perishing of this world and all things in it. Look up to the visible heavens above, which have continued hitherto, and seem likely to continue, but they shall *vanish like smoke* that soon spends itself and disappears; they shall be rolled like a scroll, and their lights shall fall like leaves in autumn. Look down to the earth beneath; that abides too for a short *ever* (*Eccl. i. 4*), but it shall *wax old like a garment* that will be the worse for wearing; and those that dwell therein, all the inhabitants of the earth, even those that seem to have the best settlement in it, shall die in like manner: the soul shall, as to this world, vanish like smoke, and the body be thrown by like a garment waxen old. They shall be easily crushed (*Job iv. 19*), and no loss of them. But when heaven and earth pass away, when all flesh and the glory of it wither as grass, the word of the Lord endures for ever, and not one iota or tittle of that shall fall to the ground. Those whose happiness is bound up in Christ's righteousness and salvation will have the comfort of it when time and days shall be no more.

III. What use they are to make of this comfort. If God's righteousness and salvation are near to them, then let them not fear the reproach of men, of mortal miserable men, nor be afraid of their revilings or spiteful taunts, theirs who bid you sing them the songs of Zion, or who ask you, in scorn, *Where is now your God?* Let not those who embrace the gospel righteousness be afraid of those who will call them *Beelzebub*, and will say all manner of evil against them falsely. Let them not be afraid of them; let them not be disturbed by these opprobrious speeches, nor made uneasy by them, as if they would be the ruin of their reputation and honour and they must for ever lie under the load of them. Let them not be afraid of their executing their menaces, nor be deterred thereby from their duty, nor frightened into any sinful compliances, nor driven to take any indirect courses for their own safety. Those can bear but little for Christ that cannot bear a hard word for him. Let us not fear the reproach of men; for, 1. They will be quickly silenced (*v. 8*): *The moth shall eat them up like a garment, ch. l. 9.* *The worm shall eat them like wool, or woollen cloth.* If we have the approbation of a living God, we may despise the censure

of dying men; the matter is not great what those say of us who must shortly be food for worms. Or it intimates the judgments of God with which they shall be visited, with which they shall be consumed, for their malice against the people of God; they shall be slowly and silently, but effectually destroyed, when God shall come to reckon with them *for all their hard speeches*, Jude 14, 15. 2. The cause we suffer for cannot be run down. The falsehood of their reproaches will be detected, but truth shall triumph, and the righteousness of religion's injured cause shall be for ever plain. Clouds darken the sun, but give no obstruction to his progress.

9 Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. *Art* thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? 10 *Art* thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over? 11 Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away. 12 I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who *art* thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; 13 And forgettest the LORD thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? And where is the fury of the oppressor? 14 The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail. 15 But I am the LORD thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared: the LORD of hosts is his name. 16 And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou *art* my people.

In these verses we have,

I. A prayer that God would, in his providence, appear and act for the deliverance of his people and the mortification of his

and their enemies. *Awake, awake! put strength, O arm of the Lord!* v. 9. The arm of the Lord is Christ, or it is put for God himself, as Ps. xlv. 23. *Awake! wakest thou?* He that keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps; but, when we pray that he would awake, we mean that he would make it to appear that he watches over his people and is always awake to do them good. The arm of the Lord is said to awake with the power of God exerts itself with more than ordinary vigour on his people's behalf. When a hand or arm is benumbed we say it is asleep; when it is stretched forth for action, it awakes. God needs not to be alarmed nor excited by us, but he gives leave thus to be humbly earnest with him for such appearances of his power as will be for his own praise. "*Put on strength,*" that is, "*put forth strength: appear in thy strength as we appear in the clothes we put on,*" Eccl. xxi. 13. The church sees her case bad, her enemies many and mighty, her friends few and feeble; and therefore she depends purely upon the strength of God's arm for her relief. "*Awake, as in the ancient days,*" that is, "*do for us now as thou didst for our fathers formerly, repeat the wonders they told us of,*" Judg. vi. 13.

II. The pleas to enforce this prayer.

They plead precedents, the experiences of their ancestors, and the great things God had done for them. "*Let the arm of the Lord be made bare on our behalf; for he has done great things formerly in defence of the same cause, and we are sure it is neither shortened nor weakened. It did wonders against the Egyptians, who enslaved an oppressed God's son, his first-born; it cut Rahab to pieces with one direful plague after another, and wounded Pharaoh, the dragon the Leviathan (as he is called, Ps. lxxiv. 14); it gave him his death's wound. It did wonders for Israel. It dried up the sea, even the waters of the great deep, as far as was requisite to open a way through the sea for the ransomed to pass over,*" v. 10. God is not at a loss for a way to accomplish his purposes concerning his people, but will either find one or make one. Past experiences, they are great supports to faith and hope, they are good pleas in prayer. *Thou hast wilt thou not?* Ps. lxxxv. 1-6. 2. They plead promises (v. 11): *And the redeemed of the Lord shall return*, that is (as it may be supplied), *thou hast said, They shall, referring to ch. xxxv. 10*, where we find the promise, that the redeemed of the Lord, who they are released out of their captivity. *Babylon, shall come with singing unto Zion*. Sinners, when they are brought out of the slavery of sin into the glorious liberty of God's children, may come singing, as a bird got loose out of the cage. The souls of believers, when they are delivered out of the prison of the body, come to the heavenly Zion with singing. Then this promise will

have its full accomplishment, and we may lead it in the mean time. He that designs such joy for us at last will he not work such deliverances for us in the mean time as our case requires? When the saints come to heaven they *enter into the joy of their Lord*; crowns their heads with immortal honour; it fills their hearts with complete satisfaction. *They shall obtain that joy and gladness* which they could never obtain in this vale of tears. In this world of changes it is a short step from joy to sorrow, but in that world *sorrow and mourning shall flee away*, never to return or come in view again.

III. The answer immediately given to this prayer (v. 12): *I, even I, am he that comforteth you.* They prayed for the operations of his power; he answers them with the consolations of his grace, which may well be accepted as an equivalent. If God do not wound the dragon, and dry the sea, as formerly, yet, if he comfort us in soul under our afflictions, we have no reason to complain. If God do not answer immediately *with the saving strength of his right hand*, we must be thankful if he answer us, as an angel himself was answered (Zech. i. 13), *with good words and comfortable words.* See how God resolves to comfort his people: *I, even I, will do it.* He had ordered his ministers to do it (ch. xl. 1); but, because they cannot reach the heart, he takes the work into his own hands: *I, even I, will do it.* See how he glories in it; he takes it among the titles of his honour to be the God that comforts those that are cast down; he delights in being so. Those whom God comforts are comforted indeed; nay, his undertaking to comfort them is comfort enough to them.

1. He comforts those that were in fear; and fear has torment, which calls for comfort. The fear of man has a snare in it which we have need of comfort to preserve us from. He comforts the timorous by chiding them, and that is no improper way of comforting either others or ourselves: *Why art thou cast down, and why disquieted?* v. 12, 13. God, who comforts his people, would not have them disquiet themselves with amazing perplexing fears of the reproach of men (v. 7), or of their growing threatening power and greatness, or of any mischief they may intend against us or our people. Observe,

(1.) The absurdity of those fears. It is a disparagement to us to give way to them: *Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid?* In the original, the pronoun is feminine, *Who art thou, O woman!* unworthy the name of a man? Such a weak and womanish thing it is to give way to perplexing fears. [1.] It is absurd to be in such dread of a dying man. *What! afraid of a man that shall die*, shall certainly and shortly die, *of the son of man who shall be made as grass*, shall wither and be trodden down or eaten up? The greatest men, and the most for-

midable, that are the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, are but men (Ps. ix. 20) and shall die like men (Ps. lxxxii. 7), are but grass sprung out of the earth, cleaving to it, and retiring again into it. Note, We ought to look upon every man as a man that shall die. Those we admire, and love, and trust to, are men that shall die; let us not therefore delight too much in them nor depend too much upon them. Those we fear we must look upon as frail and mortal, and consider what a foolish thing it is for the servants of the living God to be afraid of dying men, that are here to-day and gone to-morrow. [2.] It is absurd to fear continually every day (v. 13), to put ourselves upon a constant rack, so as never to be easy, nor to have any enjoyment of ourselves. Now and then a danger may be imminent and threatening, and it may be prudent to fear it; but to be always in a toss, jealous of dangers at every step, and to tremble at the shaking of every leaf, is to make ourselves all our lifetime *subject to bondage* (Heb. ii. 15), and to bring upon ourselves that sore judgment which is threatened, Deut. xxviii. 66, 67. *Thou shalt fear, day and night.* [3.] It is absurd to fear beyond what there is cause: "Thou art afraid of the fury of the oppressor. It is true, there is an oppressor, and he is furious, and he designs, it may be, when he has an opportunity, to do thee a mischief, and it will be thy wisdom therefore to stand upon thy guard; but thou art afraid of him, as if he were ready to destroy, as if he were just now going to cut thy throat, and as if there were no possibility of preventing it." A timorous spirit is thus apt to make the worst of every thing, and to apprehend the danger greater and nearer than really it is. Sometimes God is pleased at once to show us the folly of so doing: "Where is the fury of the oppressor? It is gone in an instant, and the danger is over ere thou art aware." His heart is turned, or his hands are tied. *Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise*, and the king of Babylon no more. What has become of all the furious oppressors of God's Israel, that hector'd them, and threatened them, and were a terror to them? they passed away, and lo, they were not; and so shall these.

(2.) The impiety of those fears: "Thou art afraid of a man that shall die, and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, who is also the Maker of all the world, who has stretched forth the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, and therefore has all the hosts and all the powers of both at his command and disposal." Note, Our inordinate fear of man is a tacit forgetfulness of God. When we disquiet ourselves with the fear of man we forget that there is a God above him, and that the greatest of men have no power but what is given them from above; we forget the providence of God, by which he orders and overrules all events according to the

counsel of his own will; we forget the promises he has made to protect his people, and the experiences we have had of his care concerning us, and his seasonable interposition for our relief many a time, when we thought the oppressor ready to destroy; we forget our Jehovah-jirehs, monuments of mercy in the mount of the Lord. Did we remember to make God our fear and our dread, we should not be so much afraid as we are of the frowns of men, *ch. viii. 12, 13*. Happy is the man that fears God always, *Prov. xxviii. 14; Luke xii. 4, 5*.

2. He comforts those that were in bonds, *v. 14, 15*. See here, (1.) What they do for themselves: *The captive exile hastens that he may be loosed* and may return to his own country, from which he is banished; his care is *that he may not die in the pit* (not die a prisoner, through the inconveniencies of his confinement), and that *his bread should not fail*, either the bread he should have to keep him alive in prison or that which should bear his charges home; his stock is low, and therefore he hastens to be loosed. Now some understand this as his fault. He is distrustfully impatient of delays, cannot wait God's time, but thinks he is undone and must die in the pit if he be not released immediately. Others take it to be his praise, that when the doors are thrown open he does not linger, but applies himself with all diligence to procure his discharge. And then it follows, *But I am the Lord thy God*, which intimates, (2.) What God will do for them, even that which they cannot do for themselves. God has all power in his hand to help the captive exiles; for he has *divided the sea*, when the roaring of its waves was more frightful than any of the impotent menaces of proud oppressors. He has *stilled or quieted the sea*, so some think it should be read, *Ps. lxxv. 7; lxxxix. 9*. This is not only a proof of what God can do, but a resemblance of what he has done, and will do, for his people; he will find out a way to still the threatening storm, and bring them safely into the harbour. *The Lord of hosts is his name*, his name for ever, the name by which his people have long known him. And, as he is able to help them, so he is willing and engaged to do it; for he is *thy God, O captive-exile!* thine in covenant. This is a check to the desponding captives. Let them not conclude that they must either be loosed immediately or die in the pit; for he that is the Lord of hosts can relieve them when they are brought ever so low. It is also an encouragement to the diligent captives, who, when liberty is proclaimed, are willing to lose no time; let them know that the Lord is their God, and, while they thus strive to help themselves, they may be sure he will help them.

3. He comforts all his people who depended upon what the prophets said to them in the name of the Lord, and built their

hopes upon it. When the deliverance which the prophets spoke of either did not come so soon as they looked for them or did not come up to the height of their expectation they began to be cast down in their own eyes; but, as to this, they are encouraged (*v. 16*) by what God says to his prophet, not to this only, but to all his prophets nor to this, or them, principally, but to Christ, the great prophet. It is a great satisfaction to those to whom the message is sent to hear the God of truth and power say to his messenger, as he does here, *I have put my words in thy mouth, that by them I may plant the heavens*. God undertook to comfort his people (*v. 12*); but still he does it by his prophets, by his gospel; and, that he may do it by these, he here tells us, (1.) That his word in them is very true. He owns what they have said to be what he has directed and enjoined them to say: "*I have put my words in thy mouth, and therefore he that receives thee and them receives me.*" This is a great stay to our faith, that Christ's doctrine was not his, but his that sent him and that the words of the prophets and apostles were God's words, which he put into their mouths. God's Spirit not only revealed to them the things themselves they spoke of, but dictated to them the words they should speak (*2 Pet. i. 21; 1 Cor. ii. 13*); so that these are the true sayings of God, of a God that cannot lie. (2.) That is very safe: I have *covered thee in the shadow of my hand* (as before, *ch. xlix. 2*), which speaks the special protection not only of the prophets, but of their prophecies, not only of Christ, but of Christianity, of the gospel of Christ; it is not only the faithful word of God which the prophets deliver to us, but it shall be carefully preserved till it have its accomplishment for the use of the church notwithstanding the restless endeavours of the powers of darkness to extinguish this light. They shall *prophecy again* (*Rev. x. 11*) though not in their persons, yet in their writings, which God has always *covered in the shadow of his hand*, preserved by a special providence, else they would have been lost ere this. (3.) That this word, when it comes to be accomplished, will be very great and will not fall short of the pomp and grandeur of the prophecy: "*I have put my words in thy mouth, not that by the performance of them I may plant a nation, or found a city, but that I may plant the heavens and lay the foundations of the earth*, may do that for my people which will be a new creation." This must look as far forward as to the great work done by the gospel of Christ and the setting up of his holy religion in the world. As God by Christ made the world at first (*Heb. i. 2*) and by him formed the Old-Testament church (*Zech. vi. 12*), so by him, and the words put into his mouth, he will set up, [1.] A new world, will again plant the heavens and found the earth. Sin having

but the whole creation into disorder, Christ's taking away the sin of the world put all into order again. *Old things have passed away, all things have become new*; things in heaven and things on earth are reconciled, and so put into a new posture, Col. i. 20. Through him, according to the promise, *we look for new heavens and a new earth* (2 Pet. iii. 13), and to this the prophets bear witness. [2.] He will set up a new church, a New-Testament church: *He will say unto Zion, Thou art my people*. The gospel church is called *Zion* (Heb. xii. 22) and *Jerusalem* (Gal. iv. 26); and, when the Gentiles are brought into it, it shall be said unto them, *You are my people*. When God works great deliverances for his church, and especially when he shall complete the salvation of it in the great day, he will thereby own that poor despised handful to be his people, whom he has chosen and loved.

17 Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of his fury; thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung them out. 18 *There is none to guide her among all the sons whom she hath brought forth; neither is there any that taketh her by the hand of all the sons that she hath brought up.* 19 These two things are come unto thee; (Who shall be sorry for thee?) desolation, and destruction, and the famine, and the sword: by whom shall I comfort thee? 20 Thy sons have fainted, they lie at the head of all the streets, as a wild bull in a net: they are full of the fury of the LORD, the rebuke of thy God. 21 Therefore hear now this, thou afflicted, and drunken, but not with wine: 22 Thus saith thy Lord the LORD, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of his people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again: 23 But I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee; which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over: and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over.

God, having awoke for the comfort of his people, here calls upon them to awake, as afterwards, ch. lii. 1. It is a call to awake not so much out of the sleep of sin (though that also is necessary in order to their being

ready for deliverance) as out of the stupor of despair. When the inhabitants of Jerusalem were in captivity they, as well as those who remained upon the spot, were so overwhelmed with the sense of their troubles that they had no heart or spirit to mind any thing that tended to their comfort or relief; they were as the disciples in the garden, *sleeping for sorrow* (Luke xxii. 45), and therefore, when the deliverance came, they are said to have been like those that dream, Ps. cxxvi. 1. Nay, it is a call to awake, not only from sleep, but from death, like that to the dry bones to live, Ezek. xxxvii. 9. "Awake, and look about thee, that thou mayest see the day of thy deliverance dawn, and mayest be ready to bid it welcome. Recover thy senses; sink not under thy load, but stand up, and bestir thyself for thy own help." This may be applied to the Jerusalem that was in the apostle's time, which is said to have been in bondage with her children (Gal. iv. 25), and to have been under the power of a spirit of slumber (Rom. xi. 8); they are called to awake, and mind the things that belonged to their everlasting peace, and then the cup of trembling should be taken out of their hands, peace should be spoken to them, and they should triumph over Satan, who had blinded their eyes and lulled them asleep. Now,

1. It is owned that Jerusalem had long been in a very deplorable condition, and sunk into the depths of misery.

1. She had lain under the tokens of God's displeasure. He had put into her hand the cup of his fury, that is, her share of his displeasure. The dispensations of his providence concerning her had been such that she had reason to think he was angry with her. She had provoked him to anger most bitterly, and was made to taste the bitter fruits of it. The cup of God's fury is, and will be, a cup of trembling to all those that have it put into their hands: damned sinners will find it so to eternity. It is said (Ps. lxxv. 8) that *the dregs of the cup*, the loathsome sediments in the bottom of it, *all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them*; but here Jerusalem, having made herself as the wicked of the earth, is compelled to wring them out and drink them; for wherever there has been a cup of fornication, as there had been in Jerusalem's hand when she was idolatrous, sooner or later there will be a cup of fury, a cup of trembling. Therefore stand in awe and sin not.

2. Those that should have helped her in her distress failed her, and were either unable or unwilling to help her, as might have been expected, v. 18. She is intoxicated with the cup of God's fury, and, being so, staggers, and is very unsteady in her counsels and attempts. She knows not what she says or does, much less knows she what to say or do; and, in this unhappy condition, of all the sons that she has brought forth and

brought up, that she has borne and educated (and there were many famous ones, for of Zion it was said *that this and that man were born there*, Ps. lxxxvii. 5), *there is none to guide her*, none to take her by the hand to keep her either from falling or from shaming herself, to lend either a hand to help her out of her trouble or a tongue to comfort her under it. Think it not strange if wise and good men are disappointed in their children, and have not that succour from them which they expected, but those that were arrows in their hand prove arrows in their heart, when Jerusalem herself has none of all her sons, prince, priest, nor prophet, that has such a sense either of duty or gratitude as to help her when she has most need of help. Thus they complain, Ps. lxxiv. 9. *There is none to tell us how long.* Now that which aggravated this disappointment was, (1.) That her trouble was very great, and yet there was none to pity or help her: *These two things have come unto thee* (v. 19), to complete thy desolation and destruction, even the *famine and the sword*, two sore judgments, and very terrible. Or the two things were the *desolation and destruction* by which the city was wasted and the famine and sword by which the citizens perished. Or the two things were the trouble itself (made up of desolation, destruction, famine, and sword) and her being helpless, forlorn, and comfortless, under it. "Two sad things indeed, to be in this woeful case, and to have none to pity thee, to sympathize with thee in thy griefs, or to help to bear the burden of thy cares, to have none to comfort thee, by suggesting that to thee which might help to alleviate thy grief or doing that for thee which might help to redress thy grievances." Or these two things that had come upon Jerusalem are the same with the two things that were afterwards to come upon Babylon (ch. xlvii. 9), *loss of children and widowhood*—piteous case, and yet, "when thou hast brought it upon thyself by thy own sin and folly, *who shall be sorry for thee?*"—a case that calls for comfort, and yet, when thou art froward under thy trouble, frettest, and makest thyself uneasy, *by whom shall I comfort thee?*" Those that will not be counselled cannot be helped. (2.) That those who should have been her comforters were their own tormentors (v. 20): *They have fainted*, as quite dispirited and driven to despair; they have no patience in which to keep possession of their own souls and the enjoyment of themselves, nor any confidence in God's promise, by which to keep possession of the comfort of that. They throw themselves upon the ground, in vexation at their troubles, and there *they lie at the head of all the streets*, complaining to all that pass by (Lam. i. 12), pining away for want of necessary food; there they lie like a *wild bull in a net*, fretting and raging, struggling and pulling, to help themselves,

but entangling themselves so much the more, and making their condition the worse by their own passions and discontent. Those that are of a meek and quiet spirit are, under affliction, like a dove in a net mourning indeed, but silent and patient. Those that are of a froward peevish spirit are like a wild bull in a net, uneasy to themselves, vexatious to their friends, and provoking to their God: *They are full of the fury of the Lord, the rebuke of our God.* God is angry with them, and contends with them, and they are full of that only, and take no notice of his wise and gracious designs in afflicting them; never enquire wherefore he contends with them, and therefore nothing appears in them but anger at God and quarrelling with him. They are displeased at God for the dispensations of his providence concerning them, and so they do but make bad worse. They had long been Jerusalem's woeful case, and God took cognizance of it. But,

II. It is promised that Jerusalem's trouble shall at length come to an end, and be transferred to her persecutors (v. 21): *Nevertheless hear this, thou afflicted.* It is offered the lot of God's church to be afflicted, and God has always something to say to her which she will do well to hearken to. "Thou art *drunken*, not as formerly with wine, but with the intoxicating cup of Babylon's whoredoms and idolatries, but with the cup of affliction. Know then, for thy comfort, 1. "That the Lord Jehovah is thy Lord and thy God, for all this." It is expressed emphatically (v. 22): "*Thus saith thy Lord, thy God, and thy God*—the Lord, who is able to help thee, and has wherewithal to relieve thee,—thy Lord, who has an incontestable right to thee, and will not alienate it,—thy God, in covenant with thee, and who has undertaken to make thee happy." Whatever the distresses of God's people may be, he will not disown his relation to them, nor have they lost their interest in him and in his promise. 2. "That he is the God who pleads the cause of his people, as their patron and protector, who takes what is done against them as done against himself." The cause of God's people, and of that holy religion which they profess, is a righteous cause, otherwise the righteous God would not appear for it; yet it may for a time be run down, and seem as if it were lost. But God will plead either by convincing the consciences or confounding the mischievous projects of those that fight against it. He will plead it by clearing up the equity and excellency of it to the world and by giving success to those that act in defence of it. It is his own cause he has espoused it, and therefore will plead it with jealousy. 3. That they should shortly take leave of their troubles and bid a final farewell to them: "*I will take out of thy hand the cup of trembling*, that bitter cup; it shall pass from thee." Throwing away the cu-

trembling will not do, nor saying, "We will not, we cannot, drink it;" but, if we patiently submit, he that put it into our hands will himself take it out of our hands. Nay, it is promised, "*Thou shalt no more drink it again.*" God has let fall his controversy with thee, and will not revive the judgment." 4. That their persecutors and oppressors should be made to drink of the same bitter cup of which they had drunk so deeply, v. 23. See here, (1.) How insolently they had abused and trampled upon the people of God: *They have said to thy soul, to thee, to thy life, Bow down, that we may go over.* Nay, they have said it to thy conscience, taking a pride and pleasure in forcing thee to worship idols. Herein the New-Testament Babylon treads in the steps of that old oppressor, tyrannizing over men's consciences, giving law to them, putting them upon the rack, and compelling them to sinful compliances. Those that set up an infallible head and judge, requiring an implicit faith in his dictates and obedience to his commands, do in effect say to men's souls, *Bow down, that we may go over,* and they say it with delight. (2.) How nearly the people of God (having by their sin lost much of their courage and sense of honour) truckled to them: *Thou hast laid thy body as the ground.* Observe, The oppressors required souls to be subjected to them, that every man should believe and worship just as they would have them. But all they could gain by their threats and violence was that people laid their bodies on the ground; they brought them to an external and hypocritical conformity, but conscience cannot be forced, nor is it mentioned to their praise that they yielded thus far. But observe, (3.) How justly God will reckon with those who have carried it so imperiously towards his people: *The cup of trembling shall be put into their hand.* Babylon's case shall be as bad as ever Jerusalem's was. Daniel's persecutors shall be thrown into Daniel's den; let them see how they like it. And the Lord is known by these judgments which he executes.

CHAP. LII.

The greater part of this chapter is on the same subject with the chapter before, concerning the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon, which yet is applicable to the great salvation Christ has wrought out for us; but the last three verses are on the same subject with the following chapter, concerning the person of the Redeemer, his humiliation and exaltation. Observe, I. The encouragement that is given to the Jews in captivity to hope that God would deliver them in his own way and time, ver. 1-6. II. The great joy and rejoicing that shall be both with ministers and people upon that occasion, ver. 7-10. III. The call given to those that remained in captivity to shift for their own enlargement when liberty was proclaimed, ver. 11, 12. IV. A short idea given here of the Messiah, which is enlarged upon in the next chapter, ver. 13-15.

AWAKE, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean. 2 Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit

down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion. 3 For thus saith the Lord, Ye have sold yourselves for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money. 4 For thus saith the Lord God, My people went down aforetime into Egypt to sojourn there; and the Assyrian oppressed them without cause. 5 Now therefore, what have I here, saith the Lord, that my people is taken away for nought? They that rule over them make them to howl, saith the Lord; and my name continually every day is blasphemed. 6 Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak: behold, it is I.

Here, I. God's people are stirred up to appear vigorous for their own deliverance, v. 1, 2. They had desired that God would *awake and put on his strength*, ch. li. 9. Here he calls upon them to *awake and put on their strength*, to bestir themselves; let them awake from their despondency, and pluck up their spirits, encourage themselves and one another with the hope that all will be well yet, and no longer succumb and sink under their burden. Let them awake from their distrust, look above them, look about them, look into the promises, look into the providences of God that were working for them, and let them raise their expectations of great things from God. Let them awake from their dullness, sluggishness, and inactivity, and raise up their endeavours, not to take any irregular courses for their own relief, contrary to the law of nations concerning captives, but to use all likely means to recommend themselves to the favour of the conqueror and make an interest with him. God here gives them an assurance, 1. That they should be reformed by their captivity: *There shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean* (v. 1); their idolatrous customs should be no more introduced, or at least not harboured; for when by the marriage of strange wives, in Ezra's time and Nehemiah's, the unclean crept in, they were soon by the vigilance and zeal of the magistrates expelled again, and care was taken that Jerusalem should be a holy city. Thus the gospel Jerusalem is purified by the blood of Christ and the grace of God, and made indeed a holy city. 2. That they should be relieved and rescued out of their captivity, that the bands of their necks should be loosed, that they should not now be any longer oppressed, nay, that they should not be any more invaded, as they had been: *There shall no more come against thee* (so it may be read) *the uncircumcised and the un-*

clean. The heathen shall no again enter into God's sanctuary and profane his temple, Ps. lxxix. 1. This must be understood with a condition. If they keep close to God, and keep in with him, God will keep off, will keep out the enemy; but, if they again corrupt themselves, Antiochus will profane their temple and the Romans will destroy it. However, for some time they shall have peace. And to this happy change, now approaching, they are here called to accommodate themselves. (1.) Let them prepare for joy: "*Put on thy beautiful garments*, no longer to appear in mourning weeds and the habit of thy widowhood. Put on a new face, a smiling countenance, now that a new and pleasant scene begins to open." The beautiful garments were laid up then, when the harps were hung on the willow trees; but, now there is occasion for both, let both be resumed together. "Put on thy strength, and, in order to that, put on thy beautiful garments, in token of triumph and rejoicing." Note, *The joy of the Lord will be our strength* (Neh. viii. 10), and our beautiful garments will serve for armour of proof against the darts of temptation and trouble. And observe, Jerusalem must put on her beautiful garments when she becomes a holy city, for the beauty of holiness is the most amiable beauty, and the more holy we are the more cause we have to rejoice. (2.) Let them prepare for liberty: "*Shake thyself from the dust in which thou hast lain*, and into which thy proud oppressors have trodden thee (ch. li. 23), or into which thou hast in thy extreme sorrow rolled thyself." *Arise, and set up*; so it may be read. "O Jerusalem! prepare to get clear of all the marks of servitude thou hast been under and to shift thy quarters: *Loose thyself from the bands of thy neck*; be inspired with generous principles and resolutions to assert thy own liberty." The gospel proclaims liberty to those who were bound with fears and makes it their duty to take hold of their liberty. Let those who have been weary and heavily laden under the burden of sin, finding relief in Christ, shake themselves from the dust of their doubts and fears and loose themselves from those bands; for, *if the Son make them free, they shall be free indeed*.

II. God stirs up himself to appear jealous for the deliverance of his people. He here pleads their cause with himself, and even stirs up himself to come and save them, for his reasons of mercy are fetched from himself. Several things he here considers.

1. That the Chaldeans who oppressed them never acknowledged God in the power they gained over his people, any more than Sennacherib did, who, when God made use of him as an instrument for the correction and reformation of his people, meant not so, ch. x. 6, 7. "*You have sold yourselves for nought*; you got nothing by it, nor did I," v. 3. (God considers that when they by sin had sold themselves he himself, who had

the prior, nay, the sole, title to them, *did not increase his wealth by their price*, ch. xlv. 12. They did not so much as pay the debts to him with it; the Babylonians gave him no thanks for them, but rather reproached and blasphemed his name upon that account.) "And therefore they, having so long had you for nothing, shall at last rest you for nothing: *You shall be redeemed without price*," as was promised, ch. xlv. Those that give nothing must expect to get nothing; however, God is a debtor to no man.

2. That they had been often before in similar distress, had often smarted for time under the tyranny of their task-master and therefore it was a pity that they should now be left always in the hand of these oppressors (v. 4): "*My people went down in Egypt*, in an amicable way to settle there but they enslaved them, and ruled them with rigour." And then they were delivered, notwithstanding the pride, and power, and policies of Pharaoh. And why may we not think God will deliver his people now? At other times *the Assyrian oppressed* the people of God *without cause*, as when the ten tribes were carried away captive by the king of Assyria; soon afterwards Sennacherib, another Assyrian, with a destroying army oppressed and made himself master of all the defended cities of Judah. The Babylonians might not unfitly be called *Assyrians*, their monarchy being a branch of the Assyrians and they now oppressed them without cause. Though God was righteous in delivering them into their hands, they were unrighteous in using them as they did, and could not pretend a dominion over them as their subjects as Pharaoh might when they were settled in Goshen, a part of his kingdom. When we suffer by the hands of wicked and unreasonable men it is some comfort to be able to say that as to them it is without cause, that we have not given them any provocation, Ps. vii. 3—5, &c.

3. That God's glory suffered by the injury that were done to his people (v. 5): "*Where have I here*, what do I get by it, *that my people are taken away for nought*? God is not worshipped as he used to be in Jerusalem his altar there is gone and his temple in ruins; but if, in lieu of that, he were more and better worshipped in Babylon, either by the captives or by the natives, it were another matter—God might be looked upon as in some respects a gainer in his honour by it; but, alas! it is not so. (1.) The captives are so dispirited that they cannot praise him instead of this they are continually howling which grieves him and moves his pity. *Those that rule over them make them to howl* as the Egyptians of old made them to sigh Exod. ii. 23. So the Babylonians now, using them more hardly, extorted from them louder complaints and made them to howl. This gives us no pleasing idea of the temper th

captives were now in; their complaints were not so rational and pious as they should have been, but brutish rather; they *howled*, Hos. vii. 14. However God heard them, and came down to deliver them, as he did out of Egypt, Exod. iii. 7, 8. (2.) The natives are so insolent that they will not praise him, but, instead of that, they are continually blaspheming, which affronts him and moves his anger. They boasted that they were too hard for God because they were too hard for his people, and set him at defiance, as unable to deliver them, and thus his name continually every day was blasphemed among them. When they praised their own idols they *lifted up themselves against the Lord of heaven*, Dan. v. 23. "Now," says God, "this is not to be suffered. I will go down to deliver them; for what honour, what rent, what tribute of praise have I from the world, when my people, who should be to me for a name and a praise, are to me for a reproach? For their oppressors will neither praise God themselves nor let them do it." The apostle quotes this with application to the wicked lives of the Jews, by which God was dishonoured among the Gentiles then, as much as now he was by their sufferings, Rom. ii. 23, 24.

4. That his glory would be greatly manifested by their deliverance (v. 6): "*Therefore, because my name is thus blasphemed, I will arise, and my people shall know my name, my name Jehovah.*" By this name he had made himself known in delivering them out of Egypt, Exod. vi. 3. God will do something to vindicate his own honour, something for his great name; and his people, who have almost lost the knowledge of it, shall know it to their comfort and shall find it their strong tower. They shall know that God's providence governs the world, and all the affairs of it, that it is he who speaks deliverance for them by the word of his power, that it is he only, who at first spoke and it was done. They shall know that God's word, which Israel is blessed with above other nations, shall without fail have its accomplishment in due season, that it is he who speaks by the prophet; it is he, and they do not speak of themselves; for not one iota or tittle of what they say shall fall to the ground.

7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! 8 Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion. 9 Break forth into joy, sing together,

ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the LORD hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem. 10 The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. 11 Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD. 12 For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rereward.

The removal of the Jews from Babylon to their own land again is here spoken of both as a mercy and as a duty; and the application of v. 7 to the preaching of the gospel (by the apostle, Rom. x. 15) plainly intimates that that deliverance was a type and figure of the redemption of mankind by Jesus Christ, to which what is here said of their redemption out of Babylon ought to be accommodated.

I. It is here spoken of as a great blessing, which ought to be welcomed with abundance of joy and thankfulness. 1. Those that bring the tidings of their release shall be very acceptable (v. 7): *How beautiful upon the mountains, the mountains round about Jerusalem, over which these messengers are seen coming at a distance, how beautiful are their feet, when it is known what tidings they bring!* It is not meant so much of the common posts, or the messengers sent express by the government to disperse the proclamation, but rather of some of the Jews themselves, who, being at the fountain-head of intelligence, had early notice of it, and immediately went themselves, or sent their own messengers, to all parts, to disperse the news, and even to Jerusalem itself, to tell the few who remained there that their brethren would be with them shortly; for it is published not merely as matter of news, but as a proof that Zion's God reigns, for in that language it is published: they say unto Zion, *Thy God reigns.* "Those who bring the tidings of peace and salvation, that Cyrus has given orders for the release of the Jews, tidings which were so long expected by those that waited for the consolation of Israel, those good tidings (so the original reads it, without the tautology of our translation, *good tidings of good*), put this construction upon it, *O Zion! thy God reigns.* Note, When bad news is abroad this is good news, and when good news is abroad this is the best news, that Zion's God reigns, that God is Zion's God, in covenant with her, and as such he reigns, Ps. cxlvi. 10; Zech. ix. 9. *The Lord has founded Zion, ch. xiv. 32.* All events have their rise in the disposals of

the kingdom of his providence and their tendency to the advancement of the kingdom of his grace. This must be applied to the preaching of the gospel, which is a proclamation of peace and salvation; it is gospel indeed, good news, glad tidings, tidings of victory over our spiritual enemies and liberty from our spiritual bondage. The good news is that the Lord Jesus reigns and all power is given to him. Christ himself brought these tidings first (Luke iv. 18, Heb. ii. 3), and of him the text speaks: *How beautiful are his feet!* his feet that were nailed to the cross, how beautiful upon Mount Calvary! his feet when he came *leaping upon the mountains* (Cant. ii. 8), how beautiful were they to those who knew his voice and knew it to be the voice of their beloved! His ministers proclaim these good tidings; they ought to keep their feet clean from the pollutions of the world, and then they ought to be beautiful in the eyes of those to whom they are sent, who sit at their feet, or rather at Christ's in them, to hear his word. They must be *esteemed in love for their work's sake* (1 Thess. v. 13), for their message sake, which is well worthy of all acceptance. 2. Those to whom the tidings are brought shall be put thereby into a transport of joy. (1.) Zion's watchmen shall then rejoice because they are surprisingly illuminated, v. 8. The watchmen on Jerusalem's walls shall lead the chorus in this triumph. Who they were we are told, ch. lxii. 6. They were such as God set on the walls of Jerusalem, to make mention of his name, and to continue instant in prayer to him, till he again made *Jerusalem a praise in the earth*. These watchmen stand upon their watch-tower, waiting for an answer to their prayers (Hab. ii. 1); and therefore when the good news comes they have it first, and the longer they have continued and the more importunate they have been in praying for it the more will they be elevated when it comes: They shall *lift up the voice, with the voice together shall they sing* in concert, to invite others to join with them in their praises. And that which above all things will transport them with pleasure is that *they shall see eye to eye*, that is, face to face. Whereas God had been a God hiding himself, and they could scarcely discern any thing of his favour through the dark cloud of their afflictions, now that the cloud is scattered they shall plainly see it. They shall see *Zion's king eye to eye*; so it was fulfilled when the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and there were those that *saw his glory* (John i. 14) and *looked upon it*, 1 John i. 1. They shall see an exact agreement and correspondence between the prophecy and the event, the promise and the performance; they shall see how they look one upon another eye to eye, and be satisfied that the same God spoke the one and did the other. When the Lord shall bring again Zion out of her captivity the

prophets shall thence receive and give fuller discoveries than ever of God's good-will to his people. Applying this also, as the foregoing verse, to gospel times, it is a promise of the pouring out of the Spirit upon gospel ministers, as a spirit of wisdom and revelation, to lead them into all truth, so that they shall see eye to eye, shall see God's grace more clearly than the Old-Testament saints could see it; and they shall herein be unanimous; in these great things concerning the common salvation they shall concur in their sentiments as well as their songs. Nay, St. Paul seems to allude to this when he makes it the privilege of our future state that *we shall see face to face*. (2.) Zion's waste places shall then rejoice because they shall be surprisingly comforted (v. 9): *Break forth into joy, sing together, you waste places of Jerusalem*; that is, all parts of Jerusalem, for it was all in ruins, and even those parts that seemed to lie most desolate shall share in the joy; and they, having little expected it, shall break forth into joy, as men that dream, Ps. cxvi. 1, 2. *Let them sing together*. Note, Those that share in mercies ought to join in praises. Here is matter for joy and praise. [1.] God's people will have the comfort of this salvation; and what is the matter of our rejoicing ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving. *He has redeemed Jerusalem* (the inhabitants of Jerusalem that were sold into the hands of their enemies) and thereby he has comforted his people that were in sorrow. The redemption of Jerusalem is the joy of all God's people, whose character it is that they look for that redemption, Luke ii. 38. [2.] God will have the glory of it, v. 10. *He has made bare his holy arm* (manifested and displayed his power) *in the eyes of all the nations*: God's arm is a holy arm, stretched out in purity and justice, in defence of holiness and in pursuance of his promise. [3.] All the world will have the benefit of it. In the great salvation wrought out by our Lord Jesus the *arm of the Lord was revealed* and *all the ends of the earth were made to see this great salvation*, not as spectators of it only, as they saw the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon, but as sharers in it; some of all nations, the most remote, shall partake of the benefits of the redemption. This is applied to our salvation by Christ. Luke iii. 6, *All flesh shall see the salvation of God, that great salvation*.

II. It is here spoken of as a great business, which ought to be managed with abundance of care and circumspection. When the liberty is proclaimed, 1. Let the people of God hasten out of Babylon with all convenient speed; though they are ever so well settled there, let them not think of taking root in Babylon, but *Depart, depart* (v. 11), *go out from the midst of her*; not only those that are in the borders, but those that are in the midst, in the heart of the country, let them

gone. Babylon is no place for Israelites. As soon as they have leave to go, let them go no time. With this word God stirred up the spirits of those that were moved to go, Ezra i. 5. And it is a call to all those who are yet in the bondage of sin and Satan, to make use of the liberty which Christ has proclaimed to them. And, if the Son *make them free, they shall be free indeed.* 2. Let them take heed of carrying away with them any of the pollutions of Babylon: *Touch no unclean thing.* Now that God makes bare his holy arm for you, *be you holy as he is, and keep yourselves from every wicked thing.* When they came out of Egypt they brought with them the idolatrous customs of Egypt (Ezek. xxiii. 3), which were their ruin; let them take heed of doing so now that they come out of Babylon. Note, When we are receiving any special mercy from God we ought more carefully than ever to watch against all impurity. But especially let those be clean who *bear the vessels of the Lord*, that is, the priests, who had the charge of the vessels of the sanctuary (when they were restored by a particular grant) to carry them to Jerusalem, Ezra i. 7; viii. 24, &c. Let them not only avoid touching any unclean thing, but be very careful to *cleanse themselves according to the purification of the sanctuary.* Christians are made to our God spiritual priests, Rev. i. 6. They are to bear the vessels of the Lord, are entrusted to keep the ordinances of God pure and entire; it is a good thing that is committed to them, and they ought to be clean, to wash their hands in innocency and so to compass God's altars and carry his vessels, and keep themselves pure. 3. Let them depend upon the presence of God with them and his protection in their removal (*v. 12*): *You shall not go out with haste.* They were to go with diligent haste, not to lose time nor linger as Lot in Sodom, but they were not to go with a diffident distrustful haste, as if they were afraid of being pursued (as when they came out of Egypt) or of having the orders for their release recalled and countermanded: no, they shall find that, as for God, his work is perfect, and therefore they need not make more haste than good speed. Cyrus shall give them an honourable discharge, and they shall have an honourable return, and not steal away; *for the Lord will go before them as their general and commander-in-chief, and the God of Israel will be their rearward*, or he that will gather up those that are left behind. God will both lead their van and bring up their rear; he will secure them from enemies that either meet them or follow them, for with his favour will he compass them. The pillar of cloud and fire, when they came out of Egypt, sometimes went behind them, to secure their rear (Exod. xiv. 19), and God's presence with them would now be that to them which that pillar was a visible token of. Those that are in

the way of their duty are under God's special protection; and he that believes this will not make haste.

13 Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. 14 As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: 15 So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for *that* which had not been told them shall they see; and *that* which they had not heard shall they consider.

Here, as in other places, for the confirming of the faith of God's people and the encouraging of their hope in the promises of temporal deliverances, the prophet passes from them to speak of the great salvation which should in the fulness of time be wrought out by the Messiah. As the prophecy of Christ's incarnation was intended for the ratification of the promise of their deliverance from the Assyrian army, so this of Christ's death and resurrection is to confirm the promise of their return out of Babylon; for both these salvations were typical of the great redemption and the prophecies of them had a reference to that. This prophecy, which begins here and is continued to the end of the next chapter, points as plainly as can be at Jesus Christ; the ancient Jews understood it of the Messiah, though the modern Jews take a great deal of pains to pervert it, and some of ours (no friends therein to the Christian religion) will have it understood of Jeremiah; but Philip, who hence preached Christ to the eunuch, has put it past dispute that *of him speaks the prophet this*, of him and of no other man, Acts viii. 34, 35. Here,

I. God owns Christ to be both commissioned and qualified for his undertaking. 1. He is appointed to it. "*He is my servant, whom I employ and therefore will uphold.*" In his undertaking he does his Father's will, seeks his Father's honour, and serves the interests of his Father's kingdom. 2. He is qualified for it. *He shall deal prudently, for the spirit of wisdom and understanding shall rest upon him, ch. xi. 2.* The word is used concerning David when he behaved himself wisely, 1 Sam. xviii. 14. Christ is wisdom itself, and, in the contriving and carrying on the work of our redemption, there appeared much of the wisdom of God in a mystery, 1 Cor. ii. 7. Christ, when he was here upon earth, dealt very prudently, to the admiration of all.

II. He gives a short prospect both of his humiliation and his exaltation. See here, 1. How he humbled himself: *Many were astonished at him*, as they were at David when by reason of his sorrows and troubles

he became a *wonder unto many*, Ps. lxxi. 7. Many wondered to see what base usage he met with, how inveterate people were against him, how inhuman, and what indignities were done him: *His visage was marred more than any man's* when he was buffeted, smitten on the cheek, and crowned with thorns, and *hid not his face from shame and spitting*. His face was *foul with weeping*, for he was a *man of sorrows*; he that really was fairer than the children of men had his face spoiled with the abuses that were done him. Never was man used so barbarously; his form, when he took upon him the form of a servant, was more mean and abject than that of any of the sons of men. Those that saw him said, "Surely never man looked so miserably, a worm and no man," Ps. xxii. 6. The nation *abhorred him* (ch. xlix. 7), treated him as the *off-scouring of all things*. Never was sorrow like unto his sorrow. 2. How highly God exalted him, and exalted him because he humbled himself. Three words are used for this (v. 13): *He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high*. God shall exalt him, men shall extol him, and with both he shall be very high, higher than the highest, higher than the heavens. He shall prosper in his work, and succeed in it, and that shall raise him very high.

(1.) Many nations shall be the better for him, for *he shall sprinkle them*, and not the Jews only; the blood of sprinkling shall be applied to their consciences, to purify them. He suffered, and died, and so sprinkled many nations; for in his death there was a *fountain opened*, Zech. xiii. 1. He shall sprinkle many nations by his heavenly doctrine, which shall drop as the rain and distil as the dew. Moses's did so only on one nation (Deut. xxxii. 2), but Christ's on many nations. He shall do it by baptism, which is the washing of the body with pure water, Heb. x. 22. So that this promise had its accomplishment when Christ sent his apostles to disciple all nations, by baptizing or sprinkling them.

(2.) The great ones of the nation shall show him respect: *Kings shall shut their mouths at him*, that is, they shall not open their mouths against him, as they have done, to contradict and blaspheme his sacred oracles; nay, they shall acquiesce in, and be well pleased with, the methods he takes of setting up his kingdom in the world; they shall with great humility and reverence receive his oracles and laws, as those who, when they heard Job's wisdom, *after his speech spoke not again*, Job xxix. 9, 22. *Kings shall see and arise*, ch. xlix. 7. (3.) The mystery which was kept secret from the beginning of the world shall by him be *made known to all nations for the obedience of faith*, as the apostle speaks, Rom. xvi. 25, 26. *That which had not been told them shall they see*; the gospel brings to light things new and unheard of, which will awaken the attention and engage the reverence of kings and kingdoms. This

is applied to the preaching of the gospel in the Gentile world, Rom. xv. 21. These words are there quoted according to the Septuagint translation: *To whom he was not spoken of they shall see, and those that have not heard shall understand*. As the things revealed had long been kept secret, so the persons to whom they were revealed had long been kept in the dark; but now they shall see and consider the glory of God shining in the face of Christ, which before they had not been told of—they had not heard. That shall be discovered to them by the gospel of Christ which could never be told them by all the learning of their philosophers, or the art of their diviners, or any of their pagan oracles. Much had been said in the Old Testament concerning the Messiah; much had been told them, and they had heard it. But, as the queen of Sheba found concerning Solomon, what they shall see in him, when he comes, shall far exceed what had been told them. Christ disappointed the expectations of those who looked for a Messiah according to their fancies, as the carnal Jews, but outdid theirs who looked for such a Messiah as was promised. According to their faith, nay, and beyond it, it was to them.

CHAP. LIII.

The two great things which the Spirit of Christ in the Old-Testament prophets testified beforehand were the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow, 1 Pet. i. 11. And that which Christ himself, when he expounded Moses and all the prophets, showed to be the drift and scope of them all was that Christ ought to suffer, and then to enter into his glory, Luke xxiv. 26, 27. But nowhere in all the Old-Testament are these two so plainly and fully prophesied of as here in this chapter, out of which divers passages are quoted with application to Christ in the New-Testament. This chapter is so replenished with the unsearchable riches of Christ that it may be called rather the gospel of the evangelist Isaiah than the prophecy of the prophet Isaiah. We may observe here, 1. The reproach of Christ's sufferings—the meanness of his appearance, the greatness of his grief, and the prejudices which many conceived in consequence against his doctrine, ver. 1—3. 11. The rolling away of this reproach, and the stamping of immortal honour upon his sufferings, notwithstanding the disgrace and ignominy of them, by four considerations — 1. That therein he did his Father's will, ver. 4, 6, 10. 2. That thereby he made atonement for the sin of man (ver. 4—6, 8, 11, 12), for it was not for any sin of his own that he suffered, ver. 9. 3. That he bore his sufferings with an invincible and exemplary patience, ver. 7. 4. That he should prosper in his undertaking, and his sufferings should end in his immortal honour, ver. 10—12. By mixing faith with the prophecy of this chapter we may improve our acquaintance with Jesus Christ and him crucified, with Jesus Christ and him glorified, dying for our sins and rising again for our justification.

WHO hath believed our report?

And to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? 2 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. 3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

The prophet, in the close of the former chapter, had foreseen and foretold the kind reception which the gospel of Christ should find among the Gentiles, that nations and

their kings should bid it welcome, that those who had not seen him should believe in him; and though they had not any prophecies among them of gospel grace, which might raise their expectations, and dispose them to entertain it, yet upon the first notice of it they should give it its due weight and consideration. Now here he foretels, with wonder, the unbelief of the Jews, notwithstanding the previous notices they had of the coming of the Messiah in the Old Testament and the opportunity they had of being personally acquainted with him. Observe here,

I. The contempt they put upon the gospel of Christ, *v.* 1. The unbelief of the Jews in our Saviour's time is expressly said to be the fulfilling of this word, John xii. 38. And it is applied likewise to the little success which the apostles' preaching met with among Jews and Gentiles, Rom. x. 16. Note, 1. Of the many that hear the report of the gospel there are few, very few, that believe it. It is reported openly and publicly, not whispered in a corner, or confined to the schools, but proclaimed to all; and it is so faithful a saying, and so well worthy of all acceptance, that one would think it should be universally received and believed. But it is quite otherwise; few believed the prophets who spoke before of Christ; when he came himself none of the rulers nor of the Pharisees followed him, and but here and there one of the common people; and, when the apostles carried this report all the world over, some in every place believed, but comparatively very few. To this day, of the many that profess to believe this report, there are few that cordially embrace it and submit to the power of it. 2. Therefore people believe not the report of the gospel, because *the arm of the Lord is not revealed* to them; they do not discern, nor will be brought to acknowledge, that divine power which goes along with the word. *The arm of the Lord is made bare* (as was said, *ch.* li. 10) in the miracles that were wrought to confirm Christ's doctrine, in the wonderful success of it, and its energy upon the conscience; though it is a still voice, it is a strong one; but they do not perceive this, nor do they experience in themselves that working of the Spirit which makes the word effectual. They believe not the gospel because, by rebelling against the light they had, they had forfeited the grace of God, which therefore he justly denied them and withheld from them, and for want of that they believed not. 3. This is a thing we ought to be much affected with; it is to be wondered at, and greatly lamented, and ministers may go to God and complain of it to him, as the prophet here. What a pity is it that such rich grace should be received in vain, that precious souls should perish at the pool's side because they will not step in and be healed!

II. The contempt they put upon the person of Christ because of the meanness of his appearance, *v.* 2, 3. This seems to come in as a reason why they rejected his doctrine, because they were prejudiced against his person. When he was on earth many that heard him preach, and could not but approve of what they heard, would not give it any regard or entertainment, because it came from one that made so small a figure and had no external advantages to recommend him. Observe here,

1. The low condition he submitted to, and how he abased and emptied himself. The entry he made into the world, and the character he wore in it, were no way agreeable to the ideas which the Jews had formed of the Messiah and their expectations concerning him, but quite the reverse. (1.) It was expected that his extraction would be very great and noble. He was to be the Son of David, of a family that had a *name like to the names of the great men that were in the earth*, 2 Sam. vii. 9. But he sprang out of this royal and illustrious family when it was reduced and sunk, and Joseph, that son of David, who was his supposed father, was but a poor carpenter, perhaps a ship-carpenter, for most of his relations were fishermen. This is here meant by his being a *root out of a dry ground*, his being born of a mean and despicable family, in the north, in Galilee, of a family out of which, like a dry and desert ground, nothing green, nothing great, was expected, in a country of such small repute that it was thought no good thing could come out of it. His mother, being a virgin, was as dry ground, yet from her *he* sprang who is not only fruit, but root. The seed on the stony ground had no root; but, though Christ grew out of a dry ground, he is both *the root and the offspring of David*, the root of the good olive. (2.) It was expected that he should make a public entry, and come in pomp and with observation; but, instead of that, he grew up before God, not before men. God had his eye upon him, but men regarded him not: *He grew up as a tender plant*, silently and insensibly, and without any noise, as the corn, that tender plant, grows up, *we know not how*, Mark iv. 27. Christ rose as a tender plant, which, one would have thought, might easily be crushed, or might be nipped in one frosty night. The gospel of Christ, in its beginning, was as a grain of mustard-seed, so inconsiderable did it seem, Matt. xiii. 31, 32. (3.) It was expected that he should have some uncommon beauty in his face and person, which should charm the eye, attract the heart, and raise the expectations of all that saw him. But there was nothing of this kind in him; not that he was in the least deformed or misshapen, but *he had no form nor comeliness*, nothing extraordinary, which one might have thought to meet with in the countenance of *an* in-

carnate deity. Those who saw him could not see that there was any beauty in him *that they should desire him, nothing in him more than in another beloved*, Cant. v. 9. Moses when he was born, was exceedingly fair, to such a degree that it was looked upon as a happy presage, Acts vii. 20; Heb. xi. 23. David, when he was anointed, was *of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to*, 1 Sam. xvi. 12. But our Lord Jesus had nothing of that to recommend him. Or it may refer not so much to his person as to the manner of his appearing in the world, which had nothing in it of sensible glory. His gospel is preached, *not with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but with all plainness*, agreeable to the subject. (4.) It was expected that he should live a pleasant life, and have a full enjoyment of all the delights of the sons and daughters of men, which would have invited all sorts to him; but, on the contrary, he was *a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*. It was not only his last scene that was tragical, but his whole life was so, not only mean, but miserable,

— but one continued chain

Of labour, sorrow, and consuming pain.

SIR R. BLACKMORE.

Thus, being *made sin for us*, he underwent the sentence sin had subjected us to, that we should *eat in sorrow all the days of our life* (Gen. iii. 17), and thereby relaxed much of the rigour and extremity of the sentence as to us. His condition was, upon many accounts, sorrowful. He was unsettled, had not where to lay his head, lived upon alms, was opposed and menaced, and *endured the contradiction of sinners against himself*. His spirit was tender, and he admitted the impressions of sorrow. We never read that he laughed, but often that he wept. Lentulus, in his epistle to the Roman senate concerning Jesus, says, "*He was never seen to laugh*;" and so worn and macerated was he with continual grief that when he was but a little above thirty years of age he was taken to be nearly fifty, John viii. 57. Grief was his intimate acquaintance; for he acquainted himself with the grievances of others, and sympathized with them, and he never set his own at a distance; for in his transfiguration he talked of his own decease, and in his triumph he wept over Jerusalem. Let us look unto him and mourn.

2. The low opinion that men had of him, upon this account. Being generally apt to judge of persons and things by the sight of the eye, and according to outward appearance, they saw no beauty in him that they should desire him. There was a great deal of true beauty in him, the beauty of holiness and the beauty of goodness, enough to render him *the desire of all nations*; but the far greater part of those among whom he lived, and conversed, saw none of this beauty, for it was spiritually discerned. Carnal hearts see no excellency in the Lord Jesus,

nothing that should induce them to desire an acquaintance with him or interest in him. Nay, he is not only not desired, but he is *despised and rejected*, abandoned and abhorred, a reproach of men, an abject, one that men were shy of keeping company with and had not any esteem for, a worm and no man. He was despised as a mean man, rejected as a bad man. He was the stone which the builders refused; they would not have him to reign over them. Men, who should have had so much reason as to understand things better, so much tenderness as not to trample upon a man in misery—men whom he came to seek and save rejected him: "*We hid as it were our faces from him, looked another way, and his sufferings were as nothing to us; though never sorrow was like unto his sorrow*." Nay, we not only behaved as having no concern for him, but as loathing him, and having him in detestation." It may be read, *He hid as it were his face from us*, concealed the glory of his majesty, and drew a veil over it, and therefore *he was despised and we esteemed him not*, because we could not see through that veil. Christ having undertaken to make satisfaction to the justice of God for the injury man had done him in his honour by sin (and God cannot be injured except in his honour), he did it not only by divesting himself of the glories due to an incarnate deity, but by submitting himself to the disgraces due to the worst of men and malefactors; and thus by vilifying himself he glorified his Father: but this is a good reason why we should esteem him highly, and study to do him honour; let him be received by us whom men rejected.

4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. 7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. 8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither *was any* deceit in his mouth.

In these verses we have,

I. A further account of the sufferings of Christ. Much was said before, but more is said here, of the very low condition to which he abased and humbled himself, to which he became obedient even to the death of the cross. 1. He had griefs and sorrows; being acquainted with them, he kept up the acquaintance, and did not grow shy, no, not of such melancholy acquaintance. Were griefs and sorrows allotted him? He bore them, and blamed not his lot; he carried them, and did neither shrink from them, nor sink under them. The load was heavy and the way long, and yet he did not tire, but persevered to the end, till he said, *It is finished*. 2. He had blows and bruises; he *was stricken, smitten, and afflicted*. His sorrows bruised him; he felt pain and smart from them; they touched him in the most tender part, especially when God was dishonoured, and when he forsook him upon the cross. All along he was smitten with the tongue, when he was cavilled at and contradicted, put under the worst of characters, and had all manner of evil said against him. At last he was smitten with the hand, with blow after blow. 3. He had wounds and stripes. He was scourged, not under the merciful restriction of the Jewish law, which allowed not above forty stripes to be given to the worst of malefactors, but according to the usage of the Romans. And his scourging, doubtless, was the more severe because Pilate intended it as an equivalent for his crucifixion, and yet it proved a preface to it. He was wounded in his hands, and feet, and side. Though it was so ordered that not a bone of him should be broken, yet he had scarcely in any part a whole skin (how fond soever we are to sleep in one, even when we are called out to suffer for him), but from the crown of his head, which was crowned with thorns, to the soles of his feet, which were nailed to the cross, nothing appeared but wounds and bruises. 4. He was wronged and abused (v. 7): *He was oppressed*, injuriously treated and hardly dealt with. That was laid to his charge which he was perfectly innocent of, that laid upon him which he did not deserve; and in both he was oppressed and injured. *He was afflicted* both in mind and body; being oppressed, he laid it to heart, and, though he was patient, was not stupid under it, but mingled his tears with those of the oppressed, that have no comforter, because *on the side of the oppressors there is power*, Eccl. ix. 1. Oppression is a sore affliction; it has made many a wise man mad (Eccl. vii. 7); but our Lord Jesus, though, when he was oppressed, he was afflicted, kept possession

of his own soul. 5. He was judged and imprisoned, as is implied in his being *taken from prison and judgment*, v. 8. God having made him sin for us, he was proceeded against as a malefactor; he was apprehended and taken into custody, and made a prisoner; he was judged, accused, tried, and condemned, according to the usual forms of law: God filed a process against him, judged him in pursuance of that process, and confined him in the prison of the grave, at the door of which a stone was rolled and sealed. 6. He was *cut off* by an untimely death *from the land of the living*, though he lived a most useful life, did so many good works, and they were all such that one would be apt to think it was for some of them that they stoned him. He was stricken to the death, to the grave which he made *with the wicked* (for he was crucified between two thieves, as if he had been the worst of the three) and *yet with the rich*, for he was buried in a sepulchre that belonged to Joseph, an honourable counsellor. Though he died with the wicked, and according to the common course of dealing with criminals should have been buried with them in the place where he was crucified, yet God here foretold, and Providence so ordered it, that he should make his grave with the innocent, with the rich, as a mark of distinction put between him and those that really deserved to die, even in his sufferings.

II. A full account of the meaning of his sufferings. It was a very great mystery that so excellent a person should suffer such hard things; and it is natural to ask with amazement, "How came it about? What evil had he done?" His enemies indeed looked upon him as suffering justly for his crimes; and, though they could lay nothing to his charge, they *esteemed him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted*, v. 4. Because they hated him, and persecuted him, they thought that God did, that he was his enemy and fought against him; and therefore they were the more enraged against him, saying, *God has forsaken him; persecute and take him*, Ps. lxxi. 11. Those that are justly smitten are smitten of God, for by him princes decree justice; and so they looked upon him to be smitten, justly put to death as a blasphemer, a deceiver, and an enemy to Cæsar. Those that saw him hanging on the cross enquired not into the merits of his cause, but took it for granted that he was guilty of every thing laid to his charge and that therefore vengeance suffered him not to live. Thus Job's friends esteemed him smitten of God, because there was something uncommon in his sufferings. It is true he was *smitten of God*, v. 10 (or, as some read it, *he was God's smitten and afflicted*), the Son of God, though smitten and afflicted), but not in the sense in which they meant it; for, though he suffered all these things,

1. He never did any thing in the least to

deserve this hard usage. Whereas he was charged with perverting the nation, and sowing sedition, it was utterly false; he had *done no violence*, but went about doing good. And, whereas he was called *that deceiver*, he never deserved that character; for *there was no deceit in his mouth* (v. 9), to which the apostle refers, 1 Pet. ii. 22. *He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.* He never offended either in word or deed, nor could any of his enemies take up that challenge of his, *Which of you convinceth me of sin?* The judge that condemned him owned he found no fault in him, and the centurion that executed him professed that certainly *he was a righteous man.*

2. He conducted himself under his sufferings so as to make it appear that he did not suffer as an evil-doer; for, though he was *oppressed and afflicted*, yet he *opened not his mouth* (v. 7), no, not so much as to plead his own innocency, but freely offered himself to suffer and die for us, and objected nothing against it. This takes away the scandal of the cross, that he voluntarily submitted to it, for great and holy ends. By his wisdom he could have evaded the sentence, and by his power have resisted the execution; but *thus it was written, and thus it behoved him to suffer.* This commandment he received from his Father, and therefore he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, without any difficulty or reluctance (he is the *Lamb of God*); and as a *sheep is dumb before the shearers*; nay, before the butchers, so he *opened not his mouth*, which denotes not only his exemplary patience under affliction (Ps. xxxix. 9), and his meekness under reproach (Ps. xxxviii. 13), but his cheerful compliance with his Father's will. *Not my will, but thine be done. Lo, I come.* By this will we are sanctified, his making his own soul, his own life, an offering for our sin.

3. It was for our good, and in our stead, that Jesus Christ suffered. This is asserted here plainly and fully, and in a very great variety of emphatical expressions.

(1.) It is certain that we are all guilty before God. We have all sinned, and have come short of the glory of God (v. 6): *All we like sheep have gone astray*, one as well as another. The whole race of mankind lies under the stain of original corruption, and every particular person stands charged with many actual transgressions. We have all gone astray from God our rightful owner, alienated ourselves from him, from the ends he designed us to move towards and the way he appointed us to move in. We have gone astray like sheep, which are apt to wander, and are unapt, when they have gone astray, to find the way home again. That is our true character; we are bent to backslide from God, but altogether unable of ourselves to return to him. This is mentioned not only as our infelicity (that we go astray from the green pastures and expose our-

selves to the beasts of prey), but as our iniquity. We affront God in going astray from him, for we turn aside every one to his own way, and thereby set up ourselves, and of our own will, in competition with God and his will, which is the malignity of sin. Instead of walking obediently in God's way, we have turned wilfully and stubbornly to our own way, the way of our own heart, the way that our own corrupt appetites and passions lead us to. We have set up for ourselves to be our own masters, our own carvers, to do what we will and have what we will. Some think it intimates our own evil way in distinction from the evil way of other Sinners have their own iniquity, their beloved sin, which does most easily beset them, their own evil way, that they are particularly fond of and bless themselves in.

(2.) Our sins are our sorrows and our griefs (v. 4), or, as it may be read, *our sicknesses and our wounds*: the LXX. read it, *our sins*; and so the apostle, 1 Pet. ii. 24. Our original corruptions are the sickness and disease of the soul, an habitual indisposition; our actual transgressions are the wounds of the soul, which put conscience to pain, if they be not seared and senseless. Or our sins are called our *griefs and sorrows* because all our griefs and sorrows are owing to our sins and our sins deserve all our griefs and sorrows, even those that are most extreme and everlasting.

(3.) Our Lord Jesus was appointed and did undertake to make satisfaction for our sins and so to save us from the penal consequences of them. [1.] He was appointed to do it, by the will of his Father; for *the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.* God chose him to be the Saviour of poor sinners and would have him to save them in that way, by bearing their sins and the punishment of them; not the *idem*—the same thing we should have suffered, but the *tantundem*—that which was more than equivalent for the maintaining of the honour of the holiness and justice of God in the government of the world. Observe here, *First*, In what way we are saved from the ruin to which by sin we had become liable—by laying our sins on Christ, as the sins of the offerer were laid upon the sacrifice and those of all Israel upon the head of the scape-goat. Our sins were made to meet upon him (so the margin reads it); the sins of all that he was to save from every place and every age, met upon him, and he was met with for them. The sins were made to fall upon him (so some read it) as those rushed upon him that came with swords and staves to take him. The laying of our sins upon Christ implies the taking of them off from us; we shall not fall under the curse of the law if we submit to the grace of the gospel. They were laid upon Christ when he was made sin (that is, a sin-offering) for us, and redeemed us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us; thus he put himself into a capacity to

make those easy that come to him heavily laden under the burden of sin. See Ps. xl. 6—12. Secondly, By whom this was appointed: It was the Lord that laid our iniquities on Christ; he contrived this way of reconciliation and salvation, and he accepted of the vicarious satisfaction Christ was to make. Christ was delivered to death by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. None but God had power to lay our sins upon Christ, both because the sin was committed against him and to him the satisfaction was to be made, and because Christ, on whom the iniquity was to be laid, was his own Son, the Son of his love, and his holy child Jesus, who himself knew no sin. Thirdly, For whom this atonement was to be made. It was the iniquity of us all that was laid on Christ; for in Christ there is a sufficiency of merit for the salvation of all, and a serious offer made of that salvation to all, which excludes none that do not exclude themselves. It intimates that this is the one only way of salvation. All that are justified are justified by having their sins laid on Jesus Christ, and, though they were ever so many, he is able to bear the weight of them all. [2.] He undertook to do it. God laid upon him our iniquity; but did he consent to it? Yes, he did; for some think that the true reading of the next words (v. 7) is, *It was exacted, and he answered*; divine justice demanded satisfaction for our sins, and he engaged to make the satisfaction. He became our surety, not as originally bound with us, but as bail to the action: "Upon me be the curse, my Father." And therefore, when he was seized, he stipulated with those into whose hands he surrendered himself that that should be his disciples' discharge: *If you seek me, let these go their way*, John xviii. 8. By his own voluntary undertaking he made himself responsible for our debt, and it is well for us that he was responsible. Thus he restored that which he took not away.

(4.) Having undertaken our debt, he underwent the penalty. Solomon says: *He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it*. Christ, being surety for us, did smart for it. [1.] He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, v. 4. He not only submitted to the common infirmities of human nature, and the common calamities of human life, which sin had introduced, but he underwent the extremities of grief, when he said, *My soul is exceedingly sorrowful*. He made the sorrows of this present time heavy to himself, that he might make them light and easy for us. Sin is the wormwood and the gall in the affliction and the misery. Christ bore our sins, and so bore our griefs, bore them off us, that we should never be pressed above measure. This is quoted (Matt. viii. 17) with application to the compassion Christ had for the sick that came to him to be cured and the power he put forth to cure them.

[2.] He did this by suffering for our sins (v. 5): *He was wounded for our transgressions*, to make atonement for them and to purchase for us the pardon of them. Our sins were the thorns in his head, the nails in his hands and feet, the spear in his side. Wounds and bruises were the consequences of sin, what we deserved and what we had brought upon ourselves, ch. i. 6. That these wounds and bruises, though they are painful, may not be mortal, *Christ was wounded for our transgressions*, was tormented or pained (the word is used for the pains of a woman in travail) for our revolts and rebellions. *He was bruised*, or crushed, *for our iniquities*; they were the procuring cause of his death. To the same purport is v. 8, *for the transgression of my people was he smitten, the stroke was upon him* that should have been upon us; and so some read it, *He was cut off for the iniquity of my people, unto whom the stroke belonged, or was due*. *He was delivered to death for our offences*, Rom. iv. 25. Hence it is said to be according to the scriptures, according to this scripture, that Christ died for our sins, 1 Cor. xv. 3. Some read this, *by the transgressions of my people*; that is, by the wicked hands of the Jews, who were, in profession, God's people. he was stricken, was crucified and slain, Acts ii. 23. But, doubtless, we are to take it in the former sense, which is abundantly confirmed by the angel's prediction of the Messiah's undertaking, solemnly delivered to Daniel, that he shall finish transgression, make an end of sin, and make reconciliation for iniquity, Dan. ix. 24.

(5.) The consequence of this to us is our peace and healing, v. 5. [1.] Hereby we have peace: *The chastisement of our peace was upon him*; he, by submitting to these chastisements, slew the enmity, and settled an amity, between God and man; he made peace by the blood of his cross. Whereas by sin we had become odious to God's holiness and obnoxious to his justice, through Christ God is reconciled to us, and not only forgives our sins and saves us from ruin, but takes us into friendship and fellowship with himself, and thereby peace (that is, all good) comes unto us, Col. i. 20. *He is our peace*, Eph. ii. 14. Christ was in pain that we might be at ease; he gave satisfaction to the justice of God that we might have satisfaction in our own minds, might be of good cheer, knowing that through him our sins are forgiven us. [2.] Hereby we have healing; for by his stripes we are healed. Sin is not only a crime, for which we were condemned to die and which Christ purchased for us the pardon of, but it is a disease, which tends directly to the death of our souls and which Christ provided for the cure of. By his stripes (that is, the sufferings he underwent) he purchased for us the Spirit and grace of God to mortify our corruptions, which are the distempers of our souls, and to put our

souls in a good state of health, that they may be fit to serve God and prepared to enjoy him. And by the doctrine of Christ's cross, and the powerful arguments it furnishes us with against sin, the dominion of sin is broken in us and we are fortified against that which feeds the disease.

(6.) The consequence of this to Christ was his resurrection and advancement to perpetual honour. This makes the offence of the cross perfectly to cease; he yielded himself to die as a sacrifice, as a lamb, and, to make it evident that the sacrifice he offered of himself was accepted, we are told here, v. 8, [1.] That he was discharged: *He was taken from prison and from judgment*; whereas he was imprisoned in the grave under a judicial process, lay there under an arrest for our debt, and judgment seemed to be given against him, he was by an express order from heaven taken out of the prison of the grave, an angel was sent on purpose to roll away the stone and set him at liberty, by which the judgment given against him was reversed and taken off; this redounds not only to his honour, but to our comfort; for, being *delivered for our offences*, he was *raised again for our justification*. That discharge of the bail amounted to a release of the debt. [2.] That he was preferred: *Who shall declare his generation?* his age, or continuance (so the word signifies), the time of his life? He rose to die no more; death had no more dominion over him. He that was dead is alive, and lives for evermore; and who can describe that immortality to which he rose, or number the years and ages of it? And he is advanced to this eternal life because for the transgression of his people he became obedient to death. We may take it as denoting the time of his usefulness, as David is said to *serve his generation*, and so to answer the end of living. Who can declare how great a blessing Christ by his death and resurrection will be to the world? Some by *his generation* understand his spiritual seed: Who can count the vast numbers of converts that shall by the gospel be begotten to him, like the dew of the morning?

When thus exalted he shall live to see

A numberless believing progeny

Of his adopted sons; the godlike race

Exceed the stars that heav'n's high arches

grace.

Sir R. BLACKMORE.

Of this generation of his let us pray, as Moses did for Israel, *The Lord God of our fathers make them a thousand times so many more as they are, and bless them as he has promised them*, Deut. i. 11.

10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his

hand. 11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

In the foregoing verses the prophet had testified very particularly of the sufferings of Christ, yet mixing some hints of the happy issue of them; here he again mentions his sufferings, but largely foretells the glory that should follow. We may observe, in these verses,

I. The services and sufferings of Christ's state of humiliation. Come, and see how he loved us, see what he did for us.

1. He submitted to the frowns of Heaven (v. 10): *Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, to put him to pain, or torment, or grief*. The scripture nowhere says that Christ in his sufferings underwent the wrath of God; but it says here, (1.) That the Lord bruised him, not only permitted men to bruise him, but awakened his own sword against him, Zech. xiii. 7. They esteemed him smitten of God for some very great sin of his own (v. 4); now it was true that he was smitten of God, but it was for our sin; the Lord bruised him, for he did not spare him, but delivered him up for us all, Rom. viii. 32. He it was that put the bitter cup into his hand, and obliged him to drink it (John xviii. 11), having laid upon him our iniquity. He it was that made him sin and a curse for us, and turned to ashes all his burnt-offering, in token of the acceptance of it, Ps. xx. 3. (2.) That he bruised him so as to put him to grief. Christ accommodated himself to this dispensation, and received the impressions of grief from his Father's delivering him up; and he was troubled to such a degree that it put him into an agony, and he began to be amazed and very heavy. (3.) It pleased the Lord to do this. He determined to do it; it was the result of an eternal counsel; and he delighted in it, as it was an effectual method for the salvation of man and the securing and advancing of the honour of God.

2. He substituted himself in the room of sinners, as a sacrifice. He made his soul an offering for sin; he himself explains this (Matt. xx. 28), that he came to give his life a ransom for many. When men brought bulls and goats as sacrifices for sin they made them offerings, for they had an interest in them, God having put them under the feet

man. But Christ made himself an offering; it was his own act and deed. We could not put him in our stead, but he put himself, and said, *Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit*, in a higher sense than David said, or could say it. "*Father, I commit my soul to thee, I deposit it in thy hands, as the life of a sacrifice and the price of pardons.*" Thus he shall bear the iniquities of the many that he designed to justify (v. 11), shall take away the sin of the world by making it upon himself, John i. 29. This is mentioned again (v. 12): *He bore the sin of many, who, if they had borne it themselves, would have been sunk by it to the lowest hell. See how this is dwelt upon; for, whenever we think of the sufferings of Christ, we must see him in them bearing our sin.*

3. He subjected himself to that which to us is the wages of sin (v. 12): *He has poured out his soul unto death, poured it out as water*, so little account did he make of it, when the laying of it down was the appointed means of our redemption and salvation. He *loved not his life unto the death*, and his followers, the martyrs, did likewise, Rev. xii. 11. Or, rather, he poured it out as a drink-offering, to make his sacrifice complete, poured it out as wine, that his blood might be drink indeed, as his flesh is meat indeed to all believers. There was not only a colligation of his body in his sufferings (Ps. xxii. 14, *I am poured out like water*), but a surrender of his spirit; he poured out that, even unto death, though he is the Lord of life.

4. He suffered himself to be ranked with sinners, and yet offered himself to be an intercessor for sinners, v. 12. (1.) It was a great aggravation of his sufferings that he was *numbered with transgressors*, that he was not only condemned as a malefactor, but executed in company with two notorious malefactors, and he in the midst, as if he had been the worst of the three, in which circumstance of his suffering, the evangelist tells us, this prophecy was fulfilled, Mark xv. 27, 28. Nay, the vilest malefactor of all, Barabbas, who was a traitor, a thief, and a murderer, was put in election with him for the favour of the people, and carried it; for they would not have Jesus released, but Barabbas. In his whole life he was numbered among the transgressors; for he was called and accounted a sabbath-breaker, a drunkard, and a friend to publicans and sinners. (2.) It was a great commendation of his sufferings, and redounded very much to his honour, that in his sufferings he *made intercession for the transgressors*, for those that reviled and crucified him; for he prayed, *Father, forgive them*, thereby showing, not only that he forgave them, but that he was now doing that upon which their forgiveness, and the forgiveness of all other transgressors, were to be founded. That prayer was the language of his blood, crying, not for vengeance, but for mercy, and therein

it speaks better things than that of Abel, even for those who with wicked hands shed it.

II. The graces and glories of his state of exaltation; and the graces he confers on us are not the least of the glories conferred on him. These are secured to him by the covenant of redemption, which these verses give us some idea of. He promises to make his soul an offering for sin, consents that the Father shall deliver him up, and undertakes to bear the sin of many, in consideration of which the Father promises to glorify him, not only with the glory he had, as God, before the world was (John xvii. 5), but with the glories of the Mediator.

1. He shall have the glory of an everlasting Father. Under this title he was *brought into the world* (ch. ix. 6), and he shall not fail to answer the title when he goes out of the world. This was the promise made to Abraham (who herein was a type of Christ), that he should be *the father of many nations* and so be *the heir of the world*, Rom. iv. 13, 17. As he was the root of the Jewish church, and the covenant was made with him and his seed, so is Christ of the universal church and with him and his spiritual seed is the covenant of grace made, which is grounded upon and grafted in the covenant of redemption, which here we have some of the glorious promises of. It is promised,

(1.) That the Redeemer shall have a seed to serve him and to bear up his name, Ps. xxii. 30. True believers are the seed of Christ; the Father gave them to him to be so, John xvii. 6. He died to purchase and purify them to himself, fell to the ground as a corn of wheat, that he might *bring forth much fruit*, John xii. 24. The word, that incorruptible seed, of which they are born again, is his word; the Spirit, the great author of their regeneration, is his Spirit; and it is his image that is impressed upon them.

(2.) That he shall live to see his seed. Christ's children have a living Father, and because he lives they shall live also, for he is their life. Though he died, he rose again, and left not his children orphans, but took effectual care to secure to them the spirit, the blessing, and the inheritance of sons. He shall see a great increase of them; the word is plural, *He shall see his seeds*, multitudes of them, so many that they cannot be numbered.

(3.) That he shall himself continue to take care of the affairs of this numerous family: *He shall prolong his days*. Many, when they see their seed, their seed's seed, wish to depart in peace; but Christ will not commit the care of his family to any other, no, he shall himself live long, and *of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end*, for he ever lives. Some refer it to believers: *He shall see a seed that shall prolong its days*, agreeing with Ps. lxxix. 29, 36, *His seed shall endure for ever*. While

the world stands Christ will have a church in it, which he himself will be the life of.

(4.) That his great undertaking shall be successful and shall answer expectation: *The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.* God's purposes shall take effect, and not one iota or tittle of them shall fail. Note, [1.] The work of man's redemption is in the hands of the Lord Jesus, and it is in good hands. It is well for us that it is in his, for our own hands are not sufficient for us, but he is able to save to the uttermost. It is in his hands who upholds all things. [2.] It is the good pleasure of the Lord, which denotes not only his counsel concerning it, but his complacency in it; and therefore God loved him, and was well pleased in him, because he undertook to lay down his life for the sheep. [3.] It has prospered hitherto, and shall prosper, whatever obstructions or difficulties have been, or may be, in the way of it. Whatever is undertaken according to God's pleasure shall prosper, *ch. xlv. 10.* Cyrus, a type of Christ, shall perform all God's pleasure (*ch. xlv. 28.*) and therefore, no doubt, Christ shall. Christ was so perfectly well qualified for his undertaking, and prosecuted it with so much vigour, and it was from first to last so well devised, that it could not fail to prosper, to the honour of his Father and the salvation of all his seed.

(5.) That he shall himself have abundant satisfaction in it (*v. 11*): *He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.* He shall see it beforehand (so it may be understood); he shall with the prospect of his sufferings have a prospect of the fruit, and he shall be satisfied with the bargain. He shall see it when it is accomplished in the conversion and salvation of poor sinners. Note, [1.] Our Lord Jesus was in travail of soul for our redemption and salvation, in great pain, but with longing desire to be delivered, and all the pains and throes he underwent were in order to it and hastened it on. [2.] Christ does and will see the blessed fruit of the travail of his soul in the founding and building up of his church and the eternal salvation of all that were given him. He will not come short of his end in any part of his work, but will himself see that he has not laboured in vain. [3.] The salvation of souls is a great satisfaction to the Lord Jesus. He will reckon all his pains well bestowed, and himself abundantly recompensed, if the many sons be by him brought through grace to glory. Let him have this, and he has enough. God will be glorified, penitent believers will be justified, and then Christ will be satisfied. Thus, in conformity to Christ, it should be a satisfaction to us if we can do any thing to serve the interests of God's kingdom in the world. Let it always be our meat and drink, as it was Christ's, to do God's will.

2. He shall have the glory of bringing in an everlasting righteousness; for so it was

foretold concerning him, *Dan. ix. 24.* And here, to the same purport, *By his knowledge (the knowledge of him, and faith in him, shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear the sins of many, and so lay a foundation for our justification from sin.* Note, (1.) The great privilege that flows to us from the death of Christ is justification from sin, our being acquitted from that guilt which alone can ruin us, and accepted into God's favour, which alone can make us happy. (2.) Christ, who purchased our justification for us, applies it to us, by his intercession made for us, his gospel preached to us, and his Spirit witnessing in us. The Son of man had power even on earth to forgive sin. (3.) There are many whom Christ justifies, not all (multitudes perish in their sins), yet many, even as many as he gave his life a ransom for, as many as the Lord our God shall call. He shall justify not here and there one that is eminent and remarkable, but those of the many, the despised multitude. (4.) It is by faith that we are justified, by our consent to Christ and the covenant of grace; in this way we are saved, because thus God is most glorified, free grace most advanced, self most abased, and our happiness most effectually secured. (5.) Faith is the knowledge of Christ, and without knowledge there can be no true faith. Christ's way of gaining the will and affections is by enlightening the understanding and bringing that unfeignedly to assent to divine truths. (6.) That knowledge of Christ, and that faith in him, by which we are justified, have reference to him both as a servant to God and as a surety for us. [1.] As one that is employed for God to pursue his designs and secure and advance the interests of his glory. "He is my righteous servant, and as such justifies men." God has authorized and appointed him to do it; it is according to God's will and for his honour that he does it. He is himself righteous, and of his righteousness have all we received. He that is himself righteous (for he could not have made atonement for our sin if he had had any sin of his own to answer for) is made of God to us righteousness, *the Lord our righteousness.* [2.] As one that has undertaken for us. We must know him, and believe in him, as one that bore our iniquities—saved us from sinking under the load by taking it upon himself.

3. He shall have the glory of obtaining an incontestable victory and universal dominion, *v. 12.* Because he has done all these good services, therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and, according to the will of the Father, he shall divide the spoil with the strong, as a great general, when he has driven the enemy out of the field, takes the plunder of it for himself and his army, which is both an unquestionable evidence of the victory and a recompense for all the toils and perils of the battle. Note, (1.) God the Father has

engaged to reward the services and sufferings of Christ with great glory: "I will set him among the great, highly exalt him, and give him a name above every name." Great riches are also assigned to him: *He shall divide the spoil*, shall have abundance of graces and comforts to bestow upon all his faithful soldiers. (2.) Christ comes at his glory by conquest. He has set upon the strong man armed, dispossessed him, and divided the spoil. He has vanquished principalities and powers, sin and Satan, death and hell, the world and the flesh; these are the strong that he has disarmed and taken the spoil of. (3.) Much of the glory with which Christ is recompensed, and the spoil which he has divided, consists in the vast multitudes of willing, faithful, loyal subjects, that shall be brought in to him; for so some read it: *I will give many to him, and he shall obtain many for a spoil*. God will give him the heathen for his inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession, Ps. ii. 8. *His dominion shall be from sea to sea*. Many shall be wrought upon by the grace of God to give up themselves to him to be ruled, and taught, and saved by him, and hereby he shall reckon himself honoured, and enriched, and abundantly recompensed for all he did and all he suffered. (4.) What God designed for the Redeemer he shall certainly gain the possession of: "I will divide it to him," and immediately it follows, *He shall divide it*, notwithstanding the opposition that is given to him; for, as Christ finished his work that was given him to do, so God completed the recompence that was promised him for it; for he is both able and faithful. (5.) The spoil which God divided to Christ he divides (it is the same word), he distributes, among his followers; for, when he *led captivity captive*, he received gifts for men, that he might give gifts to men; for as he has told us (Acts xx. 35) he did himself reckon it more blessed and honourable to give than to receive. Christ conquered for us, and through him we are more than conquerors. He has divided the spoils, the fruits of his conquest, to all that are his: let us therefore cast in our lot among them.

CHAP. LIV.

The death of Christ is the life of the church, and of all that truly belong to it; and therefore very fitly, after the prophet had foretold the sufferings of Christ, he foretells the flourishing of the church, which is a part of his glory, and that exaltation of him which was the reward of his humiliation: it was promised him that he should see his seed, and this chapter is an explication of that promise. It may easily be granted that it has a primary reference to the welfare and prosperity of the Jewish church after their return out of Babylon, which (as other things that happened to them) was typical of the glorious liberty of the children of God, which through Christ we are brought into; yet it cannot be denied but that it has a further and principal reference to the gospel church, into which the Gentiles were to be admitted. And the first words being understood by the apostle Paul of the New-Testament Jerusalem (Gal. iv. 26, 27) may serve as a key to the whole chapter and that which follows. It is here promised concerning the Christian church, 1. That, though the beginnings of it were small, it should be greatly enlarged by the accession of many to it among the Gentiles, who had been wholly destitute of church privileges, ver. 1—5. 2. That though sometimes God might seem to withdraw from her, and suspend the tokens of his favour, he would return in mercy and would not return to contend with them any more, ver. 6—10. 3. That, though for a while she was in sorrow and under oppres-

sion, she should at length be advanced to greater honour and splendour than ever, ver. 11, 12. 4. That knowledge, righteousness, and peace, should flourish and prevail, ver. 13, 14. 5. That all attempts against the church should be baffled, and she should be secured from the malice of her enemies, ver. 14—17.

SING, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD. 2 Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; 3 For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited. 4 Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. 5 For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called.

If we apply this to the state of the Jews after their return out of captivity, it is a prophecy of the increase of their nation after they were settled in their own land. Jerusalem had been in the condition of a wife written childless, or a desolate solitary widow; but now it is promised that the city should be replenished and the country peopled again, that not only the ruins of Jerusalem should be repaired, but the suburbs of it extended on all sides and a great many buildings erected upon new foundations,—that those estates which had for many years been wrongfully held by the Babylonian Gentiles should now return to the right owners. God will again be a husband to them, and the reproach of their captivity, and the small number to which they were then reduced, shall be forgotten. And it is to be observed that, by virtue of the ancient promise made to Abraham of the increase of his seed, when they were restored to God's favour they multiplied greatly. Those that first came out of Babylon were but 42,000 (Ezra ii. 64), about a fifteenth part of their number when they came out of Egypt; many came dropping to them afterwards, but we may suppose that to be the greatest number that ever came in a body; and yet above 500 years after, a little before their destruction by the Romans, a calculation was made by the number of the paschal lambs, and the lowest computation by that rule

(allowing only ten to a lamb, whereas they might be twenty) made the nation to be nearly three millions. Josephus says, seven and twenty hundred thousand and odd, *De Bell. Jud. lib. 7. cap. 17.* But we must apply it to the church of God in general; I mean the kingdom of God among men, God's city in the world, the children of God incorporated. Now observe,

I. The low and languishing state of religion in the world for a long time before Christianity was brought in. It was like one barren, that did not bear, or travail with child, was like one desolate, that had lost husband and children; the church lay in a little compass, and brought forth little fruit. The Jews were indeed by profession married to God, but few proselytes were added to them, the rising generations were unpromising, and serious godliness manifestly lost ground among them. The Gentiles had less religion among them than the Jews; their proselytes were in a dispersion; and the children of God, like the children of a broken, reduced family, were scattered abroad (John xi. 52), did not appear nor make any figure.

II. Its recovery from this low condition by the preaching of the gospel and the planting of the Christian church.

1. Multitudes were converted from idols to the living God. Those were the church's children that were born again, were partakers of a new and divine nature, by the word. *More were the children of the desolate than of the married wife*; there were more good people found in the Gentile church (when that was set up) that had long been afar off, and without God in the world, than ever were found in the Jewish church. God's sealed ones out of the tribes of Israel are numbered (Rev. vii. 4), and they were but a remnant compared with the thousands of Israel; but those of other nations were so many, and crowded in so thickly, and lay so much scattered in all parts, that no man could number them, *v. 9.* Sometimes more of the power of religion is found in those places and families that have made little show of it, and have enjoyed but little of the means of grace, than in others that have distinguished themselves by a flourishing profession; and then more are the children of the desolate, more the fruits of their righteousness, than those of the married wife; so the last shall be first. Now this is spoken of as matter of great rejoicing to the church, which is called upon to break forth into singing upon this account. The increase of the church is the joy of all its friends and strengthens their hands. The longer the church has lain desolate the greater will the transports of its joy be when it begins to recover the ground it has lost and to gain more. Even in heaven, among the angels of God, there is an uncommon joy for a sinner that repents, much more for a nation that does so. If the barren fig-tree at length

bring forth fruit, it is well; it shall rejoice and others with it.

2. The bounds of the church were extended much further than ever before, *v. 2.*

3. (1.) It is here supposed that the present state of the church is a tabernacle state; it dwells in tents, like the heirs of promise of old (Heb. xi. 9); its dwelling is mean and movable, and of no strength against a storm. The city, the continuing city, is reserved for hereafter. A tent is soon taken down and shifted, so the candlestick of church privileges is soon removed out of its place (Rev. ii. 5), and, when God pleases, it is as soon fixed elsewhere. (2.) Though it be a tabernacle state, it is sometimes very remarkably a growing state; and, if this family increase no matter though it be in a tent. Thus it was in the first preaching of the gospel; it was the business of the apostles to disciple all nations, to stretch forth the curtains of the church's habitation, to preach the gospel where Christ had not yet been named (Rom. xv. 20), to leaven with the gospel those towns and countries that had hitherto been strangers to it, and so to lengthen the cords of this tabernacle, that more might be enclosed, which would make it necessary to strengthen the stakes proportionably, that they might bear the weight of the enlarged curtains. The more numerous the church grows the more cautious she must be to fortify herself against errors and corruption, and to support her seven pillars, *Prov. ix. 1.* (3.) It was a proof of divine power going along with the gospel that in all places it grew and prevailed mightily, *Acts xix. 20.* It broke forth, as the breaking forth of waters—on the right hand and on the left—that is, on all hands. The gospel spread itself into all parts of the world; there were eastern and western churches. The church's seed inherited the Gentiles, and the cities that had been desolate (that is, destitute of the knowledge and worship of the true God) came to be inhabited, that is, to have religion set up in them and the name of Christ professed.

3. This was the comfort and honour of the church (*v. 4*): "*Fear not, for thou shalt not be ashamed*, as formerly, of the straitness of thy borders, and the fewness of thy children, which thy enemies upbraided thee with, but shalt forget the reproach of thy youth, because there shall be no more ground for that reproach." It was the reproach of the Christian religion, in its youth, that none of the rulers or princes of this world embraced it and that it was entertained and professed by a despicable handful of men; but, after awhile, nations were disciplined, the empire became Christian, and then this reproach of its youth was forgotten.

4. This was owing to the relation in which God stood to his church, as her husband (*v. 5*): *Thy Maker is thy husband.* Believers are said to be married to Christ, that they

may bring forth fruit unto God (Rom. vii. 4); to the church is married to him, that she may bear and bring up a holy seed to God, that shall be accounted to him for a generation. Jesus Christ is the church's Maker, by whom she is formed into a people—her Redeemer, by whom she is brought out of captivity, the bondage of sin, the worst of slaveries. This is he that espoused her to himself; and, (1.) He is *the Lord of hosts*, who has an irresistible power, an absolute sovereignty, and a universal dominion! Kings who are lords of some hosts, find there are others who are lords of other hosts, as many and mighty as theirs; but God is the Lord of all hosts. (2.) He is *the Holy One of Israel*, the same that presided in the affairs of the Old-Testament church and was the Mediator of the covenant made with it. The promises made to the New-Testament Israel are as rich and sure as those made to the Old-Testament Israel; for he that is our Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel. (3.) He is and shall be called *the Lord of the whole earth*, as God, and as Mediator, for he is the heir of all things; but then he shall be called so, when the ends of the earth shall be made to see his salvation, when all the earth shall call him their God and have an interest in him. Long he had been called, in a peculiar manner, *the God of Israel*; but now, the partition wall between Jew and Gentile being taken down, he shall be called *the God of the whole earth* even where he has been, as at Athens itself, an *unknown God*.

6 For the LORD hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. 7 For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. 8 In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer. 9 For this *is as* the waters of Noah unto me: for *as* I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. 10 For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.

The seasonable succour and relief which God sent to his captives in Babylon, when they had a discharge from their bondage there, are here foretold, as a type and figure

of all those consolations of God which are treasured up for the church in general and all believers in particular, in the covenant of grace.

I. Look back to former troubles, and in comparison with them God's favours to his people appear very comfortable, v. 6—8. Observe, 1. How sorrowful the church's condition had been. She had been as a woman forsaken, whose husband was dead, or had fallen out with her, though she was *a wife of youth*, upon which account she is grieved in spirit, takes it very ill, frets, and grows melancholy upon it; or she had been as one refused and rejected, and therefore full of discontent. Note, Even those that are espoused to God may yet seem to be refused and forsaken, and may be grieved in spirit under the apprehensions of being so. Those that shall never be forsaken and left in despair may yet for a time be perplexed and in distress. The similitude is explained (v. 7, 8): *For a small moment have I forsaken thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee.* When God continues his people long in trouble he seems to forsake them; so their enemies construe it (Ps. lxxi. 11); so they themselves misinterpret it, *ch. xlix. 14.* When they are comfortless under their troubles, because their prayers and expectations are not answered, God hides his face from them, as if he regarded them not nor designed them any kindness. God owns that he had done this; for he keeps an account of the afflictions of his people, and, though he never turned his face against them (as against the wicked, Ps. xxxiv. 16), he remembers how often he turned his back upon them. This arose indeed from his displeasure. It was in wrath that he forsook them and hid his face from them (*ch. lvii. 17*); yet it was but in a little wrath: not that God's wrath ever is a little thing, or to be made light of (*Who knows the power of his anger?*), but little in comparison with what they had deserved, and what others justly suffer, on whom the full vials of his wrath are poured out. He did not stir up all his wrath. But God's people, though they be sensible of ever so small a degree of God's displeasure, cannot but be grieved in spirit because of it. As for the continuance of it, it was but *for a moment*, a *small moment*; for God does not keep his anger against his people for ever; no, it is soon over. As he is slow to anger, so he is swift to show mercy. The afflictions of God's people, as they are light, so they are but for a moment, a cloud that presently blows over. 2. How sweet the returns of mercy would be to them when God should come and comfort them according to the time that he had afflicted them. God called them into covenant with himself when they were forsaken and grieved; he called them out of their afflictions when they were most pressing, v. 6. God's anger endures for a moment, but he will gather

his people when they think themselves neglected, will gather them out of their dispersions, that they may return in a body to their own land,—will gather them into his arms, to protect them, embrace them, and bear them up,—and will gather them at last to himself, *will gather the wheat into the barn*. He will have mercy on them. This supposes the turning away of his anger and the admitting of them again into his favour. God's gathering his people takes rise from his mercy, not any merit of theirs; and it is with *great mercies* (v. 7), *with everlasting kindness*, v. 8. The wrath is little, but the mercies are great; the wrath is for a moment, but the kindness everlasting. See how one is set over against the other, that we may neither despond under our afflictions nor despair of relief.

II. Look forward to future dangers, and in defiance of them God's favours to his people appear very constant, and his kindness everlasting; for it is formed into a covenant, here called a *covenant of peace*, because it is founded in reconciliation and is inclusive of all good. Now,

1. This is as firm as the covenant of providence. It is *as the waters of Noah*, that is, as that promise which was made concerning the deluge that there should never be the like again to disturb the course of summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, v. 9. God then contended with the world in great wrath, and for a full year, and yet at length returned in mercy, everlasting mercy; for he gave his word, which was as inviolable as his oath, that Noah's flood should never return, that he would never drown the world again; see Gen. viii. 21, 22; ix. 11. And God has ever since kept his word, though the world has been very provoking; and he will keep it to the end; for the world that now is is reserved unto fire. And thus inviolable is the covenant of grace: *I have sworn that I would not be wroth with thee*, as I have been, *and rebuke thee*, as I have done. He will not be so angry with them as to cast them off and break his covenant with them (Ps. lxxxix. 34), nor rebuke them as he has rebuked the heathen, to destroy them, and *put out their name for ever and ever*, Ps. ix. 5.

2. It is more firm than the strongest parts of the visible creation (v. 10): *The mountains shall depart*, which are called *everlasting mountains*, and *the hills be removed*, though they are called *perpetual hills*, Hab. iii. 6. Sooner shall they remove than God's covenant with his people be broken. Mountains have sometimes been shaken by earthquakes, and removed; but the promises of God were never broken by the shock of any event. The day will come when *all the mountains shall depart* and *all the hills be removed*, not only the tops of them covered, as they were by the waters of Noah, but the roots of them torn up; nor the earth and all the

works that are therein shall be burned up; but then the covenant of peace between God and believers shall continue in the everlasting bliss of all those who are the children of that covenant. Mountains and hills signify great men, men of bulk and figure. Do these mountains seem to support the skies (as Atlas) and bear them up? They shall depart and be removed. Creature-confidences shall fail us. *In vain is salvation hoped for from those hills and mountains*. But the firmament is firm, and answers to its name, when those who seem to prop it are gone. When our friends fail us our God does not, nor does his kindness depart? Do these mountains threaten, and seem to top the skies, and bid defiance to them, as Pelion and Ossa? Do the kings of the earth, and the rulers, set themselves against the Lord? They shall depart and be removed. Great mountains, that stand in the way of the salvation of the church, shall be *made plain* (Zech. iv. 7); but God's kindness shall never depart from his people, for whom he loves, he loves to the end; nor shall the covenant of his peace ever be removed, for he is the Lord that has mercy on his people. *Therefore* the covenant is immovable and inviolable, because it is built not on our merit, which is a mutable uncertain thing, but on God's mercy, which is from everlasting to everlasting.

11 O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. 12 And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. 13 And all thy children *shall be* taught of the Lord, and great *shall be* the peace of thy children. 14 In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee. 15 Behold they shall surely gather together, but not by me: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake. 16 Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy. 17 No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This *is* the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness *is* of me, saith the LORD.

Very precious promises are here made to the church in her low condition, that God would not only continue his love to his people under their troubles as before, but that he would restore them to their former prosperity, nay, that he would raise them to greater prosperity than any they had yet enjoyed. In the foregoing chapter we had the humiliation and exaltation of Christ; here we have the humiliation and exaltation of the church; for, if we suffer with him, we shall reign with him. Observe,

I. The distressed state the church is here reduced to by the providence of God (v. 11):

O thou afflicted, poor, and indigent society, that art tossed with tempests, like a ship driven from her anchors by a storm and hurried into the ocean, where she is ready to be swallowed up by the waves, and in this condition *not comforted* by any compassionate friend that will sympathize with thee, or suggest to thee any encouraging considerations (Eccl. iv. 1), not comforted by any allay to thy trouble, or prospect of deliverance out of it." This was the condition of the Jews in Babylon, and afterwards, for a time, under Antiochus. It is often the condition of Christian churches and of particular believers; without are afflictions, within are fears; they are like the disciples in a storm, ready to perish; and where is their faith?

II. The glorious state the church is here advanced to by the promise of God. God takes notice of the afflicted distressed state of his church, and comforts her, when she is most disconsolate and has no other comforter. Let the people of God, when they are afflicted and tossed, think they hear God speaking comfortably to them by these words, taking notice of their griefs and fears, that afflictions they are under, what distresses they are in, and what comforts their case calls for. When they bemoan themselves, God bemoans them, and speaks to them with pity: *O thou afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted*; for in all their afflictions he is afflicted. But this is not all; he engages to raise her up out of her affliction, and encourages her with the assurance of the great things he would do for her, both for her prosperity and for the securing of that prosperity to her.

1. Whereas now she lay in disgrace, God promises that which would be her beauty and honour, which would make her easy to herself and amiable in the eyes of others.

(1.) This is here promised by a similitude taken from a city, and it is an apt similitude, or the church is the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. Whereas now Jerusalem lay in ruins, a heap of rubbish, it shall be not only rebuilt, but beautified, and appear more splendid than ever; the stones shall be laid not only firm, but fine, laid with fair colours; they shall be *glistering stones*, 1 Chron. xxix. 2. The foundations

shall be laid or garnished with *sapphires*, the most precious of the precious stones here mentioned; for Christ (the church's foundation), and the foundation of the apostles and prophets, are precious above any thing else. The windows of this house, city, or temple, shall be made of *agates*, the gates of *carbuncles*, and all the borders (the walls that enclose the courts, or the boundaries by which her limits are marked, the mere-stones) shall be of *pleasant stones*, v. 12. Never was this literally true; but it intimates, [1.] That, God having graciously undertaken to build his church, we may expect that to be done for it, that to be wrought in it, which is very great and uncommon. [2.] That the glory of the New-Testament church shall far exceed that of the Jewish church, not in external pomp and splendour, but in those gifts and graces of the Spirit which are infinitely more valuable, that wisdom which is *more precious than rubies* (Prov. iii. 15), than the precious onyx and the sapphire, and which the *topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal*, Job xxviii. 16, 19. [3.] That the wealth of this world, and those things of it that are accounted most precious, shall be despised by all the true living members of the church, as having no value, no glory, in comparison with that which far excels. That which the children of this world lay up among their treasures, and too often in their hearts, the children of God make pavements of, and put under their feet, the fittest place of it.

(2.) It is here promised in the particular instances of those things that shall be the beauty and honour of the church, which are knowledge, holiness, and love, the very image of God, in which man was created, renewed, and restored. And these are the sapphires and carbuncles, the precious and pleasant stones, with which the gospel temple shall be enriched and beautified, and these wrought by the power and efficacy of those doctrines which the apostle compares to gold, silver, and precious stones, that are to be *built upon the foundation*, 1 Cor. iii. 12. Then the church is all glorious, [1.] When it is full of the knowledge of God, and that is promised here (v. 13): *All thy children shall be taught of the Lord*. The church's children, being born of God, shall be taught of God; being his children by adoption, he will take care of their education. It was promised (v. 1) that the church's children should be many; but lest we should think that being many, as sometimes it happens in numerous families, they will be neglected, and not have instruction given them so carefully as if they were but few, God here takes that work into his own hand: *They shall all be taught of the Lord*; and none teaches like him. First, It is a promise of the means of instruction and those means authorized by a divine institution: *They shall all be taught of God*, that is, they shall be taught by those whom God shall appoint and whose labours shall

be under his direction and blessing. He will ordain the methods of instruction, and by his word and ordinances will diffuse a much greater light than the Old-Testament church had. Care shall be taken for the teaching of the church's children, that knowledge may be transmitted from generation to generation, and that all may be enriched with it, from the least even to the greatest. *Secondly*, It is a promise of the Spirit of illumination. Our Saviour quotes it with application to gospel grace, and makes it to have its accomplishment in all those that were brought to believe in him (John vi. 45): *It is written in the prophets, They shall be all taught of God*, whence he infers that those, and those only, come to him by faith that have heard and learned of the Father, that are *taught by him as the truth is in Jesus*, Eph. iv. 21. There shall be a plentiful effusion of the Spirit of grace upon Christians, *to teach them all things*, John xiv. 26. [2.] When the members of it live in love and unity among themselves: *Great shall be the peace of thy children*. Peace may be taken here for all good. As where no knowledge of God is no good can be expected, so those that are taught of God to know him are in a fair way to prosper for both worlds. *Great peace have those that know and love God's law*, Ps. cxix. 165. But it is often put for love and unity; and so we may take it. All that are taught of God are taught to *love one another* (1 Thess. iv. 9) and that will keep peace among the church's children and prevent their falling out by the way. [3.] When holiness reigns; for that above any thing is the beauty of the church (v. 14): *In righteousness shalt thou be established*. The reformation of manners, the restoration of purity, the due administration of public justice, and the prevailing of honesty and fair dealing among men, are the strength and stability of any church or state. The kingdom of God, set up by the gospel of Christ, is not meat and drink, but this righteousness and peace, holiness and love.

2. Whereas now she lay in danger, God promises that which would be her protection and security.

(1.) God engages here that though, in the day of her distress, without were fightings and within were fears, now she shall be safe from both. [1.] There shall be no fears within (v. 14): *"Thou shalt be far from oppression"*. Those that have oppressed thee shall be removed, those that would oppress thee shall be restrained, and therefore thou shalt not fear, but mayest look upon it as a thing at a great distance, that thou art now in no danger of. Thou shalt be far from terror, not only from evil, but from the fear of evil, for it shall not come near thee so as to do thee any hurt or to put thee in any fright." Note, Those are far from terror that are far from oppression; for it is as great a terror as can fall on a peo-

ple to have the rod of government turned the serpent of oppression, because again this there is no fence, nor is there any dig from it. [2.] There shall be no fighting without. Though attempts should be made upon them to insult them, to invade the country, or besiege their towns, they should all be in vain, and none of them succeed, 15. It is granted, *"They shall surely gather together against thee; thou must expect"*. The confederate force of hell and earth will be renewing their assaults. As long as there is a devil in hell, and a persecutor out of it, God's people must expect frequent alarms; but, *First*, God will not own them, will not give them either commission or countenance, they gather together, hand joins in hand, but it is *not by me*. God gave them no such order as he did to Sennacherib, *to take the spoil, and to take the prey*, ch. x. 6. And therefore, *Secondly*, Their attempt will end in their own ruin: *"Whosoever shall gather together against thee, be they ever so many, and ever so mighty, they shall not only be baffled, but they shall fall for thy sake, or they shall fall before thee, which shall be the just punishment of their enmity to thee."* God will make them to fall for the sake of the love he bears to his church and the care he has of it, in answer to the prayers made for his people, and in pursuance of the promise made to them. *"They shall fall, that the mayest stand,"* Ps. xxvii. 2.

(2.) That we may with the greatest assurance depend upon God for the safety of his church, we have here, [1.] The power of God over the church's enemies asserted, v. 1. The truth is they have no power but what given them from above, and he that gives them their power can limit and restrain them. *Hitherto they shall go, and no further*. *First*, They cannot carry on their designs without arms and weapons of war; and the smith that makes those weapons is God's creature, and he gave him his skill to work in iron and brass (Exod. xxxi. 3, 4) and particularly to make proper instruments for warlike purposes. It is melancholly to think, as if men did not die fast enough for themselves, how ingenious and industrious they are to make instruments of death and to find out ways and means to kill one another. *The smith blows the coals in the fire*, to make his iron malleable, to soften it first, that it may be hardened into steel, and so he may bring forth an instrument proper for the work of those that seek to destroy. It is the iron age that is the age of war. But God has created the smith, and therefore can tie his hands, so that the project of the enemies shall miscarry (as many a project has done for want of arms and ammunition. Or the smith that forges the weapons is perhaps put here for the council of war that form the design, blows the coals of contention and brings forth the plan of the war; the enemies can do no more than God will let them

Secondly, They cannot carry it on without men, they must have soldiers, and it is *God that created the waster to destroy*. Military men value themselves upon their great offices and splendid titles, and even the common soldiers call themselves *gentlemen*; but God calls them *wasters made to destroy*, for wasting and destruction are their business. They think their own ingenuity, labour, and experience, made them soldiers; but it was God that created them, and gave them strength and spirit for that hazardous employment; and therefore he not only can restrain them, but will serve his own purposes and designs by them. [2.] The promise of God concerning the church's safety solemnly laid down, as *the heritage of the servants of the Lord* (v. 17), as that which they may depend upon and be confident of, that God will protect them from their adversaries both in camps and courts. First, From their field-adversaries, that think to destroy them by force and violence, and dint of sword: "*No weapon that is formed against thee* (though ever so artfully formed by the smith that blows the coals, v. 16, though ever so skillfully managed by the waster that seeks to destroy) *shall prosper*; it shall not prove strong enough to do any harm to the people of God; it shall miss its mark, shall fall out of the hand or perhaps recoil in the face of him that uses it against thee." It is the happiness of the church that *no weapon formed against it shall prosper* long, and therefore the folly of its enemies will at length be made manifest to all, for they are but preparing instruments of ruin for themselves. Secondly, From their law-adversaries, that think to run them down under colour of right and justice. When the weapons of war do not prosper there are tongues that rise in judgment. Both are included in the gates of hell, that seek to destroy the church; for they had their courts of justice, as well as their magazines and military stores, in their gates. The tongues that rise in judgment against the church are such as either demand a dominion over it, as if God's children were their lawful captives, pretending an authority to oppress their consciences, or they are such as misrepresent them, and falsely accuse them, and by slanders and calumnies endeavour to make them odious to the people and obnoxious to the government. This the enemies of the Jews did, to incense the kings of Persia against them, Ezra iv. 12; Esth. iii. 8. "But these insulting threatening tongues thou shalt condemn; thou shalt have wherewith to answer their insolent demands, and to put to silence their malicious reflections. Thou shalt do it *by well-doing* (1 Pet. ii. 15), by doing that which will make thee manifest in the consciences even of thy adversaries, that thou art not what thou art represented to be. *Thou shalt condemn them*, that is, God shall condemn them for thee. *He shall bring forth thy right-*

eousness as the light, Ps. xxxvii. 6. Thou shalt condemn them as Noah condemned the old world that reproached him, by building the ark, and so saving his house, in contempt of their contempts." The day is coming when God will reckon with wicked men for all their hard speeches which they have spoken against him, Jude 15.

The last words refer not only to this promise, but to all that go before: *This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord*. God's servants are his sons, for he has provided an inheritance for them, rich, sure, and indefeasible. God's promises are their *heritage for ever* (Ps. cxix. 111); *and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord*. God will clear up the righteousness of their cause before men. It is with him, for he knows it; it is with him, for he will plead it. Or their reward for their righteousness, and for all that which they have suffered unrighteously, is of God, that God who judges in the earth, and with whom *verily there is a reward for the righteous*. Or their righteousness itself, all that in them which is good and right, is of God, who works it in them; it is of Christ who is made righteousness to them. In those for whom God designs a heritage hereafter he will work righteousness now.

CHAP. LV.

As we had much of Christ in the 53rd chapter, and much of the church of Christ in the 54th chapter, so in this chapter we have much of the covenant of grace made with us in Christ. The "sure mercies of David," which are promised here (ver. 3), are applied by the apostle to the benefits which flow to us from the resurrection of Christ (Acts xiii. 34), which may serve as a key to this chapter; not but that it was intended for the comfort of the people of God that lived then, especially of the captives in Babylon, and others of the dispersed of Israel; but unto us was this gospel preached as well as unto them, and much more clearly and fully in the New Testament. Here is, I. A free and gracious invitation to all to come and take the benefit of gospel grace, ver. 1. II. Pressing arguments to enforce this invitation, ver. 2-4. III. A promise of the success of this invitation among the Gentiles, ver. 5. IV. An exhortation to repentance and reformation, with great encouragement given to hope for pardon thereupon, ver. 6-9. V. The ratification of all this, with the certain efficacy of the word of God, ver. 10, 11. And a particular instance of the accomplishment of it in the return of the Jews out of their captivity, which was intended for a sign of the accomplishment of all these other promises.

HO, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. 2 Wherefore do ye spend money for *that which* is not bread? and your labour for *that which* satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye *that which* is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. 3 Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, *even* the sure mercies of David. 4 Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. 5

Behold, thou shalt call a nation *that* thou knowest not, and nations *that* knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.

Here, I. We are all invited to come and take the benefit of that provision which the grace of God has made for poor souls in the new covenant, of that which is the *heritage of the servants of the Lord* (ch. liv. 17), and not only their heritage hereafter, but their cup now, v. 1. Observe,

1. Who are invited: *Ho, every one*. Not the Jews only, to whom first the word of salvation was sent, but the Gentiles, the poor and the maimed, the halt and the blind, are called to this marriage supper, whoever can be picked up out of the highways and the hedges. It intimates that in Christ there is enough for all and enough for each, that ministers are to make a general offer of life and salvation to all, that in gospel times the invitation should be more largely made than it had been and should be sent to the Gentiles, and that the gospel covenant excludes none that do not exclude themselves. The invitation is published with an *Oyez—Ho*, take notice of it. *He that has ears to hear let him hear*.

2. What is the qualification required in those that shall be welcome—they must thirst. All shall be welcome to gospel grace upon those terms only that gospel grace be welcome to them. Those that are satisfied with the world and its enjoyments for a portion, and seek not for a happiness in the favour of God,—those that depend upon the merit of their own works for a righteousness, and see no need they have of Christ and his righteousness,—these do not thirst; they have no sense of their need, are in no pain or uneasiness about their souls, and therefore will not condescend so far as to be beholden to Christ. But those that thirst are invited to the waters, as those that labour, and are heavy-laden, are invited to Christ for rest. Note, Where God gives grace he first gives a thirsting after it; and, where he has given a thirsting after it, he will give it, Ps. lxxxi. 10.

3. Whither they are invited: *Come you to the waters*. Come to the water-side, to the ports, and quays, and wharfs, on the navigable rivers, into which goods are imported; thither come and buy, for that is the marketplace of foreign commodities; and to us they would have been for ever foreign if Christ had not brought in an everlasting righteousness. Come to Christ; for he is the fountain opened; he is the rock smitten. Come to holy ordinances, to those streams that make glad the city of our God; come to them, and though they may seem to you plain and common things, like waters, yet to those who believe in Christ the things

signified will be as wine and milk, abundantly refreshing. Come to the healing waters; come to the living waters. Whoever will, let him come, and *partake of the water of life*, Rev. xxii. 17. Our Saviour referred to it, John vii. 37. *If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink*.

4. What they are invited to do. (1.) *Come and buy*. Never did any tradesman court customers that he hoped to get by as Christ courts us to that which we only are to be the gainers by. "Come and buy, and we can assure you you shall have a good bargain, which you will never repent of nor lose by. Come and buy; make it your own by an application of the grace of the gospel to yourselves; make it your own upon Christ's terms, nay, your own upon any terms, and stand not hesitating about the terms, nor deliberating whether you shall agree to them." (2.) *"Come, and eat"*; make it still more your own, as that which we eat is more our own than that which we only buy." We must buy the truth, not that we may lay it by to be looked at, but that we may feed and feast upon it, and that the spiritual life may be nourished and strengthened by it. We must buy necessary provisions for our souls, be willing to part with any thing, though ever so dear to us, so that we may but have Christ and his graces and comforts. We must part with sin, because it is an opposition to Christ, part with all opinion of our own righteousness, as standing in competition with Christ, and part with life itself, and its most necessary supports, rather than quit our interest in Christ. And, when we have bought what we need, let us not deny ourselves the comfortable use of it, but enjoy it, and eat the labour of our hands: *Buy and eat*.

5. What is the provision they are invited to: *"Come, and buy wine and milk"*, which will not only quench the thirst (fair water would do that), "but nourish the body, and revive the spirits." The world comes short of our expectations. We promise ourselves at least, water in it, but we are disappointed of that, as *the troops of Tema*, Job vi. 1. But Christ outdoes our expectations. We come to the waters, and would be glad of them, but we find there wine and milk, which were the staple commodities of the tribe of Judah, and which the Shiloh of that tribe is furnished with to entertain the *gathering of the people to him*, Gen. xlix. 10, 12. *His eyes shall be red with wine and his teeth white with milk*. We must come to Christ, to have milk for babes, to nourish and cherish those that are but lately born again; and with him strong men shall find that which will be a cordial to them: they shall have wine to make glad their hearts. We must part with our puddle-water, nay, with our poison, that we may procure this wine and milk.

6. The free communication of this provision: *Buy it without money, and without price*.

A strange way of buying, not only without ready money (that is common enough), but without any money, or the promise of any; yet it seems not so strange to those who have observed Christ's counsel to Laodicea, that was wretchedly poor, to *come and buy*, Rev. iii. 17, 18. Our buying without money intimates, (1.) That the gifts offered us are invaluable and such as no price can be set upon. Wisdom is that which cannot be gotten for gold. (2.) That he who offers them has no need of us, nor of any returns we can make him. He makes us these proposals, not because he has occasion to sell, but because he has a disposition to give. (3.) That the things offered are already bought and paid for. Christ purchased them at the full value, with price, not with money, but with *his own blood*, 1 Pet. i. 19. (4.) That we shall be welcome to the benefits of the promise, though we are utterly unworthy of them, and cannot make a tender of any thing that looks like a valuable consideration. We ourselves are not of any value, nor is any thing we have or can do, and we must own it, that, if Christ and heaven be ours, we may see ourselves for ever indebted to free grace.

II. We are earnestly pressed and persuaded (and O that we would be prevailed with!) to accept this invitation, and make this good bargain for ourselves.

1. That which we are persuaded to is to hearken to God and to his proposals: "*Hearken diligently unto me, v. 2.* Not only give me the hearing, but approve of what I say, and apply it to yourselves (*v. 3*): *Incline your ear*, as you do to that which you find yourselves concerned in and pleased with; bow the ear, and let the proud heart stoop to the humbling methods of the gospel; bend the ear this way, that you may hear with attention and remark; hear, *and come unto me*; not only come and treat with me, but comply with me, come up to my terms;" accept God's offers as very advantageous; answer his demands as very fit and reasonable.

2. The arguments used to persuade us to this are taken,

(1.) From the unspeakable wrong we do to ourselves if we neglect and refuse this invitation: "*Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread*, which will not yield you, no, not beggar's food, dry bread, when with me you may have wine and milk without money? *Wherefore do you spend your labour and toil for that which will not be so much as dry bread to you, for it satisfies not?*" See here, [1.] The vanity of the things of this world. They are not bread, not proper food for a soul; they afford no suitable nourishment or refreshment. Bread is the staff of the natural life, but it affords no support at all to the spiritual life. All the wealth and pleasure in the world will not make one meal's meat for a soul. Eternal truth and eternal good are the only food

for a rational and immortal soul, the life of which consists in reconciliation and conformity to God, and in union and communion with him, which the things of the world will not at all befriender. *They satisfy not*; they yield not any solid comfort and content to the soul, nor enable it to say, "Now I have what I would have." Nay, they do not satisfy even the appetites of the body. The more men have the more they would have, Eccl. i. 8. Haman was unsatisfied in the midst of his abundance. They flatter, but they do not fill; they please for a while, like the dream of a hungry man, who awakes and his soul is empty. They soon surfeit, but they never satisfy; they cloy a man, but do not content him, or make him truly easy. It is all vanity and vexation. [2.] The folly of the children of this world. They spend their money and labour for these uncertain unsatisfying things. Rich people live by their money, poor people by their labour; but both mistake their truest interest, while the one is trading, the other toiling, for the world, both promising themselves satisfaction and happiness in it, but both miserably disappointed. God vouchsafes compassionately to reason with them: "Wherefore do you thus act against your own interest? Why do you suffer yourselves to be thus imposed upon?" Let us reason thus with ourselves, and let the result of these reasonings be a holy resolution not to *labour for the meat that perishes, but for that which endures to everlasting life*, John vi. 27. Let all the disappointments we meet with in the world help to drive us to Christ, and lead us to seek for satisfaction in him only. This is the way to make that sure which will be made sure.

(2.) From the unspeakable kindness we do to ourselves if we accept this invitation and comply with it. [1.] Hereby we secure to ourselves present pleasure and satisfaction. "If you hearken to Christ, you *eat that which is good*, which is both wholesome and pleasant, good in itself and good for you." God's good word and promise, a good conscience, and the comforts of God's good Spirit, are a continual feast to those that hearken diligently and obediently to Christ. Their souls shall *delight themselves in fatness*, that is, in the richest and most grateful delights. Here the invitation is not, "*Come, and buy*," lest that should discourage, but, "*Come, and eat*"; come and entertain yourselves with that which will be abundantly pleasing; eat, O friends!" It is sad to think that men should need to be courted thus to their own bliss. [2.] Hereby we secure to ourselves lasting happiness: "*Hear, and your soul shall live*"; you shall not only be saved from perishing eternally, but you shall be eternally blessed:" for less than that cannot be the life of an immortal soul. The words of Christ are spirit and life, life to spirits (John vi. 33, 63), the words

of this life, Acts v. 20. On what easy terms is happiness offered to us! It is but "Hear, and you shall live." [3.] The great God graciously secures all this to us: "Come to me, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, will put myself into covenant-relations and under covenant-engagements to you, and thereby settle upon you the sure mercies of David." Note, *First*, If we come to God to serve him, he will covenant with us to do us good and make us happy; such are his condescension to us and concern for us. *Secondly*, God's covenant with us is an everlasting covenant—its contrivance from everlasting, its continuance to everlasting. *Thirdly*, The benefits of this covenant are mercies suited to our case, who, being miserable, are the proper objects of mercy. They come from God's mercy, and are ordered every way in kindness to us. *Fourthly*, They are the mercies of David, such mercies as God promised to David (Ps. lxxxix. 28, 29, &c.), which are called the *mercies of David his servant*, and are appealed to by Solomon, 2 Chron. vi. 42. It shall be a covenant as sure as that with David, Jer. xxxiii. 25, 26. The covenant of royalty was a figure of the covenant of grace, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. Or, rather, by David here we are to understand the Messiah. Covenant-mercies are all *his* mercies; they are purchased by him; they are promised in him; they are treasured up in his hand, and out of his hand they are dispensed to us. He is the Mediator and trustee of the covenant; to him this is applied, Acts xiii. 34. They are the *ἁγία* (the word used there; and by LXX. here) — *the holy things of David*, for they are confirmed by the holiness of God (Ps. lxxxix. 35) and are intended to advance holiness among men. *Fifthly*, They are sure mercies. The covenant, being well-ordered in all things, is sure. It is sure in the general proposal of it; God is real and sincere, serious and in earnest, in the offer of these mercies. It is sure in the particular application of it to believers; God's gifts and callings are without repentance. They are the mercies of David, and therefore sure, for in Christ the promises are all yea and amen.

III. Jesus Christ is promised for the making good of all the other promises which we are here invited to accept of, v. 4. He is that David whose sure mercies all the blessings and benefits of the covenant are. "And God has given him in his purpose and promise, has constituted and appointed him, and in the fulness of time will as surely send him as if he had already come, to be all that to us which is necessary to our having the benefit of these preparations." He has given him freely; for what more free than a gift? There was nothing in us to merit such a favour, but Christ is the gift of God. We want one, 1. To attest the truth of the promises which we are invited to take the benefit of; and Christ is given for a witness

that God is willing to receive us into his favour upon gospel terms, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, that we may venture our souls upon those promises with entire satisfaction. Christ is a faithful witness, we may take his word—a competent witness, for he lay in the bosom of the Father from eternity, and was perfectly apprised of the whole matter. Christ, as a prophet, testifies the will of God to the world; and to believe is to receive his testimony. 2. To assist us in closing with the invitation, and coming up to the terms of it. We know not how to find the way to the waters where we are to be supplied, but Christ is given to be a *leader*. We know not what to do that we may be qualified for it, and become sharers in it, but he is given for a *commander*, to show us what to do and enable us to do it. Much difficulty and opposition lie in our way to Christ; we have spiritual enemies to grapple with, but, to animate us for the conflict, we have a good captain, like Joshua, a leader and commander to tread our enemies under our feet and to put us in possession of the land of promise. Christ is a commander by his precept and a leader by his example; our business is to obey him and follow him.

IV. The Master of the feast being fixed, it is next to be furnished with guests, for the provision shall not be lost, nor made in vain, v. 5. 1. The Gentiles shall be called to this feast, shall be invited out of the high-ways and the hedges: "*Thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not*, that is, that was not formerly called and owned as thy nation, that thou didst not send prophets to as to Israel, the people whom God knew above all the families of the earth." The Gentiles shall now be favoured as they never were before; their knowing God is said to be rather their *being known of God*, Gal. iv. 9. 2. They shall come at the call: *Nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee*; those that had long been afar off from Christ shall be made nigh; those that had been running from him shall run to him, with the greatest speed and alacrity imaginable. There shall be a concourse of believing Gentiles to Christ, who, being lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to him. Now see the reason, (1.) Why the Gentiles will thus flock to Christ; it is *because of the Lord his God*, because he is the Son of God, and is declared to be so with power, because they now see his God is one with whom they have to do, and there is no coming to him as their God but by making an interest in his Son. Those that are brought to be acquainted with God, and understand how the concern lies between them and him, cannot but run to Jesus Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man, and there is no coming to God but by him. (2.) Why God will bring them to him; it is because he is the Holy One of Israel, true to his promises,

and he has promised to glorify him by giving him the heathen for his inheritance. When Greeks began to enquire after Christ he said, *The hour has come that the Son of man should be glorified*, John xii. 22, 23. And his being glorified in his resurrection and ascension was the great argument by which multitudes were wrought upon to run to him.

6 Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: 7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. 8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. 10 For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: 11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. 12 For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. 13 Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

We have here a further account of that covenant of grace which is made with us in Jesus Christ, both what is required and what is promised in the covenant, and of those considerations that are sufficient abundantly to confirm our believing compliance with and reliance on that covenant. This gracious discovery of God's good-will to the children of men is not to be confined either to the Jew or to the Gentile, to the Old Testament or to the New, much less to the captives in Babylon. No, both the precepts and the promises are here given to all, to every one that thirsts after happiness, v. 1. And who does not? Hear this, and live.

1 Here is a gracious offer made of par-

don, and peace, and all happiness, to poor sinners, upon gospel terms, v. 6, 7.

1. Let them pray, and their prayers shall be heard and answered (v. 6): "*Seek the Lord while he may be found*." Seek him whom you have left by revolting from your allegiance to him and whom you have lost by provoking him to withdraw his favour from you. *Call upon him now while he is near, and within call.*" Observe here,

(1.) The duties required. [1.] "*Seek the Lord*." Seek to him, and enquire of him, as your oracle. *Ask the law at his mouth. What wilt thou have me to do?*" Seek for him, and enquire after him, as your portion and happiness; seek to be reconciled to him and acquainted with him, and to be happy in his favour. Be sorry that you have lost him; be solicitous to find him; take the appointed method of finding him, making use of Christ as your way, the Spirit as your guide, and the word as your rule." [2.] "*Call upon him*." Pray to him, to be reconciled, and, being reconciled, pray to him for every thing else you have need of."

(2.) The motives made use of to press these duties upon us: *While he may be found—while he is near*. [1.] It is implied that now God is near and will be found, so that it shall not be in vain to seek him and to call upon him. Now his patience is waiting on us, his word is calling to us, and his Spirit striving with us. Let us now improve our advantages and opportunities; for now is the accepted time. But, [2.] There is a day coming when he will be afar off, and will not be found, when the day of his patience is over, and his Spirit will strive no more. There may come such a time in this life, when the heart is incurably hardened; it is certain that at death and judgment the door will be shut, Luke xvi. 26; xiii. 25, 26. Mercy is now offered, but then judgment without mercy will take place.

2. Let them repent and reform, and their sins shall be pardoned, v. 7. Here is a call to the unconverted, to the wicked and the unrighteous—to the wicked, who live in known gross sins, to the unrighteous, who live in the neglect of plain duties: to them is the word of this salvation sent, and all possible assurance given that penitent sinners shall find God a pardoning God. Observe here,

(1.) What it is to repent. There are two things involved in repentance:—[1.] It is to turn from sin; it is to forsake it. It is to leave it, and to leave it with loathing and abhorrence, never to return to it again. The wicked must *forsake his way*, his evil way, as we would forsake a false way that will never bring us to the happiness we aim at, and a dangerous way, that leads to destruction. Let him not take one step more in that way. Nay, there must be not only a change of the way, but a change of the mind; the unrighteous must *forsake his thoughts*. Repentance, if it be true, strikes at the root,

ground of his glorying in it. (Rom. i. 17), *because therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith.* The law revealed that righteousness of God by which all sinners stand condemned, but the gospel reveals that by which all believers stand acquitted.

3. The Old-Testament saints saw this salvation coming, and drawing near to them, long before it came; and they had notice by the prophets of its approach. As Daniel understood by Jeremiah's books the approach of the redemption out of Babylon, at the end of seventy years, so others understood by Daniel's books the approach of our redemption by Christ at the end of seventy weeks of years.

II. He tells us what are his expectations of duty from us, in consideration thereof. Say not, "We see the salvation near, and therefore we may live as we list, for there is no danger now of missing it or coming short of it;" that is turning the grace of God into wantonness. But, on the contrary, when the salvation is near double your guard against sin. Note, The fuller assurances God gives us of the performance of his promises the stronger obligations he lays us under to obedience. The salvation here spoken of has now come; yet, there being still a further salvation in view, the apostle presses duty upon us Christians with the same argument. Rom. xiii. 11, *Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.* That which is here required to qualify and prepare us for the approaching salvation is,

1. That we be honest and just in all our dealings: *Keep you judgment and do justice.* Walk by rule, and make conscience of what you say and do, that you do no wrong to any. Render to all their dues exactly, and, in exacting what is due to you, keep up a court of equity in your own bosom, to moderate the rigours of the law. Be ruled by that golden rule, "Do as you would be done by." Magistrates must administer justice wisely and faithfully. This is required to evidence the sincerity of our faith and repentance, and to open the way of mercy. *Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* God is true to us; let us be so to one another.

2. That we religiously observe the sabbath day, v. 2. We are not just if we rob God of his time. Sabbath-sanctification is here put for all the duties of the first table, the fruits of our love to God, as justice and judgment are put for all those of the second table, the fruits of our love to our neighbour. Observe, (1.) The duty required, which is to *keep the sabbath*, to keep it as a talent we are to trade with, as a treasure we are entrusted with. "Keep it holy; keep it safe; keep it with care and caution; keep it from polluting it. Allow neither yourselves nor others either to violate the holy rest or omit the holy work of that day." If this be intended primarily for the Jews in Babylon, it was fit that they should be particularly

put in mind of this, because when, by reason of their distance from the temple, they could not observe the other institutions of their law, yet they might distinguish themselves from the heathen by putting a difference between God's day and other days. But it being required more generally of man, and *the son of man*, it intimates that sabbath-sanctification should be a duty in gospel times, when the bounds of the church should be enlarged and other rites and ceremonies abolished. Observe, Those that would keep the sabbath from polluting it must put on resolution, must not only do this, but lay hold on it, for sabbath time is precious, but is very apt to slip away if we take not great care; and therefore we must lay hold on it and keep our hold, must do it and persevere in it. (2.) The encouragement we have to do this duty: *Blessed is he that doeth it.* The way to have the blessing of God upon our employments all the week is to make conscience, and make a business, of sabbath-sanctification; and in doing so we shall be the better qualified to do judgment and justice. The more godliness the more honesty, 1 Tim. ii. 2.

3. That we have nothing to do with sin. *Blessed is the man that keeps his hand from doing evil*, any wrong to his neighbour, in body, goods, or good name—or, more generally, any thing that is displeasing to God and hurtful to his own soul. Note, The best evidence of our having kept the sabbath well will be a care to keep a good conscience all the week. By this it will appear that we have been in the mount with God if our faces shine in a holy conversation before men.

3 Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, The LORD hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I *am* a dry tree. 4 For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose *the things* that please me, and take hold of my covenant; 5 Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. 6 Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; 7 Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their

burnt-offerings and their sacrifices *shall* be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people. 8 The LORD God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather *others* to him, beside those that are gathered unto him.

The prophet is here, in God's name, encouraging those that were hearty in joining themselves to God and yet laboured under great discouragements. 1. Some were discouraged because they were not of the seed of Abraham. They had *joined themselves to the Lord*, had bound their souls with a bond to be his for ever (this is the root and life of religion, to break off from the world and the flesh, and devote ourselves entirely to the service and honour of God); but they questioned whether God would accept them, because they were of *the sons of the stranger*, v. 3. They were Gentiles, strangers to the commonwealth of Israel and aliens from the covenants of promise, and therefore feared they had no part nor lot in the matter. They said, "*The Lord has utterly separated me from his people, and will not own me as one of them, nor admit me to their privileges.*" It was often said that there should be *one law for the stranger and for him that was born in the land* (Exod. xii. 49), and yet they came to this melancholy conclusion. Note, Unbelief often suggests things to the discouragement of good people which are directly contrary to what God himself has said, things which he has expressly guarded against. Let not the *sons of the stranger* therefore say thus, for they have no reason to say it. Note, Ministers must have answers ready for the disquieting fears and jealousies of weak Christians, which, how unreasonable soever, they must take notice of. 2. Others were discouraged because they were not fathers in Israel. The eunuch said, *Behold, I am a dry tree*. So he looked upon himself, and it was his grief; so others looked upon him, and it was his reproach. He was thought to be of no use because he had no children, nor was ever likely to have any. This was then the more grievous because eunuchs were not admitted to be priests (Lev. xxi. 20), nor to *enter into the congregation* (Deut. xxiii. 1), and because the promise of a numerous posterity was the particular blessing of Israel and the more valuable because from among them the Messiah was to come. Yet God would not have the eunuchs to make the worst of their case, nor to think that they should be excluded from the gospel church, and from being spiritual priests, because they were shut out from the congregation of Israel and the Levitical priesthood; no, as the taking down of the partition wall, contained in ordinances, admitted the Gentiles, so it let in likewise those that had been

kept out by ceremonial pollutions. Yet, by the reply here given to this suggestion, it should seem the chief thing which the eunuch laments in his case is his being written childless.

Now suitable encouragements are given to each of these.

I. To those who have no children of their own, who, though they had the honour to be the children of the church and the covenant themselves, yet had none to whom they might transmit that honour, none to receive the sign of circumcision and the privileges secured by that sign. Now observe,

1. What a good character they have, though they lie under this ignominy and affliction; and those only are entitled to the following comforts who in some measure answer to these characters. (1.) *They keep God's sabbaths* as he has appointed them to be kept. In the primitive times, if a Christian were asked, "Hast thou kept holy the Lord's day?" He would readily answer, "I am a Christian, and dare not do otherwise." (2.) In their whole conversation they *choose those things that please God*. They do that which is good; they do it with a sincere design to please God in it; they do it of choice, and with delight. If sometimes, through infirmity, they come short in doing that which pleases God, yet they choose it, they endeavour after it, and aim at it. Note, Whatever is God's pleasure should without dispute be our choice. (3.) *They take hold of his covenant*, and that is a thing that pleases God as much as any thing. The covenant of grace is proposed and proffered to us in the gospel; to take hold of it is to consent to it, to accept the offer and come up to the terms, deliberately and sincerely to take God to be to us a God and to give up ourselves to him to be to him a people. Taking hold of the covenant denotes an entire and resolute consent to it, taking hold as those that are afraid of coming short, catching at it as a good bargain, and as those that are resolved never to let it go, for it is our life: and we take hold of it as a criminal took hold of the horns of the altar to which he fled for refuge.

2. What a great deal of comfort they may have if they answer to this character, though they are not built up into families (v. 5) *Unto them will I give a better place and name*. It is supposed that there is a place and a name, which we have from sons and daughters, that is valuable and desirable. It is a pleasing notion we have that we live in our children when we are dead. But there is a better place, and a better name, which those have that are in covenant with God, and it is sufficient to counterbalance the want of the former. A place and a name denote rest and reputation; a place to live comfortably in themselves, and a name to live creditably with among their neighbours; they shall be happy, and may be easy both

at home and abroad. Though they have not children to be the music of their house, or arrows in their quiver, to keep them in countenance when they speak with their enemies in the gate, yet they shall have a place and a name more than equivalent. For, (1.) God will give it to them, will give it to them by promise; he will himself be both their habitation and their glory, their place and their name. (2.) He will give it to them in his house, and within his walls; there they shall have a place, shall be planted so as to take root (Ps. xcii. 13), shall dwell all the days of their life, Ps. xxvii. 4. They shall be at home in communion with God, as Anna, that departed not from the temple night nor day. There they shall have a name. A name for good things with God and good people is a name better than that of sons and daughters. Our relation to God, our interest in Christ, our title to the blessings of the covenant, and our hopes of eternal life, are things that give us in God's house a blessed place and a blessed name. (3.) It shall be an everlasting name, that shall never be extinct, shall never be cut off; like the place and name of angels, who therefore marry not, because they die not. Spiritual blessings are unspeakably better than those of sons and daughters; for children are a certain care and may prove the greatest grief and shame of a man's life, but the blessings we partake of in God's house are a sure and constant joy and honour, comforts which cannot be embittered.

II. To those that are themselves the children of strangers.

1. It is here promised that they shall now be welcome to the church, v. 6, 7. When God's Israel come out of Babylon, let them bring as many of their neighbours along with them as they can persuade to come, and God will find room enough for them all in his house. And here (as before) we may observe,

(1.) Upon what terms they shall be welcome. Let them know that God's Israel, when they come out of Babylon, will not be plagued, as they were when they came out of Egypt, with a mixed multitude, that went with them, but were not cordially for them; no, the sons of the strangers shall have a place and a name in God's house provided, [1.] That they forsake other gods, all rivals and pretenders whatsoever, and join themselves to the Lord, so as to become one spirit, 1 Cor. vi. 17. [2.] That they join themselves to him as subjects to their prince and soldiers to their general, by an oath of fidelity and obedience, to serve him, not occasionally, as one would serve a turn, but to be constantly his servants, entirely subject to his command, and devoted to his interest. [3.] That they join themselves to him as friends to his honour and the interests of his kingdom in the world, to love the name of the Lord, to be well pleased with all the discoveries he has made of himself and all

the memorials they make of him. Observe, Serving him and loving him go together; for those that love him truly will serve him faithfully, and that obedience is most acceptable to him, as well as most pleasant to us, which flows from a principle of love, for then his commandments are not grievous, 1 John v. 3. [4.] That they keep the sabbath from polluting it; for the stranger that is within thy gates is particularly required to do that. [5.] That they take hold of the covenant, that is, that they come under the bonds of it, and put in for the benefits of it.

(2.) To what privileges they shall be welcome, v. 7. Three things are here promised them, in their coming to God:—[1.] Assistance: "I will bring them to my holy mountain, not only bid them welcome when they come, but incline them to come, will show them the way, and lead them in it." David himself prays that God by his light and truth would bring them to his holy hill, Ps. xliii. 3. And the sons of the stranger shall be under the same guidance. The church is God's holy hill, on which he hath set his King; and, in bringing them to Zion Hill, he brings them to be subjects to Zion's King, as well as worshippers in Zion's holy temple. [2.] Acceptance: "Their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted on my altar, and be never the less acceptable for being theirs, though they are sons of the stranger." The prayers and praises (those spiritual sacrifices) of devout Gentiles shall be as pleasing to God as those of the pious Jews, and no difference shall be made between them; for, though they are Gentiles by birth, yet through grace they shall be looked upon as the believing seed of faithful Abraham and the praying seed of wrestling Jacob, for in Christ Jesus there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision. [3.] Comfort. They shall not only be accepted, but they themselves shall have the pleasure of it: I will make them joyful in my house of prayer. They shall have grace, not only to serve God, but to serve him cheerfully and with gladness, and that shall make the service the more acceptable to him; for, when we sing in the ways of the Lord, then great is the glory of our God. They shall go away and eat their bread with joy, because God now accepts their works, Eccl. ix. 7. Nay, though they came mourning to the house of prayer, they shall go away rejoicing, for they shall there find such ease, by casting their cares and burdens upon God, and referring themselves to him, that, like Hannah, they shall go away and their countenance shall be no more sad. Many a sorrowful spirit has been made joyful in the house of prayer.

2. It is here promised that multitudes of the Gentiles shall come to the church, not only that the few who come dropping in shall be made welcome, but that great numbers shall come in, and the door be thrown open

to them: *My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people.* The temple was then God's house, and to that Christ applies these words (Matt. xxi. 13), but with an eye to it as a type of the gospel church, Heb. ix. 8, 9. For Christ calls it *his house*, Heb. iii. 6. Now concerning this house it is promised, (1.) That it shall not be a house of sacrifice, but a house of prayer. The religious meetings of God's people shall be meetings for prayer, in which they shall join together, as a token of their united faith and mutual love. (2.) That it shall be a house of prayer, not for the people of the Jews only, but for all people. This was fulfilled when Peter was made, not only to perceive it himself, but to tell it to the world, that *in every nation he that fears God and works righteousness is accepted of him*, Acts x. 35. It had been declared again and again that *the stranger that comes nigh shall be put to death*, but Gentiles shall now be looked upon no longer as strangers and foreigners, Eph. ii. 19. And it appears by Solomon's prayer, at the dedication of the temple, both that it was primarily intended for a house of prayer and that strangers should be welcome to it, 1 Kings viii. 30, 41, 43. And it is intimated here (v. 8) that when the Gentiles are called in they shall be incorporated into one body with the Jews, that (as Christ says, John x. 16) there may be *one fold and one Shepherd*; for, [1.] God will *gather the outcasts of Israel*. Many of the Jews that had by their unbelief cast themselves out shall by faith be brought in again, *a remnant according to the election of grace*, Rom. xi. 5. Christ came to the *lost sheep of the house of Israel* (Matt. xv. 24), to *gather their outcasts* (Ps. cxlvii. 2), to *restore their persecuted* (ch. xlix. 6), and to *be their glory*, Luke ii. 32. [2.] He will gather others also to him, besides his own outcasts that are gathered to him. Or, though some of the Gentiles have come over now and then into the church, that shall not serve (as some may think) to answer the extent of these promises; no, there are still more and more to be brought in: "*I will gather others to him besides these*"; these are but the first-fruits in comparison with the harvest that shall be gathered for Christ in the nations of the earth, when the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in." Note, The church is a growing body: when some are gathered to it we may still hope there shall be more, till the mystical body be completed. *Other sheep I have.*

9 All ye beasts of the field, come to devour, *yea*, all ye beasts in the forest. 10 His watchmen *are blind*: they are all ignorant, they *are* all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. 11 *Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are*

shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter. 12 Come ye, *say they*, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to-morrow shall be as this day, *and much more abundant.*

From words of comfort the prophet here, by a very sudden change of his style, passes to words of reproof and conviction, and goes on in that strain, for the most part, in the three following chapters; and therefore some here begin a new sermon. He had assured the people that in due time God would deliver them out of captivity, which was designed for the comfort of those that should live when God would do this. Now here he shows what their sins and provocations were, for which God would send them into captivity, and this was designed for the conviction of those that lived in his own time, nearly a hundred years before the captivity, who were now filling up the measure of the nation's sin, and to justify God in what he brought upon them. God will lay them waste by the fierceness of their enemies, for the falseness of their friends.

I. Desolating judgments are here summoned, v. 9. The sheep of God's pasture are now to be made the sheep of his slaughter, to fall as victims to his justice, and therefore *the beasts of the field and the forest* are called to come and devour. They are beasts of prey, and do it from their own ravenous disposition; but God permits them to do it, nay, he employs them as his servants in doing it, the ministers of his justice, though they mean not so, neither does their heart think so. If this refers primarily to the descent made upon them by the Babylonians, and their devouring them, yet it may look further, to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation by the Romans, after these outcasts of them (mentioned v. 8) were gathered in to the Christian church. The Roman armies came upon them as beasts of the forest to devour them, and they quite *took away their place and nation*. Note, When God has bloody work to do he has beasts of prey within call, to be employed in doing it.

II. The reason of these judgments is here given. The shepherds, who should have been the watchmen of the flock, to discover the approaches of the beasts of prey, to keep them off, and protect the sheep, were treacherous and careless, minded not their business, nor made any conscience of the trust reposed in them, and so the sheep became an easy prey to the wild beasts. Now this may refer to the false prophets that lived in Isaiah's, Jeremiah's, and Ezekiel's time (who flattered the people in their wicked ways, and told them they should have peace though

they went on) and to the priests that bore rule by their means. Or it may refer to the wicked princes, the sons of Josiah, that *did evil in the sight of the Lord*, and other wicked magistrates under them, who betrayed their trust, were vicious and profane, and, instead of making up the breach at which the judgments of God were breaking in upon them, made it wider, and augmented the fierce anger of the Lord instead of doing any thing to turn it away. They should have kept judgment and justice (v. 1), but they abandoned both, Jer. v. 1. Or it may refer to those who were the nation's watchmen in our Saviour's time, the chief priests and the scribes, who should have discerned the signs of the times and have given notice to the people of the approach of the Messiah, but who, instead of that, opposed him, and did all they could to keep people from coming to the knowledge of him and to prejudice them against him. It is a very sad character that is here given of these watchmen. *Woe unto thee, O land!* when thy guides are such.

1. They had no sense or knowledge of their business. They were wretchedly ignorant of their work, and very unfit to teach, being so ill-taught themselves: *His watchmen are blind*, and therefore utterly unfit to be watchmen. If the seers see not, who shall see for us? *If the light that is in us be darkness, how great is that darkness!* Christ describes the Pharisees to be *blind leaders of the blind*, Matt. xv. 14. The beasts of the field come to devour, and the watchmen are blind, and are not aware of them. *They are all ignorant* (v. 10), *shepherds that cannot understand* (v. 11), that know not what is to be done about the sheep, nor can *feed them with understanding*, Jer. iii. 15. 2. What little knowledge they had they made no use of it; no one was the better for it. As they were blind watchmen, that could not discern the danger, so they were *dumb dogs*, that would not give warning of it. And why are the dogs set to guard the sheep if they cannot bark to waken the shepherd and frighten the wolf? Such were these; those that had the charge of souls never reprov'd men for their faults, nor told them what would be in the end thereof, never gave them notice of the judgments of God that were breaking in upon them. They barked at God's prophets, and bit them too, and worried the sheep, but made no opposition to the wolf or thief. 3. They were very lazy, and would take no pains. They loved their ease, and hated business, were always *sleeping, lying down and loving to slumber*. They were not overcome and overpowered by sleep, as the disciples, through grief and fatigue, but they lay down on purpose to invite sleep, and said, *Soul, take thy ease. Yet a little sleep*. It is bad with a people when their shepherds slumber (Nah. iii. 18), and it is well for God's people that their shepherd, the keeper of Israel, neither slumbers nor sleeps. 4.

They were very covetous and eager after the world—*greedy dogs that can never have enough*. If they had ever so much, they would think it too little. They so love silver as never to be satisfied with silver, Eccl. v. 10. All their enquiry is what they shall get, not what they shall do. Let them have the wages, and they care not whether the work be done or no; they feed not the flock, but fleece it. They are every one looking to his own way, minding his own private interests, and have no regard at all to the public welfare. It was St. Paul's complaint of the watchmen in his time (Phil. ii. 21), *All seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's*. Every one is for propagating his own opinion, advancing his own party, raising his own family, and having every thing to his own mind, while the common concerns of the public are wretchedly neglected and postponed. They look every one to his gain from his quarter, from his end or part of the work. They are for gain from every quarter (*Rem, rem, quocunque modo rem*—Money, money, by fair means or by foul we must have money), but especially from their own quarter, where they will be sure to take care that they lose nothing, nor miss any thing that is to be got. If any one put not into their mouths they not only will do him no service, but they *prepare war against him*, Mic. iii. 5. 5. They were perfect epicures, given to their pleasures; never so much in their element as in their drunken revels (v. 12): *Come* (say they), *I will fetch wine* (they have that at command; their cellars are better furnished than their closets) and *we will fill ourselves*, or be drunk, *with strong drink*. They were often drunk, not overseen (as we say) or overtaken in drink, but designedly. The watchmen did thus invite and encourage one another to drink to excess, or they courted the people to sit and drink with them, and so confirmed those in their wicked ways, and hardened their hearts, whom they should have reprov'd. How could they think it any harm to be drunk when the watchmen themselves joined with them and led them to it! 6. They were very secure and confident of the continuance of their prosperity and ease; they said, *To-morrow shall be as this day and much more abundant*; we shall have as much to spend upon our lusts to-morrow as we have to-day. They had no thought at all of their own frailty and mortality, though they were shortening their days and hastening their deaths by their excesses. They had no dread of the judgments of God, though they were daily provoking him and making themselves liable to his wrath and curse. They never considered the uncertainty of all the delights and enjoyments of sense, how they perish in the using and pass away with the lusts of them. They resolved to continue in this wicked course, whatever their consciences said to the contrary, to be as merry to-morrow as they are to-day. *But boast*

not thyself of to-morrow when perhaps this night thy soul shall be required of thee.

CHAP. LVII.

The prophet, in this chapter, makes his observations, I. Upon the deaths of good men, comforting those that were taken away in their integrity and reproving those that did not make a due improvement of such providences, ver. 1, 2. II. Upon the gross idolatries and spiritual whoredoms which the Jews were guilty of, and the destroying judgments they were thereby bringing upon themselves, ver. 3-12. III. Upon the gracious returns of God to his people to put an end to their captivity and re-establish their prosperity, ver. 13-21.

THE righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come. 2 He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, *each one* walking in his uprightness.

The prophet, in the close of the foregoing chapter, had condemned the watchmen for their ignorance and sottishness; here he shows the general stupidity and senselessness of the people likewise. No wonder they were inconsiderate when their watchmen were so, who should have awakened them to consideration. We may observe here,

I. The providence of God removing good men apace out of this world. *The righteous, as to this world, perish;* they are gone and their place knows them no more. Piety exempts none from the arrests of death, nay, in persecuting times, the most righteous are most exposed to the violences of bloody men. The first that died died a martyr. Righteousness delivers from the sting of death, but not from the stroke of it. They are said to *perish* because they are utterly removed from us, and to express the great loss which this world sustains by the removal of them, not that their death is their undoing, but it often proves an undoing to the places where they lived and were useful. Nay, even *merciful men are taken away*, those good men that are distinguished from the righteous, for whom *some would even dare to die*, Rom. v. 7. Those are often removed that could be worst spared; the fruitful trees are cut down by death and the barren left still to cumber the ground. Merciful men are often taken away by the hands of men's malice. Many good works they have done, and for some of them they are stoned. Before the captivity in Babylon perhaps there was a more than ordinary mortality of good men, so that there were scarcely any left, Jer. v. 1. The godly ceased, and the faithful failed, Ps. xii. 1.

II. The careless world slighting these providences, and disregarding them: *No man lays it to heart, none considers it.* There are very few that lament it as a public loss, very few that take notice of it as a public warning. The death of good men is a thing to be laid to heart and considered more than common deaths. Serious enquiries ought to be made, wherefore God contends with us, what good lessons are to be learned by such

providences, what we may do to help to make up the breach and to fill up the room of those that are removed. God is justly displeased when such events are not laid to heart, when the voice of the rod is not heard nor the intentions of it answered, much more when it is rejoiced in, as the slaying of the witnesses is, Rev. xi. 10. Some of God's choicest blessings to mankind, being thus easily parted with, are really undervalued; and it is an evidence of very great incogitancy. Little children, when they are little, least lament the death of their parents, because they know not what a loss it is to them.

III. The happiness of the righteous in their removal.

1. *They are taken away from the evil to come*, then when it is just coming, (1.) In compassion to them, that they may not see *the evil* (2 Kings xxii. 29), nor share in it, nor be in temptation by it. When the deluge is coming they are called into the ark, and have a hiding-place and rest in heaven when there was none for them under heaven. (2.) In wrath to the world, to punish them for all the injuries they have done to the righteous and merciful ones; those are taken away that stood in the gap to turn away the judgments of God, and then what can be expected but a deluge of them? It is a sign that God intends war when he calls home his ambassadors.

2. They go to be easy out of the reach of that evil. The righteous man, who while he lived walked in his uprightness, when he dies *enters into peace and rests in his bed*. Note, (1.) Death is gain, and rest, and bliss, to those only who walked in their uprightness, and who, when they die, can appeal to God concerning it, as Hezekiah (2 Kings xx. 3). *Now, Lord, remember it.* (2.) Those that practised uprightness, and persevered in it to the end, shall find it well with them when they die. Their souls then enter into peace, into the world of peace, where peace is in perfection and where there is no trouble. *Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.* Their bodies rest in their beds. Note, The grave is a bed of rest to all the Lord's people; there they rest from all their labours, Rev. xiv. 13. And the more weary they were the more welcome will that rest be to them, Job iii. 17. This bed is made in the darkness, but that makes it the more quiet; it is a bed out of which they shall rise refreshed in the morning of the resurrection.

3 But draw near hither, ye sons of the sorceress, the seed of the adulterer and the whore. 4 Against whom do ye sport yourselves? Against whom make ye a wide mouth, and draw out the tongue? *Are ye not children of transgression, a seed of falsehood,* 5 Inflaming yourselves with idols under every green tree,

the king, which some understand of the idol they worshipped, particularly *Moloch*, which signifies a king. "Thou didst every thing to ingratiate thyself with those idols, didst offer incense and sweet ointments at their altars." Or it may be meant of the king of Assyria, whom Ahaz made his court to, or of the king of Babylon, whose ambassadors Hezekiah caressed, or of other kings of the nations whose idolatrous usages they admired and were desirous to learn and imitate, and for that end went and sent to cultivate an acquaintance and correspondence with them, that they might be like them and strengthen themselves by an alliance with them. See here, (1.) What an expense they were at in forming and procuring this grand alliance. They went with *ointments and perfumes*, either bestowed upon themselves, to beautify their own faces and so make themselves considerable and worthy the friendship of the greatest king, or to be presented to those whose favour they were ambitious of, because a man's gift makes room for him and brings him before great men. "When the first present of rich perfumes was thought too little, thou didst increase them;" and thus many seek the ruler's favour, forgetting that, after all, every man's judgment proceeds from the Lord. So fond were they of those heathen princes that they not only went themselves, in all their airs, to those that were near them, but sent messengers to those that were afar off, *ch. xviii. 2.* (2.) How much they hereby disparaged themselves and laid the honour of their crown and nation in the dust: *Thou didst debase thyself even unto hell.* They did so by their idolatries. It is a dishonour to the children of men, who are endued with the powers of reason, to worship that as their god which is the creature of their own fancy and the work of their own hands, to bow down to the stock of a tree. It is much more a dishonour to the children of God, who are blessed with the privilege of divine revelation, to forsake such a God as they know theirs to be for a thing of nought, their own mercies for lying vanities. They likewise debased themselves by truckling to their heathen neighbours, and depending upon them, when they had a God to go to who is all-sufficient and in covenant with them. How did those shame themselves to the highest degree, and sink themselves to the lowest, that forsook the fountain of life for broken cisterns and the rock of ages for broken reeds! Note, Sinners disparage and debase themselves; the service of sin is an ignominious slavery; and those who thus debase themselves to hell will justly have their portion there.

III. The aggravations of their sin. 1. They had been tired with disappointments in their wicked courses, and yet they would not be convinced of the folly of them (*v. 10*): "*Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way*; thou hast undertaken a mighty task, to find

out true satisfaction and happiness in that which is vanity and a lie." Those that set up idols, instead of God, for the object of their worship, and princes, instead of God, for the object of their hope and confidence, and think thus to better themselves and make themselves easy, go a great way about, and will never come to their journey's end: *Thou art wearied in the multitude, or multiplicity, of thy ways* (so some read it): those that forsake the only right way wander endlessly in a thousand by-paths, and lose themselves in the many inventions which they have sought out. They weary themselves with fresh chases and fierce ones, but never gain their point, like the Sodomites, that *wearied themselves to find the door* (*Gen. xix. 11*) and could not find it at last. The pleasures of sin will soon surfeit, but never satisfy; a man may quickly tire himself in the pursuit of them, but can never repose himself in the enjoyment of them. They found this by experience. The idols they had often worshipped never did them any kindness; the kings they courted distressed them, and helped them not; and yet they were so wretchedly besotted that they could not say, "*There is no hope*"; it is in vain any longer to expect that satisfaction in creature-confidences, and in the worship of idols, which we have so often looked for, and never met with." Note, Despair of happiness in the creature, and of satisfaction in the service of sin, is the first step towards a well-grounded hope of happiness in God and a well-fixed resolution to keep to his service; and those are inexcusable who have had sensible convictions of the vanity of the creature, and yet will not be brought to say, "There is no hope to be happy short of the Creator." 2. Though they were convinced that the way they were in was a sinful way, yet, because they had found some present sensual pleasure and worldly profit by it, they could not persuade themselves to be sorry for it: "*Thou hast found the life of thy hand*" (or the living of it); thou boastest how fortune smiles upon thee, and therefore thou art not grieved, any more than Ephraim when he said (*Hos. xii. 8*), *I have become rich; I have found out substance.*" Note, Prosperity in sin is a great bar to conversion from sin. Those that live at ease in their sinful pleasures, and raise estates by their sinful projects, are tempted to think God favours them, and therefore they have nothing to repent of. Some read it ironically, or by way of question: "Thou hast found the life of thy hand, hast found true satisfaction and happiness, no doubt thou hast; hast thou not? And therefore thou art so far from being grieved that thou bleesest thyself in thy own evil way; but review thy gains once more, and come to a balance of profit and loss, and then say, What fruit hast thou of those things whereof thou art ashamed and for which God shall bring thee into judgment?"

Rom. vi. 21. 3. They had dealt very unworthily with God by their sin; for, (1.) It should seem they pretended that the reason why they left God was because he was too terrible a majesty for them to deal with; they must have gods that they could be more free and familiar with. "But," says God, "*of whom hast thou been afraid or feared, that thou hast lied, that thou hast dealt falsely and treacherously with me, and dissembled in thy covenants with me and prayers to me? What did I ever do to frighten thee from me? What occasion have I given thee to think hardly of me, that thou hast gone to seek a kinder master?*" (2.) However, it is certain that they had no true reverence of God nor any serious regard to him. So that question is commonly understood, "*Of whom hast thou been afraid, or feared?*" Of none; for thou hast not feared me whom thou shouldst fear; for thou hast lied to me." Those that dissemble with God make it to appear they stand in no awe of him. "*Thou hast not remembered me, neither what I have said nor what I have done, neither the promises nor the threatenings, nor the performances of either; thou hast not laid them to thy heart, as thou wouldst have done if thou hadst feared me.*" Note, Those who lay not the word of God and his providences to their hearts do thereby show that they have not the fear of God before their eyes. And multitudes are ruined by fearlessness, forgetfulness, and mere carelessness; they do not aright nor to good purpose fear any thing, remember any thing, nor lay any thing to heart. Nay, (3.) They were hardened in their sin by the patience and forbearance of God. "*Have not I held my peace of old, and for a long time? These things thou hast done and I kept silence. And therefore, as it follows here, thou fearest me not;*" as if because God had spared long he would never punish, Eccl. viii. 11. Because he kept silence the sinner thought him altogether such a one as himself, and stood in no awe of him.

IV. Here is God's resolution to call them to an account, though he had long borne with them (v. 12): "*I will declare (like that, Ps. l. 21, But I will reprove thee), I will declare thy righteousness, which thou makest thy boast of, and let the world see, and thyself too, to thy confusion, that it is all a sham, all a cheat, it is not what it pretends to be. When thy righteousness comes to be examined it will be found that it was unrighteousness, and that there was no sincerity in all thy pretensions. I will declare thy works, what they have been and what the gain thou pretendest to have gotten by them, and it will appear that at long-run they shall not profit thee, nor turn to any account.*" Note, Sinful works, as they are works of darkness, and there is no reason nor righteousness in them, so they are unfruitful works and there is nothing got by them; and, however they

look now, it will be made to appear so another day. Sin profits not, nay, it ruins and destroys.

13 When thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee; but the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shall take them: but he that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain; 14 And shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling block out of the way of my people. 15 For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. 16 For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made.

Here, I. God shows how insufficient idols and creatures were to relieve and succour those that worshipped them and confided in them (v. 13): "*When thou criest in thy distress and anguish, lamentest thy misery and callest for help, let thy companies deliver thee, thy idol-gods which thou hast heaped to thyself companies of, the troops of the confederate forces which thou hast relied so much upon, let them deliver thee if they can; expect no other relief than what they can give.*" Thus God said to Israel, when in their trouble they called upon him (Judg. x. 14), *Go, and cry to the gods which you have chosen, let them deliver you.* But in vain is salvation hoped for from them: *The wind shall carry them all away,* the wind of God's wrath, that breath of his mouth which shall slay the wicked; they have made themselves as chaff, and therefore the wind will of course hurry them away. Vanity they are, and *vanity shall take them away,* to vanity they shall be reduced, and vanity shall be their recompence. Both the idols and their worshippers shall come to nothing.

II. He shows that there was a sufficiency, an all-sufficiency, in him for the comfort and deliverance of all those that put their confidence in him and made their application to him. Their safety and satisfaction appear the more comfortable because their hopes are crowned with fruition, when those that seek to other helpers have their hopes frustrated: "*He that puts his trust in me, and in me only, he shall be happy, both for soul and body, for this world and the other.*"

1. Observe, in general, (1.) Those that trust in God's providence take the best course to secure their secular interests. *They shall possess the land, as much of it as*

the way of his heart; it was what he was inclined to and intent upon, and he would not be reclaimed, but *in his distress he trespassed yet more*, 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. See the strength of the corruption of men's hearts, and the sinfulness of sin, which will take its course in despite of God himself and all the flames of his wrath. See also how insufficient afflictions of themselves are to reform men, unless God's grace work with them.

III. God's wonderful return in mercy to them, notwithstanding the obstinacy of the generality of them.

1. The greater part of them went on frowardly, but there were some among them that were mourners for the obstinacy of the rest; and with an eye to them, or rather for his own name's sake, God determines not to contend for ever with them. *With the froward* God may justly *show himself froward* (Ps. xviii. 26), and *walk contrary* to those that *walk contrary* to him, Lev. xxvi. 24. When this sinner here went on frowardly in the way of his heart, one would think it should have followed, "I have seen his ways and will destroy him, will abandon him, will never have any thing more to do with him." But such are the riches of divine mercy and grace, and so do they rejoice against judgment, that it follows, *I have seen his ways and will heal him*. See how God's goodness takes occasion from man's badness to appear so much the more illustrious; and where sin has abounded grace much more abounds. God's reasons of mercy are fetched from within himself, for in us there appears nothing but what is provoking. "I have seen his ways, and yet I will heal him for my own name's sake." God knew how bad the people were, and yet would not cast them off. But observe the method. God will first give him grace, and then, and not till then, give him peace: "I have seen his way, that he will never turn to me of himself, and therefore I will turn him." Those whom God has mercy in store for he has grace in readiness for, to prepare and qualify them for that mercy which they were running from as fast as they could. (1.) God will heal him of his corrupt and vicious disposition, will cure him of his covetousness, though it be ever so deeply rooted in him and his heart have been long exercised to covetous practices. There is no spiritual disease so inveterate, but almighty grace can conquer it. (2.) God will lead him also; not only amend what was amiss in him, that he may cease to do evil, but direct him into the way of duty, that he may learn to do well. He goes on frowardly, as Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter, but God will lead him into a better mind, a better path. And then, (3.) He will restore those comforts to him which he had forfeited and lost, and for the return of which he had thus prepared him. There was a wonderful reformation wrought upon the captives in

Babylon, and then a wonderful redemption wrought for them, which brought comfort to them, to their mourners, to those among them that mourned for their own sins, the sins of their people, and the desolations of the sanctuary. To those mourners the mercy would be most comfortable, and to them God had an eye in working it out. Blessed are those that mourn, for to them comfort be longs, and they shall have it.

2. Now, as when that people went in captivity some of them were good figs, very good, others of them bad figs, very bad, and accordingly their captivity was to them for their good or for *their hurt* (Jer. xxiv. 8, 9) so, when they came out of captivity, still some of them were good, others bad, and the deliverance was to them accordingly.

(1.) To those among them that were good their return out of captivity was peace, such peace as was a type and earnest of the peace which should be preached by Jesus Christ (v. 19): *I create the fruit of the lips, peace* [1.] God designed to give them matter for praise and thanksgiving, for that is the *fruit of the lips* (Heb. xiii. 15), the *calves of the lips*, Hos. xiv. 2. *I create this*. Creation out of nothing, and this is surely out of worse than nothing, when God creates matter of praise for those that went on frowardly in the way of their heart. [2.] In order to this, peace shall be published: *Peace, peace* (perfect peace, all kinds of peace) *to him that is afar off* from the general rendezvous, from the head-quarters, as well as to him that is near. Peace with God; though he has contended with them, he will be reconciled and will let fall his controversy. Peace of conscience, a holy security and serenity of mind, after the many reproaches of conscience and agitations of spirit they had been under in their captivity. Thus God creates the fruit of the lips, fresh matter for thanksgiving; for, when he speaks peace to us, we must speak praises to him. This peace is itself of God's creating. He, and he only can work it; it is the fruit of the lips, of his lips—he commands it, of the minister's lip—he speaks it by them, ch. xl. 1. It is the fruit of preaching lips and praying lips; it is the fruit of Christ's lips, whose lips drop as a honeycomb; for to him this is applied Eph. ii. 17: *He came and preached peace to you who were afar off*, you Gentiles as well as to the Jews, who were nigh—to after ages, who were afar off in time, as well as to those of the present age.

(2.) To those among them that were wicked, though they might return with the rest, their return was no peace, v. 20. The wicked, wherever he is, in Babylon or in Jerusalem, carries about with him the principle of his own uneasiness, and is like the troubled sea. God healed those to whom he spoke peace (v. 19): *I will heal them*, all shall be well again and set to rights; but the wicked would not be healed by the grace

of God and therefore shall not be healed by his comforts. They are always like the sea in a storm, for they carry about with them, [1.] Unmortified corruptions. They are not tured and conquered, and their ungoverned lusts and passions make them like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, vexatious to all about them and therefore uneasy to themselves, noisy and dangerous. When the intemperate heats of the spirit break out in scurrilous and abusive language, then the troubled sea casts forth mire and dirt. [2.] Unpacified consciences. They are under a rightful apprehension of guilt and wrath, that they cannot enjoy themselves; when they seem settled they are in disquietude, when they seem merry they are in heaviness; like Cain, who always dwelt in the land of shaking. The terrors of conscience disturb all their enjoyments, and cast forth such mire and dirt as make them a burden to themselves. Though this does not appear (it may be) at present, yet it is a certain truth, what this prophet had said before (*ch. lviii. 22*), and here repeats (*v. 21*), *There is no peace to the wicked*, no reconciliation to God (nor can they be upon good terms with him, while they go on still in their trespasses), no quietness or satisfaction in their own mind, no real good, no peace in death, because no hope. *My God hath said it*, and all the world cannot unsay it, That there is no peace to those that allow themselves in any sin. What have they to do with peace?

CHAP. LVIII.

The prophet, in this chapter, has his commission and charge renewed to reprove the sinners in Zion, particularly the hypocrites, to show them their transgressions, *ver. 1*. It is intended for admonition and warning to all hypocrites, and is not to be confined to those of any one age. Some refer it primarily to those at that time when Isaiah prophesied; see *chap. xxxiii. 14; xxxix. 13*. Others to the captives in Babylon, the wicked among them, to whom the prophet had declared there was no peace, *ch. lvi. 21*. Against the terror of that word they thought to shelter themselves with their external performances, particularly their fastings, which they kept up in Babylon, and for some time after their return to their own land, *Zech. vii. 3, &c.* The prophet therefore here shows them that their devotions would not entitle them to peace while their conversations were not at all of a piece with them. Others think it is principally intended against the hypocrisy of the Jews, especially the Pharisees before and in our Saviour's time: they boasted of their fastings, but Christ (as the prophet here) showed them their transgressions (*Matth. xxiii.*), much the same with those they are here charged with. Observe, *I*. The plausible profession of religion which they made, *ver. 2*. *II*. The boasts they made of that profession, and the blame they laid upon God for taking no more notice of it, *ver. 3*. *III*. The sins they are charged with, which spoiled the acceptableness of their fasts, *ver. 4, 5*. *IV*. Instructions given them how to keep fasts right, *ver. 6, 7*. *V*. Precious promises made to those who do so keep fasts, *ver. 8-12*. *VI*. The like precious promises made to those that sanctify sabbaths right, *ver. 13, 14*.

CRY aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. 2 Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God.

When our Lord Jesus promised to send the Comforter he added, *When he shall come he shall convince* (*John xvi. 7, 8*); for conviction must prepare for comfort, and must also separate between the precious and the vile, and mark out those to whom comfort does not belong. God had appointed this prophet to comfort his people (*ch. xl. 1*); here he appoints him to convince them, and show them their sins.

I. He must tell them how very bad they really were, *v. 1*. *1*. He must deal faithfully and plainly with them. "Though they are called the *people of God* and the *house of Jacob*, though they wear an honourable title and character, by which they are interested in many glorious privileges, yet do not flatter them, but show them their transgressions and their sins, be particular in telling them their faults, what sins are committed among them, which they do not know of, nay, what sins are committed by them which they do not acknowledge to be sins; though in some things they are reformed, let them know that in other things they are still as bad as ever. Show them their transgressions and their sins, that is, all their transgressions in their sins, their sins and all the aggravations of them," *Lev. xvi. 21*. Note, (1.) God sees sin in his people, in the house of Jacob, and is displeased with it. (2.) They are often unaple and unwilling to see their own sins, and need to have them shown them, and to be told, *Thus and thus thou hast done*. *2*. He must be vehement and in good earnest herein, must *cry aloud, and not spare*, not spare them (not touch them with his reproofs as if he were afraid of hurting them, but search the wound to the bottom, lay it bare to the bone), not spare himself or his own pains, but cry as loud as he can; though he spend his strength and waste his spirits, though he get their ill-will by it and get himself into an ill name, yet he must not spare. He must lift up his voice like a trumpet, to make those hear of their faults that were apt to be deaf when admonition was addressed to them. He must give his reproofs in the most powerful and pressing manner possible, as one who desired to be heeded. The trumpet does not give an uncertain sound, but, though loud and shrill, is intelligible; so must his alarms be, giving them warning of the fatal consequences of sin, *Ezek. xxxiii. 3*.

II. He must acknowledge how very good they seemed to be, notwithstanding (*v. 2*): *Yet they seek me daily*. When the prophet went about to show them their transgressions they pleaded that they could see no transgressions which they were guilty of; for they were diligent and constant in attending on God's worship—and what more would he have of them? Now,

1. He owns the matter of fact to be true. As far as hypocrites do that which is good,

that the hypocrisy of it is an abomination to him. Note, The shows of religion, though they show ever so fair in the eye of the world, will not be accepted of God without the substance of it.

(2.) We are here told positively what is the fast that God has chosen, what that is which will recommend a fast-day to the divine acceptance, and what is indeed afflicting the soul, that is, crushing and subduing the corrupt nature. *It is not afflicting the soul for a day* (as some read it, v. 5) that will serve; no, it must be the business of our whole lives. It is here required, [1.] That we be just to those with whom we have dealt hardly. The fast that God has chosen consists in reforming our lives and undoing what we have done amiss (v. 6): *To loose the bands of wickedness*, the bands which we have wickedly tied, and by which others are bound out from their right or bound down under severe usage. Those which perhaps were at first bands of justice, tying men to pay a due debt, become, when the debt is exacted with rigour from those whom Providence has reduced and emptied, *bands of wickedness*, and they must be loosed, or they will bring us into bonds of guilt much more terrible. It is *to undo the heavy burden* laid on the back of the poor servant, under which he is ready to sink. It is *to let the oppressed go free* from the oppression which makes his life bitter to him. "Let the prisoner for debt that has nothing to pay be discharged, let the vexatious action be quashed, let the servant that is forcibly detained beyond the time of his servitude be released, and thus *break every yoke*; not only let go those that are wrongfully kept under the yoke, but break the yoke of slavery itself, that it may not serve again another time nor any be made again to serve under it." [2.] That we be charitable to those that stand in need of charity, v. 7. The particulars in the former verse *may* be taken as acts of charity, that we not only release those whom we have unjustly oppressed—that is justice, but that we contribute to the rescue and ransom of those that are oppressed by others, to the release of captives and the payment of the debts of the poor; but those in this verse are *plainly* acts of charity. This then is the fast that God has chosen. *First*, To provide food for those that want it. This is put first, as the most necessary, and which the poor can but a little while live without. It is *to break thy bread to the hungry*. Observe, "It must be *thy* bread, that which is honestly got (not that which thou hast robbed others of), the bread which thou thyself hast occasion for, the bread of thy allowance." We must deny ourselves, that we may have to give to him that needeth. "Thy bread which thou hast spared from thyself and thy family, on the fast-day, if that, or the value of it, be not given to the poor, it is the miser's fast, which he makes

a hand of; it is fasting for the world, not for God. This is the true fast, to break thy bread to the hungry, not only to give them that which is already broken meat, but to break bread on purpose for them, to give them loaves and not to put them off with scraps." *Secondly*, To provide lodging for those that want it: It is *to take care of the poor that are cast out*, that are forced from their dwelling, turned out of house and harbour, *are cast out as rebels* (so some critics render it), that are attainted, and whom therefore it is highly penal to protect. "If they suffer unjustly, make no difficulty of sheltering them; do not only find out quarters for them and pay for their lodging elsewhere, but, which is a greater act of kindness, bring them to thy own house, make them thy own guests." Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for though thou mayest not, as some have done, thereby entertain angels, thou mayest entertain Christ himself, who will recompense it in the resurrection of the just. *I was a stranger and you took me in.*" *Thirdly*, To provide clothing for those that want it: "When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, both to shelter him from the injuries of the weather and to enable him to appear decently among his neighbours; give him clothes to come to church in, and in these and other instances *hide not thyself from thy own flesh.*" Some understand it more strictly of a man's own kindred and relations: "If those of thy own house and family fall into decay, thou art *worse than an infidel* if thou dost not provide for them," 1 Tim. v. 8. Others understand it more generally; all that partake of the human nature are to be looked upon as our own flesh, for have we not all one Father? And for this reason we must not hide ourselves from them, not contrive to be out of the way when a poor petitioner enquires for us, not look another way when a moving object of charity and compassion presents itself; let us remember that they are flesh of our flesh and therefore we ought to sympathize with them, and in doing good to them we really do good to our own flesh and spirit too in the issue; for thus *we lay up for ourselves a good foundation, a good bond, for the time to come.*

8 Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward. 9 Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity; 10 And if thou draw out thy soul to the hun-

gry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness *be* as the noon-day: 11 And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. 12 And *they that shall be* of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in.

Here are precious promises for those to feast freely and cheerfully upon by faith who keep the fast that God has chosen; let them know that God will make it up to them. Here is,

I. A further account of the duty to be done in order to our interest in these promises (v. 9, 10); and here, as before, it is required that we both do justly and love mercy, that we cease to do evil and learn to do well. 1. We must abstain from all acts of violence and fraud. "Those must be *taken away from the midst of thee*, from the midst of *thy person*, out of *thy heart*" (so some); "thou must not only refrain from the practice of injury, but mortify in thee all inclination and disposition towards it." Or *from the midst of thy people*. Those in authority must not only not be oppressive themselves, but must do all they can to prevent and restrain oppression in all within their jurisdiction. They must not only *break the yoke* (v. 6), but take away the yoke, that those who have been oppressed may never be re-enslaved (as they were Jer. xxxiv. 10, 11); they must likewise *forbear threatening* (Eph. vi. 9) and take away the *putting forth of the finger*, which seems to have been then, as sometimes with us, a sign of displeasure and the indication of a purpose to correct. Let not the finger be put forth to point at those that are poor and in misery, and so to expose them to contempt; such expressions of contumely as are provoking, and the products of ill-nature, ought to be banished from all societies. And let them not *seek vanity*, flattery or fraud, to one another, but let all conversation be governed by sincerity. Perhaps that dissimulation which is the bane of friendship is meant by the putting forth of the finger (as Prov. vi. 13 by *teaching with the finger*), or it is putting forth the finger with the ring on it, which was the badge of authority, and which therefore they produced when they spoke iniquity, that is, gave unrighteous sentences. 2. We must abound in all acts of charity and beneficence. We must not only give alms accord-

ing as the necessities of the poor require, but, (1.) We must give freely and cheerfully, and from a principle of charity. We must *draw out our soul to the hungry* (v. 10), not only draw out the money and reach forth the hand, but do this from the heart, heartily, and without grudging, from a principle of compassion and with a tender affection to such as we see to be in misery. Let the heart go along with the gift; for God loves a cheerful giver, and so does a poor man too. When our Lord Jesus healed and fed the multitude it was as having compassion on them. (2.) We must give plentifully and largely, so as not to tantalize, but to *satisfy the afflicted soul*: "Do not only feed the hungry, but gratify the desire of the afflicted, and, if it lies in your power, make them easy." What are we born for, and what have we our abilities of body, mind, and estate for, but to do all the good we can in this world with them? And the poor we have always with us.

II. Here is a full account of the blessings and benefits which attend the performance of this duty. If a person, a family, a people, be thus disposed to every thing that is good, let them know for their comfort that they shall find God their bountiful rewarder and what they lay out in works of charity shall be abundantly made up to them. 1. God will surprise them with the return of mercy after great affliction, which shall be as welcome as the light of the morning after a long and dark night (v. 8): "*Then shall thy light break forth as the morning* and (v. 10) *thy light shall rise in obscurity*. Though thou hast been long buried alive thou shalt recover thy eminency; though long overwhelmed with grief, thou shalt again look pleasant as the dawning day." Those that are cheerful in doing good God will make cheerful in enjoying good; and this also is a special *gift of God*, Eccl. ii. 24. Those that have shown mercy shall find mercy. Job, who in his prosperity had done a great deal of good, had friends raised up for him by the Lord when he was reduced, who helped him with their substance, so that his light rose in obscurity. "Not only thy light, which is sweet, but thy health too, or the healing of the wounds thou hast long complained of, shall spring forth speedily; all thy grievances shall be redressed, and thou shalt renew thy youth and recover thy vigour." Those that have helped others out of trouble will obtain help of God when it is their turn. 2. God will put honour upon them. Good works shall be recompensed with a good name; this is included in that *light which rises out of obscurity*. Though a man's extraction be mean, his family obscure, and he has no external advantages to gain him honour, yet, if he do good in his place, that will procure him respect and veneration, and his darkness shall by this means become *as the noon-day*, that is, he shall become

very eminent and shine brightly in his generation. See here what is the surest way for a man to make himself illustrious; let him study to do good. He that would be the greatest of all, and best-beloved, let him by humility and industry make himself a servant of all. "*Thy righteousness shall then go before thee*, that is, it shall introduce thee into the esteem of many, and make thee an interest. *Thy righteousness shall answer for thee* (as Jacob says, Gen. xxx. 33), that is, it shall silence reproaches, nay, it shall bespeak thee more praises than thy humility can be pleased with." He that has given to the poor, his righteousness (that is, the honour of it) endures for ever, Ps. cxii. 9. 3. They shall always be safe under the divine protection: "*Thy righteousness shall go before thee as thy vanguard*, to secure thee from enemies that charge thee in the front, and the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward, the gathering host, to bring up those of thee that are weary and are left behind, and to secure thee from the enemies, that, like Amalek, fall upon thy rear." Observe, How good people are safe on all sides. Let them look which way they will, behind them or before them; let them look backward or forward; they see themselves safe, and find themselves easy and quiet from the fear of evil. And observe what it is that is their defence; it is their righteousness, and the glory of the Lord, that is, as some suppose, Christ; for it is by him that we are justified, and God is glorified. He it is that goes before us, and is the captain of our salvation, as he is the Lord our righteousness; he it is that is our rearward, on whom alone we can depend for safety when our sins pursue us and are ready to take hold on us. Or, "God himself in his providence and grace shall both go before thee as thy guide to conduct thee, and attend thee as thy rearward to protect thee, and this shall be the reward of thy righteousness and so shall be for the glory of the Lord as the rewarder of it." 4. God will be always nigh unto them, to hear their prayers, v. 9. As, on the one hand, he that shuts his ears to the cry of the poor shall himself cry and God will not hear him; so, on the other hand, he that is liberal to the poor, his prayers shall come up with his alms for a memorial before God, as Cornelius's did (Acts x. 4): "*Then shalt thou call*, on thy fast-days, which ought to be days of prayer, and the Lord shall answer, shall give thee the things thou callest to him for; *thou shalt cry* when thou art in any distress or sudden fright, and he shall say, *Here I am*." This is a very condescending expression of God's readiness to hear prayer. When God calls to us by his word it becomes us to say, *Here we are; what saith our Lord unto his servants?* But that God should say to us, *Behold me, here I am*, is strange. When we cry to him, as if he were at a distance, he will let us know that he is

near, even at our right hand, nearer than we thought he was. *It is I, be not afraid* When danger is near our protector is nearer, *a very present help*. "Here I am, ready to give you what you want, and do for you what you desire; what have you to say to me?" God is attentive to the prayers of the upright, Ps. cxxx. 2. No sooner do they call to him than he answers, *Ready, ready*. Wherever they are praying, God says, "*Here I am hearing; I am in the midst of you*." He is nigh unto them in all things, Deut. iv. 7. 5. God will direct them in all difficult and doubtful cases (v. 11): *The Lord shall guide thee continually*. While we are here, in the wilderness of this world, we have need of continual direction from heaven; for, if at any time we be left to ourselves, we shall certainly miss our way; and therefore it is to those who are good in God's sight that he gives the wisdom which in all cases is profitable to direct, and he will be to them *instead of eyes*, Eccl. ii. 26. His providence will make their way plain to them, both what is their duty and what will be most for their comfort. 6. God will give them abundance of satisfaction in their own minds. As the world is a wilderness in respect of wanderings, so that they need to be guided continually, so also is it in respect of wants, which makes it necessary that they should have continual supplies, as Israel in the wilderness had not only the pillar of cloud to guide them continually, but manna and water out of the rock to satisfy their souls in drought, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is, Ps. lxxiii. 1. To a good man God gives not only wisdom and knowledge, but joy; he is satisfied in himself with the testimony of his conscience and the assurances of God's favour. "*These will satisfy thy soul*, will put gladness into thy heart, even in the drought of affliction; *these will make fat thy bones*, and fill them with marrow, will give thee that pleasure which will be a support to thee as the bones to the body, that joy of the Lord which will be thy strength. *He shall give thy bones rest*" (so some read it), "*rest from the pain and sickness which they have laboured under and been chastened with;*" so it agrees with that promise made to the merciful. The Lord will make all his bed in his sickness, Ps. xli. 3. "*Thou shalt be like a watered garden*, so flourishing and fruitful in graces and comforts, and like a spring of water, like a garden that has a spring of water in it, whose waters fail not either in droughts or in frosts." The principle of holy love in those that are good shall be a well of living water, John iv. 14. As a spring of water, though it is continually sending forth its streams, is yet always full, so the charitable man abounds in good as he abounds in doing good and is never the poorer for his liberality. He that waters shall himself be watered. 7. They and their families shall be

public blessings. It is a good reward to those that are fruitful and useful to be rendered more so, and especially to have those who descend from them to be so too. This is here promised (v. 12): "Those that now are of thee, thy princes, and nobles, and great men, shall have such authority and influence as they never had;" or, "*Those that hereafter shall be of thee*, thy posterity, shall be serviceable to their generation, as thou art to thine." It completes the satisfaction of a good man, as to this world, to think that those that come after him shall be doing good when he is gone. 1. They shall re-edify cities that have been long in ruins, *shall build the old waste places*, which had lain so long desolate that the rebuilding of them was quite despaired of. This was fulfilled when the captives, after their return, repaired the cities of Judah, and dwelt in them, and many of those in Israel too, which had lain waste ever since the carrying away of the ten tribes. 2. They shall carry on and finish that good work which was begun long before, and shall be helped over the obstructions which had retarded the progress of it: *They shall raise up to the top that building the foundation of* which was laid long since and has been for many generations in the rearing. This was fulfilled when the building of the temple was revived after it had stood still for many years, Ezra v. 2. Or, "They shall raise up foundations which shall continue for many generations yet to come;" they shall do that good which shall be of lasting consequence. 3. They shall have the blessing and praise of all about them: "*Thou shalt be called* (and it shall be to thy honour) *the repairer of the breach*, the breach made by the enemy in the wall of a besieged city, which whoso has the courage and dexterity to make up, or make good, gains great applause." Happy are those who make up the breach at which virtue is running out and judgments are breaking in. "*Thou shalt be the restorer of paths*, safe and quiet paths, not only to travel in, but to dwell in, so safe and quiet that people shall make no difficulty of building their houses by the road-side." The sum is that, if they keep such fasts as God as chosen, he will settle them again in their former peace and prosperity, and there shall be none to make them afraid. See Zech. vii. 5, 9; viii. 3—5. It teaches us that those who do justly and love mercy shall have the comfort thereof in this world.

13 If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, *from* doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking *thine own* words: 14 Then shalt thou

delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

Great stress was always laid upon the due observance of the sabbath day, and it was particularly required from the Jews when they were captives in Babylon, because by keeping that day, in honour of the Creator, they distinguished themselves from the worshippers of the gods that have not made the heavens and the earth. See ch. lvi. 1, 2, where keeping the sabbath is joined, as here, with *keeping judgment and doing justice*. Some, indeed, understand this of the day of atonement, which they think is the fast spoken of in the former part of the chapter, and which is called a *sabbath of rest*, Lev. xxiii. 32. But, as the fasts before spoken of seem to be those that were occasional, so this sabbath is doubtless the weekly sabbath, that great sign between God and his professing people—his appointing it a sign of his favour to them and their observing it a sign of their obedience to him. Now observe here,

I. How the sabbath is to be sanctified (v. 13); and, there remaining still a sabbatism for the people of God, this law of the sabbath is still binding to us on our Lord's day.

1. Nothing must be done that puts contempt upon the sabbath day, or looks like having mean thoughts of it, when God has so highly dignified it. We must *turn away our foot from the sabbath*, from trampling upon it, as profane atheistical people do, from travelling on that day (so some); we must turn away our foot *from doing our pleasure on that holy day*, that is, from living at large, and taking a liberty to do what we please on sabbath days, without the control and restraint of conscience, or from indulging ourselves in the pleasures of sense, in which the modern Jews wickedly place the sanctification of the sabbath, though it is as great a profanation of it as any thing. On sabbath days we must not walk in *our own ways* (that is, not follow our callings), not *find our own pleasure* (that is, not follow our sports and recreations); nay, we must not *speak our own words*, words that concern either our callings or our pleasures; we must not allow ourselves a liberty of speech on that day as on other days, for we must then mind God's ways, make religion the business of the day; we must choose the things that please him; and speak his words, speak of divine things as we sit in the house and walk by the way. In all we say and do we must put a difference between this day and other days.

2. Every thing must be done that puts an honour on the day and is expressive of our high thoughts of it. We must call it a *delight*, not a *task and a burden*; we must *delight ourselves in it*, in the restraints it lays

upon us and the services it obliges us to. We must be in our element when we are worshipping God, and in communion with him. *How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!* We must not only count it a delight, but call it so, must openly profess the complacency we take in the day and the duties of it. We must call it so to God, in thanksgiving for it and earnest desire of his grace to enable us to do the work of the day in its day, because we delight in it. We must call it so to others, to invite them to come and share in the pleasure of it; and we must call it so to ourselves, that we may not entertain the least thought of wishing the sabbath gone that we may sell corn. We must call it *the Lord's holy day, and honourable*. We must call it *holy*, separated from common use and devoted to God and to his service, must call it *the holy of the Lord*, the day which he has sanctified to himself. Even in Old-Testament times the sabbath was called *the Lord's day*, and therefore it is fitly called so still, and for a further reason, because it is *the Lord Christ's day*, Rev. i. 10. It is holy because it is the Lord's day, and upon both accounts it is honourable. It is a beauty of holiness that is upon it; it is ancient, and its antiquity is its honour; and we must make it appear that we look upon it as honourable by honouring God on that day. We put honour upon the day when we give honour to him that instituted it, and to whose honour it is dedicated.

II. What the reward is of sabbath-sanctification, v. 14. If we thus remember the sabbath day to keep it holy,

1. We shall have the comfort of it; the work will be its own wages. *If we call the sabbath a delight, then shall we delight ourselves in the Lord*: he will more and more manifest himself to us as the delightful subject of our thoughts and meditations and the delightful object of our best affections. Note, The more pleasure we take in serving God the more pleasure we shall find in it. If we go about duty with cheerfulness, we shall go from it with satisfaction and shall have reason to say, "It is good to be here, good to draw near to God."

2. We shall have the honour of it: *I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth*, which denotes not only a great security (as that, ch. xxxiii. 16, *He shall dwell on high*), but great dignity and advancement. "Thou shalt ride in state, shalt appear conspicuous, and the eyes of all thy neighbours shall be upon thee." It was said of Israel, when God led them triumphantly out of Egypt, that *he made them to ride on the high places of the earth*, Deut. xxxii. 12, 13. Those that honour God and his sabbath he will thus honour. If God by his grace enable us to live above the world, and so to manage it as not only not to be hindered by it, but to be furthered and carried on by it in our journey towards heaven, then

he makes us to ride on the high places of the earth.

3. We shall have the profit of it: *I will feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father*, that is, with all the blessings of the covenant and all the precious products of Canaan (which was a type of heaven), for these were the heritage of Jacob. Observe, The heritage of believers is what they shall not only be portioned with hereafter, but fed with now, fed with the hopes of it, and not flattered, fed with the earnest and foretastes of it; and those that are so fed have reason to say that they are well fed. In order that we may depend upon it, it is added, "*The mouth of the Lord has spoken it*; you may take God's word for it, for he cannot lie nor deceive; what his mouth has spoken his hand will give, his hand will do, and not one iota or tittle of his good promise shall fall to the ground." *Blessed, therefore, thrice blessed, is he that doeth this, and lays hold on it, that keeps the sabbath from polluting it.*

CHAP. LIX.

In this chapter we have sin appearing exceedingly sinful, and grace appearing exceedingly gracious; and, as what is here said of the sinner's sin (ver. 7, 8) is applied to the general corruption of mankind (Rom. iii. 15), so what is here said of a Redeemer (ver. 20) is applied to Christ, Rom. xi. 26. I. It is here charged upon this people that they had themselves stopped the current of God's favours to them, and the particular sins are specified which kept good things from them, ver. 1—8. II. It is here charged upon them that they had themselves procured the judgments of God upon them, and they are told both what the judgments were which they had brought upon their own heads (ver. 9—11) and what the sins were which provoked God to send those judgments, ver. 12—15. III. It is here promised that, notwithstanding this, God would work deliverance for them, purely for his own name's sake (ver. 16—19), and would reserve mercy in store for them and entail it upon them, ver. 20, 21.

BEHOOLD, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: 2 But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. 3 For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness. 4 None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth; they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity. 5 They hatch cockatrice eggs, and weave the spider's web: he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper. 6 Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands. 7 Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of ini-

quity; wasting and destruction *are* in their paths. 8 The way of peace they know not; and *there is* no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace.

The prophet here rectifies the mistake of those who had been quarrelling with God because they had not the deliverances wrought for them which they had been often fasting and praying for, *ch. lviii. 3.* Now here he shows,

I. That it was not owing to God. They had no reason to lay the fault upon him that they were not saved out of the hands of their enemies; for, 1. He was still as able to help as ever: *His hand is not shortened*, his power is not at all lessened, straitened, or abridged. Whether we consider the extent of his power or the efficacy of it, God can reach as far as ever and with as strong a hand as ever. Note, The church's salvation comes from the hand of God, and that has not waxed weak nor is it at all shortened. *Has the Lord's hand waxed short?* (says God to Moses, Num. xi. 23). No, it has not; he will not have it thought so. Neither length of time nor strength of enemies, no, nor weakness of instruments, can shorten or straiten the power of God, with which it is all one to save by many or by few. 2. He was still as ready and willing to help as ever in answer to prayer: *His ear is not heavy, that it cannot hear*. Though he has many prayers to hear and answer, and though he has been long hearing prayer, yet he is still as ready to hear prayer as ever. The prayer of the upright is as much his delight as ever it was, and the promises which are pleaded and put in suit in prayer are still yea and amen, inviolably sure. More is implied than is expressed; not only his ear is not heavy, but he is quick of hearing. *Even before they call he answers, ch. lxx. 24.* If your prayers be not answered, and the salvation we wait for be not wrought for us, it is not because God is weary of hearing prayer, but because we are weary of praying, not because his ear is heavy when we speak to him, but because our ears are heavy when he speaks to us.

II. That it was owing to themselves; they stood in their own light and put a bar in their own door. God was coming towards them in ways of mercy and they hindered him. *Your iniquities have kept good things from you, Jer. v. 25.*

1. See what mischief sin does. (1.) It hinders God's mercies from coming down upon us; it is a partition wall that separates between us and God. Notwithstanding the infinite distance that is between God and man by nature, there was a correspondence settled between them, till sin set them at variance, justly provoked God against man

and unjustly alienated man from God; thus it *separates between them and God*. "He is your God, yours in profession, and therefore there is so much the more malignity and mischievousness in sin, which separates between you and him." Sin *hides his face from us* (which denotes great displeasure, Deut. xxxi. 17); it provokes him in anger to withdraw his gracious presence, to suspend the tokens of his favour and the instances of his help; he hides his face, as refusing to be seen or spoken with. See here sin in its colours, sin exceedingly sinful, withdrawing the creature from his allegiance to his Creator; and see sin in its consequences, sin exceedingly hurtful, separating us from God, and so separating us not only from all good, but to all evil (Deut. xxix. 21), which is the very quintessence of the curse. (2.) It hinders our prayers from coming up unto God; it provokes him to hide his face, that he will not hear, as he has said, *ch. i. 15.* If we regard iniquity in our heart, if we indulge it and allow ourselves in it, God will not hear our prayers, Ps. lxxvi. 18. We cannot expect that he should countenance us while we go on to affront him.

2. Now, to justify God in hiding his face from them, and proceeding in his controversy with them, the prophet shows very largely, in the following verses, how many and great their iniquities were, according to the charge given him (*ch. lviii. 1.*), to show God's people their transgressions; and it is a black bill of indictment that is here drawn up against them, consisting of many particulars, any one of which was enough to separate between them and a just and a holy God. Let us endeavour to reduce these articles of impeachment to proper heads.

(1.) We must begin with their thoughts, for there all sin begins, and thence it takes its rise: *Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity, v. 7.* Their imaginations are so, only evil continually. Their projects and designs are so; they are continually contriving some mischief or other, and how to compass the gratification of some base lust (*v. 4*): *They conceive mischief* in their fancy, purpose, counsel, and resolution (thus the embryo receives its shape and life), and then they *bring forth iniquity*, put it in execution when it is ripened for it. Though it is in pain perhaps that the iniquity is brought forth, through the oppositions of Providence and the checks of their own consciences, yet, when they have compassed their wicked purpose, they look upon it with as much pride and pleasure as if it were a *man-child born into the world*; thus, *when lust has conceived, it bringeth forth sin, Jam. i. 15.* This is called (*v. 5*) *hatching the cockatrice' egg and weaving the spider's web*. See how the thoughts and contrivances of wicked men are employed, and about what they set their wits on work. [1.] At the best it is about that which is foolish and frivolous. Their

thoughts are vain, like weaving the spider's web, which the poor silly animal takes a great deal of pains about, and, when all is done, it is a weak insignificant thing, a reproach to the place where it is, and which the besom sweeps away in an instant: such are the thoughts which worldly men entertain themselves with, building castles in the air, and pleasing themselves with imaginary satisfaction, like the *spider*, which *takes hold with her hands* very finely (Prov. xxx. 28), but cannot keep her hold. [2.] Too often it is about that which is malicious and spiteful. They hatch the eggs of the cockatrice or adder, which are poisonous and produce venomous creatures; such are the thoughts of the wicked who delight in doing mischief. *He that eats of their eggs* (that is, has any dealings with them) *dies* (that is, he is in danger of having some mischief or other done him), and that which is *crushed* in order to be eaten of, or which begins to be hatched and you promise yourself some useful fowl from it, *breaks out into a viper*, which you meddle with at your peril. Happy are those that have least to do with such men. Even the spider's web which they wove was woven with a spiteful design to catch flies in and make a prey of them; for, rather than not be doing mischief, they will play at small game.

(2.) Out of this abundance of wickedness in the heart their mouth speaks, and yet it does not always speak out the wickedness that is within, but, for the more effectually compassing the mischievous design, it is dissembled and covered with *much fair speech* (v. 3): *Your lips have spoken lies*; and again (v. 4), *They speak lies*, pretending kindness where they intend the greatest mischief; or by slanders and false accusations they blasted the credit and reputation of those they had a spite to and so did them a real mischief unseen, and perhaps by suborning witnesses against them took from them their estates and lives; for a false tongue is sharp arrows, and coals of juniper, and every thing that is mischievous. *Your tongue has muttered perverseness*. When they could not, for shame, speak their malice against their neighbours aloud, or durst not, for fear of being disproved and put to confusion, they muttered it secretly. Backbiters are called *whisperers*.

(3.) Their actions were all of a piece with their thoughts and words. They were guilty of shedding innocent blood, a crime of the most heinous nature: *Your hands are defiled with blood* (v. 3); for blood is defiling; it leaves an indelible stain of guilt upon the conscience, which nothing but the blood of Christ can cleanse it from. Nor was this a case of surprise, or one that occurred when there was something of a force put upon them; but (v. 7) *their feet ran to this evil*, naturally and eagerly, and, hurried on by the impetus of their malice and revenge, *they made haste to shed innocent blood*, as if they were afraid of losing an opportunity to do a

barbarous thing, Prov. i. 16; Jer. xxii. 17. *Wasting and destruction are in their paths*. Wherever they go they carry mischief along with them, and the tendency of their way is to lay waste and destroy, nor do they care what havoc they make. Nor do they only thirst after blood, but with other iniquities are their *fingers defiled* (v. 3); they wrong people in their estates and make every thing their own that they can lay their hands on. *They trust in vanity* (v. 4); they depend upon their arts of cozenage to enrich themselves with, which will prove vanity to them, and their deceiving others will but deceive themselves. *Their works*, which they take so much pains about and have their hearts so much upon, are all *works of iniquity*; their whole business is one continued course of oppressions and vexations, and the act of violence is in their hands, according to the arts of violence that are in their heads and the thoughts of violence in their hearts.

(4.) No methods are taken to redress these grievances and reform these abuses (v. 4): *None calls for justice*, none complains of the violation of the sacred laws of justice, nor seeks to right those that suffer wrong or to get the laws put in execution against vice and profaneness, and those lewd practices which are the shame, and threaten to be the bane, of the nation. Note, When justice is not done there is blame to be laid not only upon the magistrates that should administer justice, but upon the people that should call for it. Private persons ought to contribute to the public good by discovering secret wickedness, and giving those an opportunity to punish it that have the power of doing so in their hands; but it is ill with a state when princes rule ill and the people love to have it so. Truth is opposed, and there is not any that *pleads for it*, not any that has the conscience and courage to appear in defence of an honest cause, and confront a prosperous fraud and wrong. *The way of peace* is as little regarded as the way of truth; they *know it not*, that is, they never study the things that make for peace, no care is taken to prevent or punish the breaches of the peace and to accommodate matters in difference among neighbours; they are utter strangers to every thing that looks quiet and peaceable, and affect that which is blustering and turbulent. *There is no judgment in their goings*; they have not any sense of justice in their dealings; it is a thing they make no account of at all, but can easily break through all its fences if they stand in the way of their malicious covetous designs.

(5.) In all this they act foolishly, very foolishly, and as much against their interest as against reason and equity. Those that practise iniquity *trust in vanity*, which will certainly deceive them, v. 4. *Their webs*, which they weave with so much art and industry, *shall not become garments, neither*

shall they cover themselves, either for shelter or for ornament, with their works, v. 6. They may do hurt to others with their projects, but can never do any real service or kindness to themselves by them. There is nothing to be got by sin, and so it will appear when profit and loss come to be compared. Those paths of iniquity are *crooked paths* (v. 7), which will perplex them, but will never bring them to their journey's end; whoever go therein, though they say that they shall have peace notwithstanding they go on, deceive themselves; for they shall not know peace, as appears by the following verses.

9 Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness. 10 We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noon-day as in the night; we are in desolate places as dead men. 11 We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far off from us. 12 For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them; 13 In transgressing and lying against the LORD, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. 14 And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. 15 Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment.

The scope of this paragraph is the same with that of the last, to show that sin is the great mischief-maker; as it is that which keeps good things from us, so it is that which brings evil things upon us. But as there it is spoken by the prophet, in God's name, to the people, for their conviction and humiliation, and that God might be justified when he speaks and clear when he judges, so here it seems to be spoken by the people to God, as an acknowledgment of that which was there told them and an expression of their humble submission and subscription to the justice and equity of God's proceedings against them. Their uncircumcised hearts here seem to be humbled in some measure,

and they are brought to confess (the confession is at least extorted from them) that God had justly walked contrary to them, because they had walked contrary to him.

1. They acknowledge that God had contended with them and had walked contrary to them. Their case was very deplorable, v. 9—11. 1. They were in distress, trampled upon and oppressed by their enemies, unjustly dealt with, and ruled with rigour; and God did not appear for them, to plead their just and injured cause: "*Judgment is far from us, neither does justice overtake us*, v. 9. Though, as to our persecutors, we are sure that we have right on our side, and they are the wrong-doers, yet we are not relieved, we are not righted. We have not done justice to one another, and therefore God suffers our enemies to deal thus unjustly with us, and we are as far as ever from being restored to our right and recovering our property again. Oppression is near us, and judgment is far from us. Our enemies are far from giving our case its due consideration, but still hurry us on with the violence of their oppressions, and justice does not overtake us, to rescue us out of their hands." 2. Herein their expectations were sadly disappointed, which made their case the more sad: "*We wait for light* as those that wait for the morning, but behold obscurity; we cannot discern the least dawning of the day of our deliverance. *We look for judgment*, but there is none (v. 11); neither God nor man appears for our succour; we look for salvation, because God (we think) has promised it, and we have prayed for it with fasting; we look for it as for brightness, but it is far off from us, as far off as ever for aught we can perceive, and still *we walk in darkness*; and the higher our expectations have been raised the sorer is the disappointment." 3. They were quite at a loss what to do to help themselves and were at their wits' end (v. 10): "*We grope for the wall like the blind*; we see no way open for our relief, nor know which way to expect it, or what to do in order to it." If we shut our eyes against the light of divine truth, it is just with God to hide from our eyes the things that belong to our peace; and, if we use not our eyes as we should, it is just with him to let us be as if we had no eyes. Those that will not see their duty shall not see their interest. Those whom God has given up to a judicial blindness are strangely infatuated; they stumble at noon-day as in the night; they see not either those dangers, or those advantages, which all about them see. *Quos Deus vult perdere, eos dementat*—God infatuates those whom he means to destroy. Those that love darkness rather than light shall have their doom accordingly. 4. They sunk into despair and were quite overwhelmed with grief, the marks of which appeared in every man's countenance; they grew melancholy upon it, shunned conversation, and

affected solitude: *We are in desolate places as dead men.* The state of the Jews in Babylon is represented by *dead and dry bones* (Ezek. xxxvii. 12) and the explanation of the comparison there (v. 11) explains this text: *Our hope is lost; we are cut off for our parts.* In this despair the sorrow and anguish of some were loud and noisy: *We roar like bears;* the sorrow of others was silent, and preyed more upon their spirits: "*We mourn sore like doves,* like doves of the valleys; we mourn both *for our iniquities* (Ezek. vii. 16) and for our calamities." Thus they owned that *the hand of the Lord had gone out against them.*

II. They acknowledge that they had provoked God thus to contend with them, that he had done right, for they had done wickedly, v. 12—15. 1. They owned that they had sinned, and that to this day they were in a great trespass, as Ezra speaks (Ezra x. 10): "*Our transgressions are with us;* the guilt of them is upon us, the power of them prevails among us, we are not yet reformed, nor have we parted with our sins, though they have done us so much mischief. Nay, *our transgressions are multiplied;* they are more numerous and more heinous than they have been formerly. Look which way we will, we cannot look off them; all places, all orders and degrees of men, are infected. The sense of our transgression is with us, as David said, *My sin is ever before me;* it is too plain to be denied or concealed, too bad to be excused or palliated. God is a witness to them: *They are multiplied before thee,* in thy sight, under thy eye. We are witnesses against ourselves: *As for our iniquities, we know them,* though we may have foolishly endeavoured to cover them. Nay, they themselves are witnesses: *Our sins stare us in the face and testify against us,* so many have they been and so deeply aggravated." 2. They owned the great evil and malignity of sin, of their sin; it is *transgressing and lying against the Lord,* v. 13. The sins of those that profess themselves God's people, and bear his name, are upon *this* account worse than the sins of others, that in transgressing they *lie against the Lord,* they falsely accuse him, they misrepresent and belie him, as if he had dealt hardly and unfairly with them; or they perfidiously break covenant with him and falsify their most sacred and solemn engagements to him, which is *lying against him: it is departing away from our God,* to whom we are bound as our God and to whom we ought to cleave with purpose of heart; from him we have departed, as the rebellious subject from his allegiance to his rightful prince, and the adulterous wife from the guide of her youth and the covenant of her God. 3. They owned that there was a general decay of moral honesty; and it is not strange that those who were false to their God were unfaithful to one another. They *spoke oppression,* declared openly for that,

though it was a revolt from their God and a revolt from truth, by the sacred bonds of which we should always be tied and held fast. They *conceived and uttered words of falsehood.* Many an ill thing is conceived in the mind, yet is prudently stifled there and not suffered to go any further; but these sinners were so impudent, so daring, that whatever wickedness they conceived, they gave it an imprimatur—a sanction, and made no difficulty of publishing it. To think an ill thing is bad, but to say it is much worse. Many a word of falsehood is uttered in haste for want of consideration; but these were conceived and uttered, were uttered deliberately and of malice prepense. They were words of falsehood, and yet they are said to be uttered *from the heart,* because, though they differed from the real sentiments of the heart and therefore were words of falsehood, yet they agreed with the malice and wickedness of the heart, and were the natural language of that; it was a *double heart,* Ps. xix. 2. Those who by the grace of God keep themselves free from these enormous crimes yet put themselves into the confession of sin because members of that nation which was generally thus corrupted. 4. They owned that that was not done which might have been done to reform the land and to amend what was amiss, v. 14. "*Judgment,* that should go forward, and bear down the opposition that is made to it, that should run its course like a river, like a mighty stream *is turned away backward,* a contrary course. The administration of justice has become but a cover to the greatest injustice. Judgment, that should check the proceedings of fraud and violence, is driven back, and so they go on triumphantly. *Justice stands afar off,* even from our courts of judicature which are so crowded with the patrons of oppression that *equity cannot enter,* cannot have admission into the court, cannot be heard, or at least will not be heeded. Equity enters not into the unrighteous decrees which they decree, ch. x. 1. *Truth is fallen in the street,* and there she may lie to be trampled upon by every foot of pride, and she has never a friend that will lend a hand to help her up; *yea, truth fails* in common conversation, and in dealings between man and man, so that one knows not whom to believe nor whom to trust." 5. They owned that there was a prevailing enmity in men's minds to those that were good: *He that does evil goes unpunished, but he that departs from evil makes himself a prey* to those beasts of prey that were before described. It is criminal enough with them for a man not to do as they do, and they treat him as an enemy who will not partake with them in their wickedness. *He that departs from evil is accounted mad;* so the margin reads. Sober singularity is branded as folly, and he is thought next door to a madman who swims against the stream that runs so strongly. 6. The

owned that all this could not but be very displeasing to the God of heaven. The evil was done in his sight. They knew very well, though they were not willing to acknowledge it, that the Lord saw it; though it was done secretly, and gilded over with specious pretences, yet it could not be concealed from his all-seeing eye. All the wickedness that is in the world is naked and open before the eyes of God; and, as he is of quicker eyes than not to see iniquity, so he is of purer eyes than to behold it with the least approbation or allowance. *He saw it, and it displeased him*, though it was among his own professing people that he saw it. It was evil in his eyes; he saw the sinfulness of all this sin, and that which was most offensive to him was *that there was no judgment, no reformation*; had he seen any signs of repentance, though the sin displeased him, he would soon have been reconciled to the sinners upon their returning from their evil way. Then the sin of a nation becomes national, and brings public judgments, when it is not restrained by public justice.

16 And he saw that *there was no man*, and wondered that *there was no intercessor*: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him. 17 For he put on righteousness as a breast-plate, and a helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak. 18 According to *their deeds*, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies; to the islands he will repay recompence. 19 So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him. 20 And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD. 21 As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.

How sin abounded we have read, to our great amazement, in the former part of the chapter; how grace does much more abound

we read in these verses. And, as sin took occasion from the commandment to become more exceedingly sinful, so grace took occasion from the transgression of the commandment to appear more exceedingly gracious. Observe,

1. Why God wrought salvation for this provoking people, notwithstanding their provocations. It was purely for his own name's sake; because there was nothing in them either to bring it about, or to induce him to bring it about for them, no merit to deserve it, no might to effect it, he would do it himself, would be exalted in his own strength, for his own glory.

1. He took notice of their weakness and wickedness: *He saw that there was no man* that would do any thing for the support of the bleeding cause of religion and virtue among them, not a man that would execute judgment (Jer. v. 1), that would bestir himself in a work of reformation; those that complained of the badness of the times had not zeal and courage enough to appear and act against it; there was a universal corruption of manners, and nothing done to stem the tide; most were wicked, and those that were not so were yet weak, and durst not attempt any thing in opposition to the wickedness of the wicked. *There was no intercessor*, either none to intercede with God, to stand in the gap by prayer to turn away his wrath (it would have pleased him to be thus met, and he wondered that he was not), or, rather, none to interpose for the support of justice and truth, which were trampled upon and run down (c. 14), no advocate to speak a good word for those who were made a prey of because they kept their integrity, c. 15. They complained that God did not appear for them (ch. lvi. 3); but God with much more reason complains that they did nothing for themselves, intimating how ready he would have been to do them good if he had found among them the least motion towards a reformation.

2. He engaged his own strength and righteousness for them. They shall be saved, notwithstanding all this; and, (1.) Because they have no strength of their own, nor any active men that will set to it in good earnest to redress the grievances either of their iniquities or of their calamities, therefore *his own arm shall bring salvation to him*, to his people, or to him whom he would raise up to be the deliverer, Christ, the power of God and arm of the Lord, that man of his right hand whom he made strong for himself. The work of reformation (that is the first and principal article of the salvation) shall be wrought by the immediate influences of the divine grace on men's consciences. Since magistrates and societies for reformation fail of doing their part, one will not do justice nor the other call for it, God will let them know that he can do it without them when his time shall come thus to prepare his peo-

ple for mercy, and then the work of deliverance shall be wrought by the immediate operations of the divine Providence on men's affections and affairs. When God stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, and brought his people out of Babylon, *not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts*, then his own arm, which is never shortened, brought salvation. (2.) Because they have no righteousness of their own to merit these favours, and to which God might have an eye in working for them, therefore *his own righteousness sustained him* and bore him out in it. Divine justice, which by their sins they had armed against them, through grace appears for them. Though they can expect no favour as due to them, yet he will be just to himself, to his own purpose and promise, and covenant with his people: he will, in righteousness, punish the enemies of his people; see Deut. ix. 5. *Not for thy righteousness, but for the wickedness of these nations* they are driven out. In our redemption by Christ, since we had no righteousness of our own to produce, on which God might proceed in favour to us, he brought in a righteousness by the merit and mediation of his own Son (it is called *the righteousness which is of God by faith*, Phil. iii. 9), and this righteousness sustained him, and bore him out in all his favours to us, notwithstanding our provocations. *He put on righteousness as a breast-plate*, securing his own honour, as a breast-plate does the vitals, in all his proceedings, by the justice and equity of them; and then he put a *helmet of salvation upon his head*; so sure is he to effect the salvation he intends that he takes salvation itself for his helmet, which therefore must needs be impenetrable, and in which he appears very illustrious, formidable in the eyes of his enemies and amiable in the eyes of his friends. When righteousness is his coat of arms, salvation is his crest. In allusion to this, among the pieces of a Christian's armour we find *the breast-plate of righteousness*, and for a helmet *the hope of salvation* (Eph. vi. 14—17; 1 Thess. v. 8), and it is called *the armour of God*, because he wore it first and so fitted it for us. (3.) Because they have no spirit or zeal to do any thing for themselves, God will *put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and clothe himself with zeal as a cloak*; he will make his justice upon the enemies of his church and people, and his jealousy for his own glory and the honour of religion and virtue among men, to appear evident and conspicuous in the eye of the world; and in these he will show himself great, as a man shows himself in his rich attire or in the distinguishing habit of his office. If men be not zealous against sin, God will, and will take vengeance on it for all the injury it has done to his honour and his people's welfare; and this was the business of Christ in the world, to take away sin and be revenged on it.

II. What the salvation is that shall be wrought out by the righteousness and strength of God himself.

1. There shall be a present temporal salvation wrought out for the Jews in Babylon or elsewhere in distress and captivity. This is promised (v. 18, 19) as a type of something further. When God's time shall come he will do his own work, though those fail to should forward it. It is here promised, That God will reckon with his enemies and will render to them according to their deeds to the enemies of his people abroad, that have oppressed them, to the enemies of justice and truth at home, that have oppressed them, for they also are God's enemies; and, when the day of vengeance shall have come, he will deal with both as they have deserved, *according to retribution* (so the word is), the law of retributions (Rev. xiii. 10), or *according to former retributions*; as he has rendered to his enemies formerly, accordingly he will now repay *fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies*; his fury shall not exceed the rule of justice, as men's fury commonly does. Even to the islands, that lie most remote, if they have appeared against him, *he will repay recompence; for his hand shall find out all his enemies* (Ps. xxi. 8), and his arrows reach them. Though God's people have behaved so ill that they do not deserve to be delivered, yet his enemies behave so much worse that they do deserve to be destroyed. (2.) That, whatever attempts the enemies of God's people may afterwards make upon them to disturb their peace, they shall be baffled and brought to nought: *When the enemy shall come in like a flood, like a high spring-tide, or a land-flood, which threaten to bear down all before them without control, then the Spirit of the Lord by some secret undiscerned power shall lift up a standard against him*, and so (as the margin reads it) *put him to fight*. He that has delivered will still deliver. When God's people are weak and helpless, and have no standard to lift up against the invading power, God will give a *banner to those that fear him* (Ps. lx. 4), will by his Spirit lift up a standard, which will draw multitudes together to appear on the church's behalf. Some read it, *He shall come* (the name of the Lord, and his glory before foreseen of the Messiah promised like a straight river, the Spirit of the Lord lifting him up for an ensign. Christ by the preaching of his gospel shall cover the earth with the knowledge of God as with the waters of a flood, the Spirit of the Lord setting up Christ as a standard to the Gentiles, ch. xi. 10. (3.) That all this should redound to the glory of God and the advancement of religion in the world (v. 19): *So shall they fear the name of the Lord and his glory* in all nations that lie eastward or westward. The deliverance of the Jews out of captivity, and the destruction brought on their oppressors, would awaken multitudes to enquire

concerning the God of Israel, and induce them to serve and worship him and enlist themselves under the standard which the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up. God's appearances for his church shall occasion the accession of many to it. This had its full accomplishment in gospel times, when many came from the east and west, to fill up the places of the children of the kingdom that were cast out, when there were set up eastern and western churches, Matt. viii. 11.

2. There shall be a more glorious salvation wrought out by the Messiah in the fulness of time, which salvation all the prophets, upon all occasions, had in view. We have here the two great promises relating to that salvation:—

(1.) That the Son of God shall come to us to be our Redeemer (v. 20): *Thy Redeemer shall come*; it is applied to Christ, Rom. xi. 26. *There shall come the deliverer*. The coming of Christ as the Redeemer is the summary of all the promises both of the Old and New Testament, and this was the redemption in Jerusalem which the believing Jews looked for, Luke ii. 38. Christ is our *Goël*, our next kinsman, that redeems both the person and the estate of the poor debtor. Observe, [1.] The place where this Redeemer shall appear: *He shall come to Zion*, for there, on that holy hill, the Lord would set him up as his King, Ps. ii. 6. In Zion the chief corner-stone was to be laid, 1 Pet. ii. 6. He came to his temple there, Mal. iii. 1. Here salvation was to be placed (ch. xlvii. 13), for thence the law was to go forth, ch. i. 3. Zion was a type of the gospel church, for which the Redeemer acts in all his appearances: *The Redeemer shall come for the sake of Zion*; so the LXX. read it. [2.] The persons that shall have the comfort of the Redeemer's coming, that shall then lift up their heads, knowing that their redemption draws nigh. He shall come to those that turn from ungodliness in Jacob, to those that are in Jacob, to the praying seed of Jacob, in answer to their prayers; yet not to all that are in Jacob, that are within the pale of the visible church, but to those only that turn from transgression, that repent, and reform, and forsake those sins which Christ came to redeem them from. The sinners in Zion will fare never the better for the Redeemer's coming to Zion if they go on still in their trespasses.

(2.) That the Spirit of God shall come to us to be our sanctifier, v. 21. In the Redeemer there was a new covenant made with us a covenant of promises; and this is the great and comprehensive promise of that covenant, that God will give and continue his word and Spirit to his church and people throughout all generations. God's giving the Spirit to those that ask him includes the giving of them all good things, Luke xi. 13; Matt. vii. 11. This covenant is here said to be made with them, that is, with those that turn

from transgression; for those that cease to do evil shall be taught to do well. But the promise is made to a single person—*My Spirit that is upon thee*, being directed either, [1.] To Christ as the head of the church, who received that he might give. The Spirit promised to the church was first upon him, and from his head that precious ointment descended to the skirts of his garments; and the word of the gospel was first put into his mouth; for *it began to be spoken by the Lord*. And all believers are his seed, in whom he prolongs his days, ch. liii. 10. Or, [2.] To the church; and so it is a promise of the continuance and perpetuity of the church in the world to the end of time, parallel to those promises that the throne and seed of Christ shall endure for ever, Ps. lxxxix. 29, 36; xxii. 30. Observe, *First*, How the church shall be kept up, in a succession, as the world of mankind is kept up, by the seed and the seed's seed. As one generation passes away another generation shall come. *Instead of the fathers shall be the children*. *Secondly*, How long it shall be kept up—*henceforth and for ever*, always, even unto the end of the world; for, the world being left to stand for the sake of the church, we may be sure that as long as it does stand Christ will have a church in it, though not always visible. *Thirdly*, By what means it shall be kept up; by the constant residence of the word and Spirit in it. 1. The Spirit that was upon Christ shall always continue in the hearts of the faithful; there shall be some in every age on whom he shall work, and in whom he shall dwell, and thus the Comforter shall abide with the church for ever, John xiv. 16. 2. The word of Christ shall always continue in the mouths of the faithful; there shall be some in every age who, *believing with the heart unto righteousness, shall with the tongue make confession unto salvation*. The word shall never depart out of the mouth of the church; for there shall still be a seed to speak Christ's holy language and profess his holy religion. Observe, The Spirit and the word go together, and by them the church is kept up. For the word in the mouths of our ministers, nay, the word in our own mouths, will not profit us, unless the Spirit work with the word, and give us an understanding. But the Spirit does his work by the word and in concurrence with it; and whatever is pretended to be a dictate of the Spirit must be tried by the scriptures. On these foundations the church is built, stands firmly, and shall stand for ever, Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.

CHAP. LX.

This whole chapter is all to the same purport, all in the same strain; it is a part of God's covenant with his church, which is spoken of in the last verse of the foregoing chapter, and the blessings here promised are the fruits of the word and Spirit there promised. The long continuance of the church, even unto the utmost ages of time, was there promised, and here the large extent of the church, even unto the utmost regions of the earth; and both these tend to the honour of the Redeemer. It is here promised, 1. That the church shall be enlightened and shone upon, ver. 1, & 2. 2. That it shall

be enlarged and great additions made to it, to join in the service of God, ver. 3—8. III. That the new converts shall be greatly serviceable to the church and to the interests of it, ver. 9—13. IV. That the church shall be in great honour and reputation among men, ver. 14—16. V. That it shall enjoy a profound peace and tranquillity, ver. 17, 18. VI. That, the members of it being all righteous, the glory and joy of it shall be everlasting, ver. 19—22. Now this has some reference to the peaceable and prosperous condition which the Jews were sometimes in after their return out of captivity into their own land; but it certainly looks further, and was to have its full accomplishment in the kingdom of the Messiah, the enlargement of that kingdom by the bringing in of the Gentiles into it, and the spiritual blessings in heavenly things by Christ Jesus with which it should be enriched, and all these earnest of eternal joy and glory.

ARISE, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. 2 For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. 3 And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. 4 Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. 5 Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. 6 The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall show forth the praises of the LORD. 7 All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory. 8 Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?

It is here promised that the gospel temple shall be very lightsome and very large.

1. It shall be very lightsome: *Thy light has come*. When the Jews returned out of captivity they had *light and gladness, and joy and honour*; they then were made to *know the Lord and to rejoice in his great goodness*; and upon both accounts their light came. When the Redeemer came to Zion he brought light with him, he himself came to be a light. Now observe, 1. What this light is, and whence it springs: *The Lord shall arise upon thee* (v. 2), *the glory of the Lord* (v. 1) *shall be seen upon thee*. God is the father and fountain of lights, and it is in his light that we shall see light. As

far as we have the knowledge of God in us, and the favour of God towards us, our light has come. When God appears to us, and we have the comfort of his favour, then *the glory of the Lord rises upon us* as the morning light; when he appears for us, and we have the credit of his favour, when he shows us some token for good and proclaims his favour to us, then his glory is seen upon us as it was upon Israel in the *pillar of cloud and fire*. When Christ arose as the sun of righteousness, and in him *the day-spring from on high visited us*, then *the glory of the Lord* was seen upon us, the glory as of the *first-begotten of the Father*. 2. What a foil there shall be to this light: *Darkness shall cover the earth*; but, though it be gross darkness, darkness that might be felt, like that of Egypt, that shall overspread the people, yet the church, like Goshen, shall have light at the same time. When the case of the nations that have not the gospel shall be very melancholy, those dark corners of the earth being full of the *habitations of cruelty* to poor souls, the state of the church shall be very pleasant. 3. What is the duty which this rising of this light calls for: “*Arise, shine not only receive this light, and*” (as the margin reads it) “*be enlightened by it, but reflect this light; arise and shine with rays borrowed from it.*” The children of light ought to shine as lights in the world. If God’s glory be seen upon us to our honour, we ought not only with our lips, but in our lives, to return the praise of it to his honour. Matt. v. 16; Phil. ii. 15.

II. It shall be very large. When the Jews were settled again in their own land after their captivity, many of the people of the land joined themselves to them; but it does not appear that there ever was any such numerous accession to them as would answer the fulness of this prophecy; and therefore we must conclude that this looks further, to the bringing of the Gentiles into the gospel church, not their flocking to one particular place, though under that type it is here described. There is no place now that is the centre of the church’s unity; but the promise respects their flocking to Christ, and coming by faith, and hope, and holy love into that society which is incorporated by the charter of his gospel, and of the unity of which he only is the centre—that family which is named from him, Eph. iii. 15. The gospel church is expressly called *Zion and Jerusalem*, and under that notion all believers are said to come to it (Heb. xii. 22), *You have come unto Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem*, which serves for a key to this prophecy, Eph. ii. 19. Observe,

1. What shall invite such multitudes to the church: “*They shall come to thy light, and to the brightness of thy rising, v. 3.*” They shall be allured to join themselves to thee,” (1.) “*By the light that shines upon*

thee," the light of the glorious gospel, which the churches hold forth, in consequence of which they are called *golden candlesticks*. This light which discovers so much of God and his good will to man, by which life and immortality are brought to light, this shall invite all the serious well-affected part of mankind to come and join themselves to the church, that they may have the benefit of this light to inform them concerning truth and duty. (2.) "By the light with which thou shinest." The purity and love of the primitive Christians, their heavenly-mindedness, contempt of the world, and patient sufferings, were the brightness of the church's rising, which drew many into it. The beauty of holiness was the powerful attractive by which Christ had a willing people brought to him in the day of his power, Ps. cx. 3.

2. What multitudes shall come to the church. Great numbers *shall come, Gentiles (or nations) of those that are saved*, as it is expressed with allusion to this, Rev. xxi. 24. *Nations shall be discipled* (Matt. xxviii. 19), and even kings, men of figure, power, and influence, shall be *added to the church*. They come from all parts (v. 4): *Lift up thy eyes round about, and see them coming, devout men out of every nation under heaven*, Acts ii. 5. See how *white the fields are already to the harvest*, John iv. 35. See them coming in a body, as one man, and with one consent: *They gather themselves together, that they may strengthen one another's hands, and encourage one another. Come, and let us go*, ch. ii. 3. "They come from the remotest parts: *They come to thee from far, having heard the report of thee, as the queen of Sheba, or seen thy star in the east*, as the wise men, and they will not be discouraged by the length of the journey from coming to thee. There shall come some of both sexes. Sons and daughters shall come in the most dutiful manner, as thy sons and thy daughters, resolved to be of thy family, to submit to the laws of thy family and put themselves under the tuition of it. They shall come *to be nursed at thy side*, to have their education with thee from their cradle." The church's children must be nursed at her side, not sent out to be nursed among strangers; there, where alone the unadulterated milk of the word is to be had, must the church's new-born babes be nursed, *that they may grow thereby*, 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2. Those that would enjoy the dignities and privileges of Christ's family must submit to the discipline of it.

3. What they shall bring with them and what advantage shall accrue to the church by their accession to it. Those that are brought into the church by the grace of God will be sure to bring all they are worth in with them, which with themselves they will devote to the honour and service of God and do good with in their places. (1.) The merchants shall write *holiness to the Lord* upon

their merchandise and their hire, as ch. xxiii.

18. "The abundance of the sea, either the wealth that is fetched out of the sea (the fish, the pearls) or that which is imported by sea, shall all be converted to thee and to thy use." The wealth of the rich merchants shall be laid out in works of piety and charity. (2.) The mighty men of the nations shall employ their might in the service of the church: "The forces, or troops, of the Gentiles shall come unto thee, to guard thy coasts, strengthen thy interests, and, if occasion be, to fight thy battles." The forces of the Gentiles had often been against the church, but now they shall be for it; for as God, when he pleases, can, and, when we please him, will, make even our enemies to be at peace with us (Prov. xvi. 7), so, when Christ overcomes the strong man armed, he divides his spoils, and makes that to serve his interests which had been used against them, Luke xi. 22. (3.) The wealth imported by land-carriage, as well as that by sea, shall be made use of in the service of God and the church (v. 6): *The camels and dromedaries that bring gold and incense* (gold to make the golden altar of and incense and sweet perfumes to burn upon it), *those of Midian and Sheba*, shall bring the richest commodities of their country, not to trade with, but to honour God with, and not in small quantities, but camel-loads of them. This was in part fulfilled when the *wise men of the east* (perhaps some of the countries here mentioned), drawn by the brightness of the star, came to Christ, and presented to him treasures of *gold, frankincense, and myrrh*, Matt. ii. 11. (4.) Great numbers of sacrifices shall be brought to God's altar, acceptable sacrifices, and, though brought by Gentiles, they shall find acceptance, v. 7. *Kedar* was famous for flocks, and probably the fattest rams were those of *Nebaioth*; these shall come up with acceptance on God's altar. God must be served and honoured with what we have, according as he has blessed us, and with the best we have. This was fulfilled when by the decree of Darius the governors beyond the rivers (perhaps of some of these countries) were ordered to furnish the temple at Jerusalem with *bullocks, rams, and lambs, for the burnt-offering of the God of heaven*, Ezra vi. 9. It had a further accomplishment, and we trust will have, in the bringing in of the fulness of the Gentiles to the church, which is called the *sacrificing or offering up of the Gentiles* unto God, Rom. xv. 16. The flocks and rams are precious souls; for they are said to minister to the church, and to come up as living sacrifices, presenting themselves to God by a *reasonable service on his altar*, Rom. xii. 1.

4. How God shall be honoured by the increase of the church and the accession of such numbers to it. (1.) They shall intend the honour of God's name in it. When they bring their gold and incense it shall not be to show the riches of their country, nor to

gain applause to themselves for piety and devotion, but to show forth the praises of the Lord, v. 6. Our greatest services and gifts to the church are not acceptable further than we have an eye to the glory of God in them. And this must be our business in our attendance on public ordinances, to give unto the Lord the glory due to his name; for therefore, as these here, we are called out of darkness into light, that we should show forth the praises of him that called us, 1 Pet. ii. 9. (2.) God will advance the honour of his own name by it; so he has said (v. 7): *I will glorify the house of my glory.* The church is the house of God's glory, where he manifests his glory to his people and receives that homage by which they do honour to him. And it is for the glory of this house, and of him that keeps house there, both that the Gentiles shall bring their offerings to it and that they shall be accepted therein.

5. How the church shall herself be affected with this increase of her numbers, v. 5. (1.) She shall be in a transport of joy upon this account: "*Thou shalt see and flow together*" (or flow to and fro), "as in a pleasing agitation about it, surprised at it, but extremely glad of it." (2.) There shall be a mixture of fear with this joy: "*Thy heart shall fear*, doubting whether it be lawful to go in to the uncircumcised and eat with them." Peter was so impressed with this fear that he needed a vision and voice from heaven to help him over it, Acts x. 28. But, (3.) "When this fear is conquered thy heart shall be enlarged in holy love, so enlarged that thou shalt have room in it for all the Gentile converts; thou shalt not have such a narrow soul as thou hast had nor affections so confined within the Jewish pale." When God intends the beauty and prosperity of his church he gives this largeness of heart and an extensive charity. (4.) These converts flocking to the church shall be greatly admired (v. 8): *Who are these that fly as a cloud?* Observe, [1.] How the conversion of souls is here described. It is flying to Christ and to his church, for thither we are directed; it is flying like a cloud, though in great multitudes, so as to overspread the heavens, yet with great unanimity, all as one cloud. They shall come with speed, as a cloud flying on the wings of the wind, and come openly, and in the view of all, *their very enemies beholding them* (Rev. xi. 12), and yet not able to hinder them. They shall fly as doves to their windows, in great flights, many together; they fly on the wings of the harmless dove, which flies low, denoting their innocence and humility. They fly to Christ, to the church, to the word and ordinances, as doves, by instinct, to their own windows, to their own home; thither they fly for refuge and shelter when they are pursued by the birds of prey, and thither they fly for rest when they have been wandering and are weary, as Noah's dove to the ark.

[2.] How the conversion of souls is here admired. It is spoken of with wonder and pleasure: *Who are these?* We have reason to wonder that so many flock to Christ, when we see them all together we shall wonder whence they all came. And we have reason to admire with pleasure and affection those that do flock to him: *Who are these?* How excellent, how amiable are they! What a pleasant sight is it to see poor souls hastening to Christ, with a full resolution to abide with him!

9 Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee. 10 And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee. 11 Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the force of the Gentiles, and that their king may be brought. 12 For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted. 13 The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box-together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious. 14 The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet, and they shall call thee, The city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

The promises made to the church in the foregoing verses are here repeated, ratified and enlarged upon, designed still for the comfort and encouragement of the Jews after their return out of captivity, but certainly looking further, to the enlargement and advancement of the gospel church and the abundance of spiritual blessings with which it shall be enriched.

I. God will be very gracious and propitious to them. We must begin with the promise, because thence all the rest take rise. The sanctuary that was desolate begun to be repaired when God causes his face to shine upon it, Dan. ix. 17. All the favour

that the people of God find with men is owing to the light of God's countenance and his favour to them (v. 10): "All shall now make court to thee, *for in my wrath I smote thee, while thou wast in captivity*" (and the sufferings of the church, especially by its corruptions, decays, and divisions, against which these promises will be its relief, are sad tokens of God's displeasure), "but now in my favour have I had mercy on thee, and therefore have all this mercy in store for thee."

II. Many shall be brought into the church, even from far countries (v. 9): *Surely the isles shall wait for me*, shall welcome the gospel, and shall attend God with their praises for it and their ready subjection to it. *The ships of Tarshish*, transport-ships, shall lie ready to carry members from far distant regions to the church, or (which is equivalent) to carry the ministers of the church to remote parts, to preach the gospel and to bring in souls to join themselves to the Lord. Observe, 1. Who are brought—*thy sons*, that is, such as are designed to be so, *those children of God that are scattered abroad*, John xi. 52. 2. What they shall bring with them. They live at such a distance that they cannot bring their flocks and their rams; but, like those who lived remote from Jerusalem (who, when they came up to worship at the feast, because they could not bring their tithes in kind, turned them into money), they shall *bring their silver and gold with them*. Note, When we give up ourselves to God we must with ourselves give up all we have to him. If we honour him with our spirits, we shall honour him with our substance. 3. To whom they shall devote and dedicate themselves and all they are worth—to the name of the Lord thy God, to God as the Lord of all and the church's God and King, even to the *Holy One of Israel* (whom Israel worships as a Holy One, in the beauty of holiness), *because he has glorified thee*. Note, The honour God puts upon his church and people should not only engage us to honour them, but invite us to join ourselves to them. *We will go with you, for God is with you*, Zech. viii. 23.

III. Those that come into the church shall be welcome; for so spacious is the holy city that though, *Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, yet still there is room*. "Therefore thy gates shall be open continually" (v. 11), not only because thou hast no reason to fear thy enemies, but because thou hast reason to expect thy friends." It is usual with us to leave our doors open, or leave some one ready to open them, all night, if we look for a child or a guest to come in late. Note, Christ is always ready to entertain those that come to him, is never out of the way, nor can they ever come unseasonably; the gate of mercy is always open, night and day, or shall soon be opened to those that knock. Ministers, the door-keepers, must be always

ready to admit those that offer themselves to the Lord. God not only keeps a good house in his church, but he keeps open house, that at any time, by the preaching of the word, *in season and out of season, the forces of the Gentiles, and the kings or commanders of those forces, may be brought into the church*. *Lift up your heads, O you gates!* and let such welcome guests as these come in.

IV. All that are about the church shall be made in some way or other serviceable to it. Though dominion is far from being founded in men's grace, it is founded in God's; and he that made the inferior creatures useful to man will make the nations of men useful to the church. The earth helped the woman. *All things are for your sakes*. So here (v. 10), "Even the sons of strangers, that have neither knowledge of thee nor kindness for thee, that have always been *aliens to the commonwealth of Israel*, even they shall build up thy wall, and their kings shall in that and other things minister unto thee and not think it any disparagement to them to do so." This was fulfilled when the king of Persia, and the governors of the provinces by his order, were aiding and assisting Nehemiah in building the wall about Jerusalem. Rather than Jerusalem's walls shall lie still in ruins, the sons of the stranger shall be raised up to build them. Even those that do not belong to the church may be a protection to it. And the greatest of men should not think it below them to minister to the church, but rejoice that they are in a capacity, and have a heart, to do it any service. Nay, it is the duty of all to do what they can in their places to advance the interests of God's kingdom among men; it is at their peril if they do not; for (v. 12), *The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish*; not that they must perish by the sword or by human anathemas, or as if this gave any countenance to the using of external force for the propagating of the gospel, or as if men might be compelled by penalties and punishments to come into the church; by no means. But those who will not by faith submit to Jesus Christ, the King of the church, and serve him, shall perish eternally, Ps. ii. 12. Those that will not be subject to Christ's golden sceptre, to the government of his word and Spirit, that will not be brought under, or kept in, by the discipline of his family, shall be broken in pieces by his iron rod. *Bring them forth and slay them before me*, Luke xix. 27. Nations of such shall be utterly and eternally wasted, when Christ shall come to take vengeance on those that *obey not his gospel*, 2 Thess. i. 8.

V. There shall be abundance of beauty added to the ordinances of divine worship (v. 13): *The glory of Lebanon*, the strong and stately cedars that grow there, shall come unto thee, as of old to Solomon, when he built the temple (2 Chron. ii. 16), and with them shall be brought other timber, proper

for the carved work thereof, which the enemy had broken down, Ps. lxxiv. 5, 6. The temple, the *place of God's sanctuary*, shall be not only rebuilt, but beautified. It is the *place of his feet*, where he rests and resides, Ezek. xliii. 7. The ark is called his *foot-stool*, because it was under the mercy-seat, Ps. cxxxii. 7. This he will make glorious in the eyes of his people and of all their neighbours. *The glory of the latter house*, to which this refers, though in many instances inferior, was yet really *greater than the glory of the former*, because Christ came to that temple, Mal. iii. 1. It was likewise *adorned with goodly stones and gifts* (Luke xxi. 5), to which this promise may have some reference; yet so slightly did Christ speak of them there that we must suppose it to have its full accomplishment in the beauties of holiness, and the graces and comforts of the Spirit, with which gospel ordinances are adorned and enriched.

VI. The church shall appear truly great and honourable, v. 14. The people of the Jews, after their return out of captivity, by degrees became more considerable, and made a better figure than one would have expected, after they had been so much reduced, and than any of the other nations recovered that had been in like manner humbled by the Chaldeans. It is probable that many of those who had oppressed them in Babylon, when they were themselves driven out by the Persians, made their court to the Jews for shelter and supply and were willing to scrape acquaintance with them. This prophecy is further fulfilled when those that have been enemies to the church are wrought upon by the grace of God to see their error, and come, and join themselves to it: "*The sons of those that afflicted thee*, if not they themselves, yet their children, shall crouch to thee, shall beg pardon for their folly and beg an interest in thy favour and admission into thy family," 1 Sam. ii. 36. A promise like this is made to the church of Philadelphia, Rev. iii. 9. And it is intended to be, 1. A mortification to the proud oppressors of the church, that have afflicted her, and despised her, and taken a pleasure in doing so; they shall be brought down; their spirits shall be broken, and their condition shall be so mean and miserable that they shall be glad to be obliged to those whom they have most studied to disoblige. Note, Sooner or later God will pour contempt upon those that put contempt upon his people. 2. An exaltation to the poor oppressed ones of the church; and this is the honour that shall be done to them, they shall have an opportunity of doing good to those who have done evil to them and saving those alive who have afflicted and despised them. It is a pleasure to a good man, and he accounts it an honour, to show mercy to those with whom he has found no mercy. Yet this is not all. "They shall not only be-

come suppliants to thee for their own interest, but they shall give honour to thee: *They shall call thee, The city of the Lord*; they shall at length be convinced that thou art a favourite of heaven, and the particular care of the divine providence." That city is truly great and honourable, it is strong, it is rich, it is safe, it is beautiful, it is the most desirable place that can be to live in, which is *the city of the Lord*, which he owns, which he dwells, in which religion is uppermost. Such a one is Zion; it is the place which God has chosen to put his name there: it is *the Zion of the Holy One of Israel*, therefore, we may be sure, it is a holy city, else the Holy One of Israel would never be called the patron of it.

15 Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through *thee*, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. 16 Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings: and thou shalt know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. 17 For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness. 18 Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. 19 The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. 20 Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. 21 Thy people also *shall be* all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. 22 A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the LORD will hasten it in his time.

The happy and glorious state of the church is here further foretold, referring principally and ultimately to the Christian church and the spiritual peace of that, but under the type of that little gleam of outward peace which the Jews sometimes en-

joyed after their return out of captivity. Thus she here spoken of,

I. As compared with what it had been. This made her peace and honour the more pleasant, that her condition had been much otherwise.

1. She had been despised, but now she should be honoured, v. 15, 16. Jerusalem had been forsaken and hated, abandoned by her friends, abhorred by her enemies; no man went through that desolate city, but declined it as a rueful spectacle; it was an *astonishment and a hissing*. But now it shall be made an eternal excellency, being reformed from idolatry and having recovered the tokens of God's favour, and it shall be *the joy of good people for many generations*. Yet considering how short Jerusalem's excellency was, and how short it came of the vast compass of this promise, we must look for the full accomplishment of it in the perpetual excellencies of the gospel church, far exceeding those of the Old-Testament church, and the glorious privileges and advantages of the Christian religion, which are indeed the joy of many generations. Two things are here spoken of as her excellency and joy, in opposition to her having been forsaken and hated:—(1.) She shall find herself countenanced by her neighbours. The nations, and their kings, that are brought to embrace Christianity, shall lay themselves out for the good of the church, and maintain its interests with the tenderness and affection that the nurse shows to the child at her breast (v. 16): "*Thou shalt suck the milk of the Gentiles, not suck their blood* (that is not the spirit of the gospel); *thou shalt suck the breast of kings*, who shall be to thee as nursing fathers." (2.) She shall find herself countenanced by her God: "*Thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer*, shalt know it by experience; for such a salvation, such a redemption, shall be wrought out for thee as plainly discovers itself to be the work of the Lord, the work of a mighty one, for it is a great salvation, of the *Mighty One of Jacob*, for it secures the welfare of all those that are Israelites indeed." They before knew the Lord to be their God; now they know him to be their Saviour, their Redeemer. Their Holy One now appears their Mighty One.

2. She had been impoverished, but now she shall be enriched, and every thing shall be changed for the better with her, v. 17. When those who were raised out of the dust are set among princes, instead of brass money in their purses they have gold, and instead of iron vessels in their houses they have silver ones, and other improvements agreeable: so much shall the spiritual glory of the New-Testament church exceed the external pomp and splendour of the Jewish economy, which had no glory in comparison with that which quite excels it, 2 Cor. iii. 10. When we had baptism in the room of

circumcision, the Lord's supper in the room of the passover, and a gospel ministry in the room of a Levitical priesthood, we had gold instead of brass. Sin turned gold into brass when Rehoboam made brazen shields instead of the golden ones he had pawned; but God's favour, when that returns, will turn brass again into gold.

3. She had been oppressed by her own princes, which was sadly complained of, not only as her sin, but as her misery (ch. lix. 14); but now all the grievances of that kind shall be redressed (v. 17): "*I will make thy officers peace*; men of peace shall be made officers, and shall be indeed justices, not patrons of injustice, and justices of peace, not instruments of trouble and vexation. They shall *be peace*, that is, they shall sincerely seek thy welfare and by their means thou shalt enjoy good." They shall be *peace*, for they shall be righteousness; and *then* the peace is as a river, when the righteousness is as the waves of the sea. Even *extractors*, whose business it is to demand the public tribute, though they be exact, must not be exacting, but must be just to the subject as well as to the prince, and, according to the instructions John Baptist gave to the publicans, must *exact no more than is appointed them*, Luke iii. 13.

4. She had been insulted by her neighbours, invaded, spoiled, and plundered; but now it shall be so no more (v. 18): "*Violence shall no more be heard in thy land*; neither the threats and triumphs of those that do violence nor the outcries and complaints of those that suffer violence shall again be heard, but every man shall peaceably enjoy his own. There shall be no *wasting nor destruction*, either of persons or possessions, any where *within thy borders*; but *thy walls shall be called salvation* (they shall be safe, and means of safety to thee) *and thy gates shall be praise*, praise to thee (every one shall commend thee for the good condition they are kept in), and praise to thy God, *who strengthens the bars of thy gates*," Ps. cxvii. 13. When God's salvation is upon the walls it is fit that his praises should be in the gates, the places of concourse.

II. As completed in what it shall be. It should seem that in the close of this chapter we are directed to look further yet, as far forward as to the glory and happiness of heaven, under the type and figure of the flourishing state of the church on earth, which yet was never such as to come any thing near to what is here foretold; and several of the images and expressions here made use of we find in the description of the *new Jerusalem*, Rev. xxi. 23; xxii. 5. As the prophets sometimes insensibly pass from the blessings of the Jewish church to the spiritual blessings of the Christian church, which are eternal, so sometimes they rise from the church militant to the church triumphant, where, and where only, all the

promised peace, and joy, and honour will be in perfection. 1. God shall be all in all in the happiness here promised; so he is always to true believers (v. 19): *The sun and the moon shall be no more thy light*. God's people, when they enjoy his favour, and walk in the light of his countenance, make little account of sun and moon, and the other lights of this world, but could walk comfortably in the light of the Lord though they should withdraw their shining. In heaven there shall be no occasion for sun or moon, for it is the inheritance of the saints in light, such light as will swallow up the light of the sun as easily as the sun does that of a candle. "Idolaters worshipped the sun and moon (which some have thought the most ancient and plausible idolatry); but these shall be no more thy light, shall no more be idolized, but the Lord shall be to thee a constant light, both day and night, in the night of adversity as well as in the day of prosperity." Those that make God their only light shall have him their all-sufficient light, *their sun and shield*. *Thy God shall be thy glory*. Note, God is the glory of those whose God he is and will be so to eternity. It is their glory that they have him for their God, and they glory in it; it is to them instead of beauty. God's people are, upon this account, an honourable people, that they have an interest in God as theirs in covenant. 2. The happiness here promised shall know no change, period, or alloy (v. 20): "*Thy sun shall no more go down*, but it shall be eternal day, eternal sunshine, with thee; that shall not be thy sun which is sometimes eclipsed, often clouded, and though it shine ever so bright, ever so warm, will certainly set and leave thee in the dark, in the cold, in a few hours; but he shall be a sun, a fountain of light to thee, who is himself the *Father of all lights*, with whom there is no *variableness*, nor *shadow of turning*," James 1. 17. We read of the sun's standing still once, and not hasting to go down for the space of a day, and it was a glorious day, never was the like; but what was that to the day that shall never have a night? Or, if it had, it should be a light night; for *neither shall thy moon withdraw itself*; it shall never wane, shall never change, but be always at the full. The comforts and joys that are in heaven, the glories provided for the soul, as the light of the sun, and those prepared for the glorified body too, as the light of the moon, shall never know the least cessation or interruption; how should they when the *Lord shall himself be thy everlasting light*—a light which never wastes nor can ever be extinguished? *And the days of thy mourning shall be ended*, so as never to return; for *all tears shall be wiped away*, and the fountains of them, sin and affliction, dried up, so that *sorrow and sighing shall flee away for ever*. 3. Those that are entitled to this happiness, being duly prepared and qualified for

it, shall never be put out of the possession of it (v. 21): *Thy people*, that shall inhabit this New Jerusalem, *shall all be righteous* all justified by the righteousness of the Messiah, all sanctified by his Spirit; all that people, that Jerusalem, must be righteous, must have that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. They are all righteous, for we know that the *unrighteous shall not inherit kingdom of God*. There are no people on earth that are all righteous; there is a mixture of some bad in the best societies on this side heaven; but there are no mixtures there. They shall be *all righteous*, that is, they shall be entirely righteous; as there shall be none corrupt among them, so there shall be no corruption in them; the *spirits of just men* shall there be made perfect. And they shall be *all righteous* together who shall replenish the New Jerusalem; it is called the *congregation of the righteous*, Ps. i. 5. And, because they are *all righteous*, therefore they shall inherit the land for ever, for nothing but sin can turn them out of it. The perfection of the saints' holiness secures the perpetuity of their happiness. 4. The glory of the church shall redound to the honour of the church's God: "They shall appear to be the *branch of my planting*, the *work of my hands*, and will own them as such." It was by the grace of God that they were designed to this happiness; they are the *branch of his planting*, or of his plantations; he broke them from the wild olive and grafted them into the good olive, transplanted them out of the field, when they were as tender branches into his nursery, that, being now planted in his garden on earth, they might shortly be removed to his *paradise in heaven*. It was by his grace likewise that they were prepared and fitted for this happiness; they are the *work of his hands* (Eph. ii. 10), and wrought to the self-same thing, 2 Cor. v. 2. It is a work of time, and, when it shall be finished, will appear a work of wonder; and God will be glorified, who began it, and carried it on; for the Lord Jesus will then be *admired in all those that believe*. God will glorify himself in glorifying his chosen. They will appear the more glorious, and God will be the more glorified in them, if we compare what they are with what they were; the happiness they have arrived at with the smallness of their beginnings (v. 22): "*A little one shall become a thousand and a small one a strong nation*. The captives that returned out of Babylon strangely multiplied and became a strong nation. The Christian church was a little one, a very small one at first—the number of their names was only about 120; yet it became a thousand. The stone cut out of the mountain without hands swelled so as to fill the earth. The triumphant church, and every glorified saint, will be a thousand out of a little one, a strong nation out of a small one. The grace and peace of the saints were at first like a grain

of mustard-seed, but they increase and multiply, and make a little one to become a thousand, the weak to be as David. When they come to heaven, and look back upon the smallness of their beginning, they will wonder how they got thither. And so wonderful is all this promise that it needed the attestation with which it is closed: *I the Lord will hasten it in his time*—all that is here said relating to the Jewish and Christian church, to the militant and triumphant church, and to every particular believer.

(1.) It may seem too difficult to be brought about, and therefore may be despaired of; but the God of almighty power has undertaken it: "*I the Lord will do it, who can do it, and who have determined to do it.*" It will be done by him whose power is irresistible and his purposes unalterable. (2.) It may seem to be delayed and put off so long that we are out of hopes of it; but, as the Lord will do it, so he will *hasten it*, will do it with all convenient speed; though much time may pass before it is done, no time shall be lost; he will *hasten it in its time*, in the proper time, in the season wherein it will be beautiful; he will do it in the time appointed by his wisdom, though not in the time prescribed by our folly. And this is really hastening it; for, though it seem to tarry, it does not tarry if it come in God's time, for we are sure that that is the best time, which he that believes will patiently wait for.

CHAP. LXI.

In this chapter, I. We are sure to find the grace of Christ, promised by himself to a lost world in the everlasting gospel, under the type and figure of Isaiah's province, which was to foretell the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon, ver. 1—3. II. We think we find the glories of the church of Christ, its spiritual glories, described under the type and figure of the Jews' prosperity after their return out of their captivity. 1. It is promised that the decays of the church shall be repaired, ver. 4. 2. That those from without shall be made accessible to the church, ver. 5. 3. That the church shall be a royal priesthood, maintained by the relics of the Gentiles, ver. 6. 4. That she shall have honour and joy in lieu of all her shame and sorrow, ver. 7. 5. That her affairs shall prosper, ver. 8. 6. That posterity shall enjoy these blessings, ver. 9. 7. That righteousness and salvation shall be the eternal matter of the church's rejoicing and thanksgiving, ver. 10, 11. If the Jewish church was ever thus blessed, much more shall the Christian church be so, and all that belong to it.

THE Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *them that are bound*; 2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; 3 To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees

of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.

He that is the best expositor of scripture has no doubt given us the best exposition of these verses, even our Lord Jesus himself, who read this in the synagogue at Nazareth (perhaps it was the lesson for the day) and applied it entirely to himself, saying, *This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears* (Luke iv. 17, 18, 21); and the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth, in the opening of this text, were admired by all that heard them. As Isaiah was authorized and directed to proclaim liberty to the Jews in Babylon, so was Christ, God's messenger, to publish a more joyful jubilee to a lost world. And here we are told,

I. How he was fitted and qualified for this work: *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me*, v. 1. The prophets had the Spirit of God moving them at times, both instructing them what to say and exciting them to say it. Christ had the Spirit always resting on him without measure; but to the same intent that the prophets had, as a Spirit of counsel and a Spirit of courage, ch. xi. 1—3. When he entered upon the execution of his prophetic office the Spirit, as a dove, *descended upon him*, Matt. iii. 16. This Spirit which was upon him he communicated to those whom he sent to proclaim the same glad tidings, saying to them, when he gave them their commission, *Receive you the Holy Ghost*, thereby ratifying it.

II. How he was appointed and ordained to it: *The Spirit of God is upon me, because the Lord God has anointed me*. What service God called him to he furnished him for; *therefore* he gave him his Spirit, because he had by a sacred and solemn unction set him apart to this great office, as kings and priests were of old destined to their offices by anointing. Hence the Redeemer was called the *Messiah*, the *Christ*, because he was *anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows*. *He has sent me*; our Lord Jesus did not go unsent; he had a commission from him that is the fountain of power; *the Father sent him and gave him commandment*. This is a great satisfaction to us, that, whatever Christ said, he had a warrant from heaven for; his doctrine was not his, but his that sent him.

III. What the work was to which he was appointed and ordained.

1. He was to be a preacher, was to execute the office of a prophet. So well pleased was he with the good-will God showed towards men through him that he would himself be the preacher of it, that an honour might thereby be put upon the ministry of the gospel and the faith of the saints might be confirmed and encouraged. He must *preach good tidings* (so *gospel* signifies) *to the meek*, to the penitent, and humble, and poor in spirit; to them the tidings of a Redeemer

will be indeed good tidings, pure gospel, faithful sayings, and worthy of all acceptance. The poor are commonly best disposed to receive the gospel (Jam. ii. 5), and it is likely to profit us when it is received with meekness, as it ought to be; to such Christ preached good tidings when he said, *Blessed are the meek.*

2. He was to be a healer. He was sent to *bind up the broken-hearted*, as pained limbs are rolled to give them ease, as broken bones and bleeding wounds are bound up, that they may knit and close again. Those whose hearts are broken for sin, who are truly humbled under the sense of guilt and dread of wrath, are furnished in the gospel of Christ with that which will make them easy and silence their fears. Those only who have experienced the pains of a penitential contrition may expect the pleasure of divine cordials and consolations.

3. He was to be a deliverer. He was sent as a prophet to preach, as a priest to heal, and as a king to issue out proclamations and those of two kinds:—(1.) Proclamations of peace to his friends: He shall *proclaim liberty to the captives* (as Cyrus did to the Jews in captivity) and the *opening of the prison to those that were bound*. Whereas, by the guilt of sin, we are bound over to the justice of God, are his lawful captives, sold for sin till payment be made of that great debt, Christ lets us know that he has made satisfaction to divine justice for that debt, that his satisfaction is accepted, and if we will plead that, and depend upon it, and make over ourselves and all we have to him, in a grateful sense of the kindness he has done us, we may by faith sue out our pardon and take the comfort of it; there is, and shall be, *no condemnation to us*. And whereas, by the dominion of sin in us, we are bound under the power of Satan, sold under sin, Christ lets us know that he has conquered Satan, has *destroyed him that had the power of death and his works*, and provided for us grace sufficient to enable us to shake off the yoke of sin and to loose ourselves from those *bands of our neck*. The Son is ready by his Spirit to *make us free*; and then we shall be *free indeed*, not only discharged from the miseries of captivity, but advanced to all the immunities and dignities of citizens. This is the gospel-proclamation, and it is like the blowing of the jubilee-trumpet, which proclaimed the great year of release (Lev. xxv. 9, 40), in allusion to which it is here called the *acceptable year of the Lord*, the time of our acceptance with God, which is the origin of our liberties; or it is called the *year of the Lord* because it publishes his free grace, to his own glory, and an *acceptable year* because it brings glad tidings to us, and what cannot but be very acceptable to those who know the capacities and necessities of their own souls. (2.) Proclamations of war against

his enemies. Christ proclaims the *day of vengeance of our God*, the vengeance he takes, [1.] On sin and Satan, death and hell, and all the powers of darkness, that were to be destroyed in order to our deliverance; these Christ triumphed over in his cross, having spoiled and weakened them, shamed them, and *made a show of them openly*, therein taking vengeance on them for all the injury they had done both to God and man, Col. ii. 15. [2.] On those of the children of men that stand it out against those fair offers. They shall not only be left, as they deserve, in their captivity, but be dealt with as enemies; we have the gospel summed up, Mark xvi. 16, where that part of it, *He that believes shall be saved*, proclaims the *acceptable year of the Lord* to those that will accept of it; but the other part, *He that believes not shall be damned*, proclaims the *day of vengeance of our God*, that vengeance which he will take on those that *obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ*, 2 Thess. i. 8.

4. He was to be a comforter, and so he is as preacher, healer, and deliverer; he is sent to *comfort all who mourn*, and who, mourning, seek to him, and not to the world, for comfort. Christ not only provides comfort for them, and proclaims it, but he applies it to them; he does by his Spirit comfort them. There is enough in him to comfort all who mourn, whatever their sore or sorrow is; but this comfort is sure to those who *mourn in Zion*, who sorrow after a godly sort according to God, for his residence is in Zion,—who *mourn because of Zion's calamities and desolations*, and mingle their tears by a holy sympathy with those of a God's suffering people, though they themselves are not in trouble; such tears God has a *bottle for* (Ps. lvi. 8), such mourning he has comfort in store for. As *blessings out of Zion* are spiritual blessings, so *mourners in Zion* are holy mourners, such as carry their sorrows to the throne of grace (for in Zion was the mercy-seat) and put them out as Hannah did before the Lord. To such as these Christ has appointed by his gospel, and will give by his Spirit (v. 3) those consolations which will not only support them under their sorrows, but turn them into songs of praise. He will give them, (1.) *Beauty for ashes*. Whereas they lay in ashes, as was usual in times of great mourning, they shall not only be raised out of their dust, but made to look pleasant. Note, The holy cheerfulness of Christians is their beauty and a great ornament to their profession. Here is an elegant paronomasia in the original: He will give them *phoebeauty*, for *epher*—ashes; he will turn the sorrow into joy as quickly and as easily as you can transpose a letter; for he speaks and it is done. (2.) *The oil of joy*, which *makes the face to shine*, instead of mourning, which *disfigures the countenance* and makes

it unlovely. Thus *oil of joy* the saints have from that *oil of gladness* with which Christ himself was anointed above his fellows, Heb. i. 9. (3.) *The garments of praise*, such beautiful garments as were worn on thanksgiving-days, instead of the *spirit of heaviness, dimness, or contraction*—open joys for secret mournings. The *spirit of heaviness* they keep to themselves (Zion's mourners weep in secret); but the joy they are recompensed with they are clothed with as with a garment in the eye of others. Observe, Where God gives the oil of joy he gives the garment of praise. Those comforts which come from God dispose the heart to, and enlarge the heart in, thanksgivings to God. Whatever we have the joy of God must have the praise and glory of.

5. He was to be a planter; for the church is God's husbandry. Therefore he will do all this for his people, will cure their wounds, release them out of bondage, and comfort them in their sorrows, that they may be called *trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord*, that they may be such and be acknowledged to be such, that they may be ornaments to God's vineyard and may be fruitful in the fruits of righteousness, as the branches of God's planting, ch. lx. 21. All that Christ does for us is to make us God's people, and some way serviceable to him as living trees, *planted in the house of the Lord, and flourishing in the courts of our God*; and all this that he may be glorified—that we may be brought to glorify him by a sincere devotion and an exemplary conversation (for herein is our Father glorified, that we bring forth much fruit), that others also may take occasion from God's favour shining on his people, and his grace shining in them, to praise him, and that he may be for ever glorified in his saints.

4 And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations. 5 And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your ploughmen and your vine-dressers. 6 But ye shall be named the priests of the LORD: men shall call you the ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves. 7 For your shame ye shall have double; and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them. 8 For I the LORD love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt-offering; and

I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. 9 And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the LORD hath blessed.

Promises are here made to the Jews now returned out of captivity, and settled again in their own land, which are to be extended to the gospel church, and all believers, who through grace are delivered out of spiritual thralldom; for they are capable of being spiritually applied.

I. It is promised that their houses shall be rebuilt (v. 4), that their cities shall be raised out of the ruins in which they had long lain, and be fitted up for their use again: *They shall build the old wastes*; the old wastes shall be built, the waste cities shall be repaired, the former desolations, even the desolations of many generations, which it was feared would never be repaired, shall be raised up. The setting up of Christianity in the world repaired the decays of natural religion and raised up those desolations both of piety and honesty which had been for many generations the reproach of mankind. An unsanctified soul is like a city that is broken down and has no walls, like a house in ruins; but by the power of Christ's gospel and grace it is repaired, it is put in order again, and fitted to be a habitation of God through the Spirit. And they shall do this, those that are released out of captivity; for we are brought out of the house of bondage that we may serve God, both in building up ourselves to his glory and in helping to build up his church on earth.

II. Those that were so lately servants themselves, working for their oppressors and lying at their mercy, shall now have servants to do their work for them and be at their command, not of their brethren (they are all the Lord's freemen), but of the strangers, and the sons of the alien, who shall keep their sheep, till their ground, and dress their gardens, the ancient employments of Abel, Cain, and Adam: *Strangers shall feed your flocks, v. 5*. When, by the grace of God, we attain to a holy indifference as to all the affairs of this world, buying as though we possessed not—when, though our hands are employed about them, our hearts are not entangled with them, but reserved entire for God and his service—then the sons of the alien are our ploughmen and vine-dressers.

III. They shall not only be released out of their captivity, but highly preferred and honourably employed (v. 6): "While the strangers are keeping your flocks, you shall be keeping the charge of the sanctuary; instead of being slaves to your task-masters, you shall be named the priests of the Lord, a

high and holy calling." Priests were princes' peers, and in Hebrew were called by the same name. *You shall be the ministers of our God*, as the Levites were. Note, Those whom God sets at liberty he sets to work; he delivers them out of the hands of their enemies that they may serve him, Luke i. 74, 75; Ps. cxvi. 16. But his service is perfect freedom, nay, it is the greatest honour. When God brought Israel out of Egypt he took them to be to him a *kingdom of priests*, Exod. xix. 6. And the gospel church is a *royal priesthood*, 1 Pet. ii. 9. All believers are made to our God kings and priests; and they ought to conduct themselves as such in their devotions and in their whole conversation, with *holiness to the Lord* written upon their foreheads, that men may call them the *priests of the Lord*.

IV. The wealth and honour of the Gentile converts shall redound to the benefit and credit of the church, v. 6. *The Gentiles* shall be brought into the church. Those that were strangers shall become *fellow-citizens with the saints*; and with themselves they shall bring all they have, to be devoted to the glory of God and used in his service; and the priests, the Lord's ministers, shall have the advantage of it. It will be a great strengthening and quickening, as well as a comfort and encouragement, to all good Christians, to see the Gentiles serving the interests of God's kingdom. 1. They shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, not which they have themselves seized by violence, but which are fairly and honourably presented to them, as *gifts brought to the altar*, which the priests and their families lived comfortably upon. It is not said, "You shall hoard the riches of the Gentiles, and treasure them," but, "You shall eat them;" for there is nothing better in riches than to use them and to do good with them. 2. They shall boast themselves in their glory. Whatever was the honour of the Gentile converts before their conversion—their nobility, estates, learning, virtue, or places of trust and power—it shall all turn to the reputation of the church to which they have joined themselves; and whatever is their glory after their conversion—their holy zeal and strictness of conversation, their usefulness, their patient suffering, and all the displays of that blessed change which divine grace has made in them—shall be very much for the glory of God and therefore all good men shall glory in it.

V. They shall have abundance of comfort and satisfaction in their own bosoms, v. 7. The Jews no doubt were thus privileged after their return; they were in a new world, and now knew how to value their liberty and property, the pleasures of which were continually fresh and blooming. Much more do all those rejoice whom Christ has brought into the glorious liberty of God's children, especially when the privileges of their adoption shall be completed in the resurrection of the

body. 1. *They shall rejoice in their portion*; they shall not only have their own again, but (which is a further gift of God) they shall have the comfort of it, and a heart to rejoice in it, Eccl. iii. 13. Though the houses of the returned Jews, as well as their temple, be much inferior to what they were before the captivity, yet they shall be well-pleased with them and thankful for them. It is a portion in *their land*, their own land, the holy land, Immanuel's land, and therefore they shall rejoice in it, having so lately known what it was to be *strangers in a strange land*. Those that have God and heaven for their portion have reason to say that they have a worthy portion and to rejoice in it. 2. *Everlasting joy shall be unto them*, that is, a joyful state of their people, which shall last long, much longer than the captivity had lasted. Yet that joy of the Jewish nation was so much allayed, so often interrupted, and so soon brought to an end, that we must look for the accomplishment of this promise in the spiritual joy which believers have in God and the eternal joy they hope for in heaven. 3. This shall be a double recompence to them, and more than double, for all the reproach and vexation they have lain under in the land of their captivity: "For your shame you shall have double honour, and in your land you shall possess double wealth, to what you lost; the blessing of God upon it, and the comfort you shall have in it, shall make an abundant reparation for all the damages you have received. You shall be owned not only as *God's sons*, but as his *first-born* (Exod. iv. 22), and therefore entitled to a double portion." As the miseries of their captivity were so great that in them they are said to have received double for all their sins (ch. xl. 2), so the joys of their return shall be so great that in them they shall receive double for all their shame. The former is applicable to the fullness of Christ's satisfaction, in which God received double for all our sins; the latter to the fullness of heaven's joys, in which we shall receive more than double for all our services and sufferings. Job's case illustrates this: when God turned again his captivity, he gave him twice as much as he had before.

VI. God will be their faithful guide and a God in covenant with them (v. 8): *I will direct their work in truth*. God by his providence will order their affairs for the best, according to the word of his truth. He will guide them in the ways of true prosperity, by the rules of true policy. He will by his grace direct the works of good people in the right way, the true way that leads to happiness; he will direct them to be done in sincerity and then they are pleasing to him. God desires truth in the inward parts; and, if we do our works in truth, he will make an everlasting covenant with us; for to those that walk before him and are upright he will certainly be a God all-sufficient. Now,

as a reason both of this and of the foregoing promise, that God will recompense to them *double for their shame*, those words come in, in the former part of the verse, *I the Lord love judgment*. He loves that judgment should be done among men, both between magistrates and subjects and between neighbour and neighbour, and therefore he hates all injustice; and, when wrongs are done to his people by their oppressors and persecutors, he is displeased with them, not only because they are done to his people, but because they are wrongs, and against the eternal rules of equity. If men do not do justice, he loves to do judgment himself in giving redress to those that suffer wrong and punishing those that do wrong. God pleads his people's injured cause, not only because he is jealous for them, but because he is jealous for justice. To illustrate this, it is added that he *hates robbery for burnt-offering*. He hates injustice even in his own people, who honour him with what they have in their burnt-offerings, much more does he hate it when it is against his own people; if he hates robbery when it is for burnt-offerings to himself, much more when it is for burnt-offerings to idols, and when not only his people are robbed of their estates, but he is robbed of his offerings. It is a truth much to the honour of God that ritual services will never atone for the violation of moral precepts, nor will it justify any man's robbery to say, "It was for burnt-offerings," or *Corban—It is a gift*. Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, to do justly and love mercy better than thousands of rams; nay, that robbery is most of all hateful to God which is covered with this pretence, for it makes the righteous God to be the patron of unrighteousness. Some make this a reason of the rejection of the Jews upon the bringing in of the Gentiles (v. 6), because they were so corrupt in their morals, and, while they tithed mint and cummin, made nothing of judgment and mercy (Matt. xxiii. 23), whereas God loves judgment and insists upon that, and he hates both robbery for burnt offerings and burnt-offerings for robbery too, as that of the Pharisees, who made long prayers that they might the more plausibly devour widows' houses. Others read these words thus: *I hate rapine by iniquity*, that is, the spoil which the enemies of God's people had unjustly made of them; God hated this, and therefore would reckon with them for it.

VII. God will entail a blessing upon their posterity after them (v. 9): *Their seed* (the children of those persons themselves that are now the blessed of the Lord, or their successors in profession, the church's seed) shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation, Ps. xxii. 30. 1. They shall signalize themselves and make their neighbours to take notice of them: *They shall be known among the Gentiles*, shall distinguish themselves by

the gravity, seriousness, humility, and cheerfulness of their conversation, especially by that brotherly love by which all men shall know them to be Christ's disciples. And, they thus distinguishing themselves, God shall dignify them, by making them the blessings of their age and instruments of his glory, and by giving them remarkable tokens of his favour, which shall make them eminent and gain them respect from all about them. Let the children of godly parents love in such a manner that they may be known to be such, that all who observe them may see in them the fruits of a good education, and an answer to the prayers that were put up for them; and then they may expect that God will make them known, by the fulfilling of that promise to them, that *the generation of the upright shall be blessed*. 2. God shall have the glory of this, for every one shall attribute it to the blessing of God; all that see them shall see so much of the grace of God in them, and his favour towards them, that they shall acknowledge them to be the seed which the Lord has blessed and doth bless, for it includes both. See what it is to be blessed of God. Whatever good appears in any it must be taken notice of as the fruit of God's blessing and he must be glorified in it.

10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. 11 For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

Some make this the song of joy and praise to be sung by the prophet in the name of Jerusalem, congratulating her on the happy change of her circumstances in the accomplishment of the foregoing promises; others make it to be spoken by Christ in the name of the New-Testament church triumphing in gospel grace. We may take in both, the former as a type of the latter. We are here taught to rejoice with holy joy, to God's honour, 1. In the beginning of this good work, the clothing of the church with righteousness and salvation, v. 10. Upon this account I will greatly rejoice in the Lord. Those that rejoice in God have cause to rejoice greatly, and we need not fear running into an extreme in the greatness of our joy when we make God the gladness of our joy. The first gospel song begins like this, *My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit*

hath rejoiced in God my Saviour, Luke i. 46, 47. There is just matter for this joy, and all the reason in the world why it should terminate in God; for salvation and righteousness are wrought out and brought in, and the church is clothed with them. The salvation God wrought for the Jews, and that righteousness of his in which he appeared for them, and that reformation which appeared among them, made them look as glorious in the eyes of all wise men as if they had been clothed in robes of state or nuptial garments. Christ has clothed his church with an eternal salvation (and that is truly great) by clothing it with the righteousness both of justification and sanctification. *The clean linen is the righteousness of saints*, Rev. xix. 8. Observe how these two are put together; those, and those only, shall be clothed with the garments of salvation hereafter that are covered with the robe of righteousness now: and those garments are rich and splendid clothing, like the priestly garments (for so the word signifies) with which the *bridegroom decks himself*. The brightness of the sun itself is compared to them. Ps. xix. 5, *He is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, completely dressed*. Such is the beauty of God's grace in those that are clothed with the robe of righteousness, that by the righteousness of Christ are recommended to God's favour and by the sanctification of the Spirit have God's image renewed upon them; they are decked as a bride to be espoused to God, and taken into covenant with him; they are decked as a priest to be employed for God, and taken into communion with him. 2. In the progress and continuance of this good work, v. 11. It is not like a day of triumph, which is glorious for the present, but is soon over. No; the righteousness and salvation with which the church is clothed are durable clothing; so they are said to be, *ch. xxiii. 18*. The church, when she is pleasing herself with the righteousness and salvation that Jesus Christ has clothed her with, rejoices to think that these inestimable blessings shall both spring for future ages and spread to distant regions. (1.) They shall spring forth for ages to come, as the fruits of the earth which are produced every year, from generation to generation. *As the earth, even that which lies common, brings forth her bud*, the tender grass at the return of the year, and as *the garden enclosed causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth* in their season, so duly, so constantly, so powerfully, and with such advantage to mankind *will the Lord God cause righteousness and praise to spring forth*, by virtue of the covenant of grace, as, in the former case, by virtue of the covenant of providence. See what the promised blessings are—*righteousness and praise* (for those that are clothed with righteousness *show forth the praises of him that clothed them*); these shall spring

forth under the influence of the dew of divine grace. Though it may sometimes be winter with the church, when those blessings seem to wither and do not appear, yet the root of them is fixed, a spring-time will come, when through the reviving beams of the approaching Sun of righteousness they shall flourish again. (2.) They shall spread far, and *spring forth before all the nations*; the great salvation shall be published and proclaimed to all the world and the ends of the earth shall see it.

CHAP. LXII.

The business of prophets was both to preach and pray. In this chapter, I. The prophet determines to apply closely and constantly to this business, ver. 1. II. God appoints him and others of his prophets to continue to do so, for the encouragement of his people during the delays of their deliverance, ver. 6, 7. III. The promises are here repeated and ratified of the great things God would do for his church, for the Jews after their return out of captivity and for the Christian church when it shall be set up in the world. 1. The church shall be made honourable in the eyes of the world, ver. 2. 2. It shall appear to be very dear to God, precious and honourable in his sight, ver. 3—5. 3. It shall enjoy great plenty, ver. 8, 9. 4. It shall be released out of captivity and grow up again into a considerable nation, particularly owned and favoured by heaven ver. 10—12.

FOR Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. 2 And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name. 3 Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. 4 Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. 5 For as a young man marryeth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.

The prophet here tells us,

I. What he will do for the church. A prophet, as he is a seer, so he is a spokesman. This prophet resolves to perform that office faithfully, v. 1. *He will not hold his peace; he will not rest*; he will mind his business, will take pains, and never desire to take his ease; and herein he was a type of Christ, who was indefatigable in executing the office of a prophet and made it his meat and drink till he had finished his work. Observe here, 1. What the prophet's resolution is: *He will not hold his peace*. He will continue instant in preaching, will not only faithfully deliver, but frequently repeat, the messages he has received from

the Lord. If people receive not the precepts and promises at first, he will inculcate them and give them line upon line. And he will continue instant in prayer; he will never hold his peace at the throne of grace till he has prevailed with God for the mercies promised; he will give himself to prayer and to the ministry of the word, as Christ's ministers must (Acts vi. 4), who must labour frequently in both and never be weary of this well-doing. The business of ministers is to speak from God to his people and to God for his people; and in neither of these must they be silent. 2. What is the principle of this resolution—for Zion's sake, and for Jerusalem's, not for the sake of any private interest of his own, but for the church's sake, because he has an affection and concern for Zion, and it lies near his heart. Whatever becomes of his own house and family, he desires to see the good of Jerusalem and resolves to seek it all the days of his life, Ps. cxii. 8, 9; cxxviii. 5. It is God's Zion and his Jerusalem, and it is therefore dear to him, because it is so to God and because God's glory is interested in its prosperity. 3. How long he resolves to continue this importunity—till the promise of the church's righteousness and salvation, given in the foregoing chapter, be accomplished. Isaiah will not himself live to see the release of the captives out of Babylon, much less the bringing in of the gospel, in which *grace reigns through righteousness unto life* and salvation; yet he will not hold his peace till these be accomplished, even the utmost of them, because his prophecies will continue speaking of these things, and there shall in every age be a remnant that shall continue to pray for them, as successors to him, till the promises be performed, and so the prayers answered that were grounded upon them. Then the church's *righteousness and salvation will go forth as brightness, and as a lamp that burns*, so plainly that it will carry its own evidence along with it. It will bring honour and comfort to the church, which will hereupon both look pleasant and appear illustrious; and it will bring instruction and direction to the world, a light not only to the eyes but to the feet, and to the paths of those who before sat in darkness and in the shadow of death.

II. What God will do for the church. The prophet can but pray and preach, but God will confirm the word and answer the prayers. 1. The church shall be greatly admired. When that righteousness which is her salvation, her praise, and her glory, shall be brought forth, the Gentiles shall see it. The tidings of it shall be carried to the Gentiles, and a tender of it made to them; they may so see this righteousness as to share in it if it be not their own fault. "Even kings shall see and be in love with the glory of thy righteousness" (v. 2), shall overlook the glory of their own courts and

kingdoms, and look at, and look after, the spiritual glory of the church as that which excels. 2. She shall be truly admirable. Great names make men considerable in the world, and great respect is paid them thereupon; now it is agreed that *honor est in honorante*—honour derives its value from the dignity of him who confers it. God is the fountain of honour and from him the church's honour comes: "Thou shalt be called by a new name, a pleasant name, such as thou wast never called by before, no, not in the day of thy greatest prosperity, and the reverse of that which thou wast called by in the day of thy affliction; thou shalt have a new character, be advanced to a new dignity, and those about thee shall have new thoughts of thee." This seems to be alluded to in that promise (Rev. ii. 17) of the *white stone and in the stone a new name*, and that (Rev. iii. 12) of the *name of the city of my God and my new name*. It is a name which the mouth of the Lord shall name, who, we are sure, miscalls nothing, and who will oblige others to call her by the name he has given her; for his judgment is according to truth and all shall concur with it sooner or later. Two names God shall give her:—(1.) He shall call her his crown (v. 3): *Thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord*, not on his head (as adding any real honour or power to him, as crowns do to those that are crowned with them), but in his hand. He is pleased to account them, and show them forth, as a glory and beauty to him. When he took them to be his people it was that they might be unto him for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory (Jer. xiii. 11): "Thou shalt be a crown of glory and a royal diadem, through the hand, the good hand, of thy God upon thee; he shall make thee so, for he shall be to thee a crown of glory, ch. xxviii. 5. Thou shalt be so in his hand, that is, under his protection; he that shall put glory upon thee shall create a defence upon all that glory, so that the flowers of thy crown shall never wither nor shall its jewels be lost." (2.) He shall call her his spouse, v. 4, 5. This is a yet greater honour, especially considering what a forlorn condition she had been in. [1.] Her case had been very melancholy. She was called forsaken and her land desolate during the captivity, like a woman reproachfully divorced or left a disconsolate widow. Such was the state of religion in the world before the preaching of the gospel—it was in a manner forsaken and desolate, a thing that no man looked after nor had any real concern for [2.] It should now be very pleasant, for God would return in mercy to her. Instead of those two names of reproach, she shall be called by two honourable names. First, She shall be called *Hephzi-bah*, which signifies, *My delight is in her*; it was the name of Hezekiah's queen, Manasseh's mother (2 Kings xxi. 1), a proper name for a wife.

who ought to be her husband's delight, Prov. v. 19. And here it is the church's Maker that is her husband: *The Lord delights in thee* God by his grace has wrought that in his church which makes her his delight, she being refined, and reformed, and brought home to him; and then by his providence he does that for her which makes it appear that she is his delight and that he delights to do her good. *Secondly*, She shall be called *Beulah*, which signifies *married*, whereas she had been desolate, a condition opposed to that of the *married wife*, ch. liv. 1. "*Thy land shall be married*, that is, it shall become fruitful again, and be replenished." Though she has long been barren, she shall again be peopled, shall again be made to keep house and to be a joyful mother of children, Ps. cxiii. 9. *She shall be married*, for, 1. Her sons shall heartily espouse the land of their nativity and its interests, which they had for a long time neglected, as despairing ever to have any comfortable enjoyment of it: *Thy sons shall marry thee*, that is, they shall live with thee and take delight in thee. When they were in Babylon, they seemed to have espoused that land, for they were appointed to settle, and to seek the peace of it, Jer. xxix. 5—7. But now they shall again marry their own land, *as a young man marries a virgin* that he takes great delight in, is extremely fond of, and is likely to have many children by. It bodes well to a land when its own natives and inhabitants are pleased with it, prefer it before other lands, when its princes marry their country and resolve to take their lot with it. 2. *Her God* (which is much better) shall betroth her to himself in righteousness, Hosea ii. 19, 20. He will take pleasure in his church: *As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride*, is pleased with his relation to her and her affection to him, *so shall thy God rejoice over thee*: he shall rest in his love to thee (Zeph. iii. 17); *he shall take pleasure in thee* (Ps. cxlvii. 11), and shall *delight to do thee good with his whole heart and his whole soul*, Jer. xxxii. 41. This is very applicable to the love Christ has for his church and the complacency he takes in it, which appears so brightly in Solomon's Song, and which will be complete in heaven.

6 I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, *which* shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence, 7 And give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. 8 The LORD hath sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength, Surely I will no more give thy corn to be meat for thine enemies; and the sons of the stranger shall not drink thy wine, for the which thou hast laboured: 9

But they that have gathered it shall eat it, and praise the LORD; and they that have brought it together shall drink it in the courts of my holiness.

Two things are here promised to Jerusalem:—

I. Plenty of the means of grace—abundance of good preaching and good praying (v. 6, 7), and this shows the method God takes when he designs mercy for a people; he first brings them to their duty and pours out a spirit of prayer upon them, and then brings salvation to them. Provision is made,

1. That ministers may do their duty as watchmen. It is here spoken of as a token for good, as a step towards further mercy and an earnest of it, that, in order to what he designed for them, he would set *watchmen on their walls who should never hold their peace*. Note, (1.) Ministers are watchmen on the church's walls, for it is as a city besieged, whose concern it is to have sentinels on the walls, to take notice and give notice of the motions of the enemy. It is necessary that, as watchmen, they be wakeful, and faithful, and willing to endure hardness. (2.) They are concerned to stand upon their guard day and night; they must never be off their watch as long as those for whose souls they watch are not out of danger. (3.) They must never hold their peace; they must take all opportunities to give warning to sinners, in season, out of season, and must never betray the cause of Christ by a treacherous or cowardly silence. They must never hold their peace at the throne of grace; they must *pray, and not faint*, as Moses lifted up his hands and kept them steady, till Israel had obtained the victory over Amalek, Exod. xvii. 10, 12.

2. That people may do their duty. As those that make mention of the LORD, let not them keep silence neither, let not them think it enough that their watchmen pray for them, but let them pray for themselves; all will be little enough to meet the approaching mercy with due solemnity. Note, (1.) It is the character of God's professing people that they make mention of the LORD, and continue to do so even in bad times, when the land is termed *forsaken and desolate*. They are *the LORD's remembrancers* (so the margin reads it); they remember the LORD themselves and put one another in mind of him. (2.) God's professing people must be a praying people, must be public-spirited in prayer, must wrestle with God in prayer, and continue to do so: "*Keep not silence*; never grow remiss in the duty nor weary of it." *Give him no rest*—alluding to an importunate beggar, to the widow that with her continual coming wearied the judge into a compliance. God said to Moses, *Let me alone* (Exod. xxxiii. 10), and Jacob to Christ, *I will not let thee go except thou bless me*, Gen. xxxii. 26. (3.)

God is so far from being displeased with our pressing importunity, as men commonly are, that he invites and encourages it; he bids us to cry after him; he is not like those disciples who discouraged a petitioner, Matt. xv. 23. He bids us make pressing applications at the throne of grace, and *give him no rest*, Luke xi. 5, 8. He suffers himself not only to be reasoned with, but to be wrestled with. (4.) The public welfare or prosperity of God's Jerusalem is that which we should be most importunate for at the throne of grace; we should pray for the good of the church. [1.] That it may be safe, that he would *establish* it, that the interests of the church may be firm, may be settled for the present and secured to posterity. [2.] That it may be great, may be *a praise in the earth*, that it may be praised, and God may be praised for it. When gospel truths are cleared and vindicated, when gospel ordinances are duly administered in their purity and power, when the church becomes eminent for holiness and love, then Jerusalem is a praise in the earth, then it is in reputation. (5.) We must persevere in our prayers for mercy to the church till the mercy come; we must do as the prophet's servant did, go yet seven times, till the promising cloud appear, 1 Kings xviii. 44. (6.) It is a good sign that God is coming towards a people in ways of mercy when he pours out a spirit of prayer upon them and stirs them up to be fervent and constant in their intercessions.

II. Plenty of all other good things, v. 8. This follows upon the former; when the people praise God, when *all the people praise him*, then *shall the earth yield her increase* (Ps. lxxvii. 5, 6), and outward prosperity, crowning its piety, shall help to make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. Observe,

1. The great distress they had been in, and the losses they had sustained. Their corn had been meat for their enemies, which they hoped would be meat for themselves and their families. Here was a double grievance, that they themselves wanted that which was necessary to the support of life and were in danger of perishing for want of it, and that their enemies were strengthened by it, had their camp victualled with it, and so were the better able to do them a mischief. God is said to give their corn to their enemies, because he not only permitted it, but ordered it, to be the just punishment both of their abuse of plenty and of their symbolizing with strangers, ch. i. 7. The wine which they had laboured for, and which in their affliction they needed for the relief of those among them that were of a heavy heart, strangers drank it, to gratify their lusts with; this sore judgment was threatened for their sins, Lev. xxvi. 16; Deut. xxviii. 33. See how uncertain our creature-comforts are, and how much it is our wisdom to labour for that meat which we can never be robbed of.

2. The great fulness and satisfaction they should now be restored to (v. 9): *Those that have gathered it shall eat it, and praise the Lord*. See here, (1.) God's mercy in giving plenty, and peace to enjoy it,—that the earth yields her increase, that there are hands to be employed in gathering it in, and that they are not taken off by plague and sickness, or otherwise employed in war,—that strangers and enemies do not come and gather it for themselves, or take it from us when we have gathered it,—that we eat the labour of our hands and the bread is not eaten out of our mouths,—and especially that we have opportunity and a heart to honour God with it, and that his courts are open to us and we are not restrained from attending on him in them. (2.) Our duty in the enjoyment of this mercy. We must gather what God gives, with care and industry; we must eat it freely and cheerfully, not bury the gifts of God's bounty, but make use of them. We must, when we have eaten and are full, *bless the Lord*, and give him thanks for his bounty to us; and we must serve him with our abundance, use it in works of piety and charity, eat it and *drink it in the courts of his holiness*, where the altar, the priest, and the poor must all have their share. The greatest comfort that a good man has in his meat and drink is that it furnishes him with a meat-offering and a drink-offering for the Lord his God (Joel ii. 14); the greatest comfort that he has in an estate is that it gives him an opportunity of honouring God and doing good. This wine is to be *drunk in the courts of God's holiness*, and therefore moderately and with sobriety, as before the Lord.

3. The solemn ratification of this promise: *The Lord has sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength*, that he will do this for his people. God confirms it by an oath, that his people, who trust in him and his word, may have *strong consolation*, Heb. vi. 17, 18. And, since he can swear by no greater, he swears by himself, sometimes by his being (*As I live*, Ezek. xxxiii. 11), sometimes by his holiness (Ps. lxxxix. 35), here by his power, his right hand (which was lifted up in swearing, Deut. xxxii. 40), and his arm of power; for it is a great satisfaction to those who build their hopes on God's promise to be sure that *what he has promised he is able to perform*, Rom. iv. 21. To assure us of this he has sworn by his strength, pawning the reputation of his omnipotence upon it; if he do not do it, let it be said, *It was because he could not*, which the Egyptians shall never say (Num. xiv. 16) nor any other. It is the comfort of God's people that his power is engaged for them, his right hand, where the Mediator sits.

10 Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a stand-

ard for the people. 11 Behold, the LORD hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. 12 And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken.

This, as many like passages before, refers to the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon, and, under the type and figure of that, to the great redemption wrought out by Jesus Christ, and the proclaiming of gospel grace and liberty through him. 1. Way shall be made for this salvation; all difficulties shall be removed, and whatever might obstruct it shall be taken out of the way, v. 10. The gates of Babylon shall be thrown open, that they may with freedom go through them; the way from Babylon to the land of Israel shall be prepared; causeways shall be made and cast up through wet and miry places, and the stones gathered out from places rough and rocky; in the convenient places appointed for their rendezvous standards shall be set up for their direction and encouragement, that they may embody for their greater safety. Thus John Baptist was sent to *prepare the way of the Lord*, Matt. iii. 3. And, before Christ by his graces and comforts comes to any for salvation, preparation is made for him by repentance, which is called the *preparation of the gospel of peace*, Eph. vi. 15. Here the way is levelled by it, there the feet are shod with it, which comes all to one, for both are in order to a journey. 2. Notice shall be given of this salvation, v. 11, 12. It shall be proclaimed to the captives that they are set at liberty and may go if they please; it shall be proclaimed to their neighbours, to all about them, *to the end of the world*, that God has pleaded Zion's just, injured, and despised cause. Let it be said to Zion, for her comfort, *Behold, thy salvation comes* (that is, thy Saviour, who brings salvation); he will bring such a work, such a reward, in this salvation, as shall be admired by all, a reward of comfort and peace with him; but a work of humiliation and reformation before him, to prepare his people for that recompence of their sufferings; and then, with reference to each, it follows, they shall be called, *The holy people, and the redeemed of the Lord*. *The work before him*, which shall be wrought in them and upon them, shall denominate them a holy people, cured of their inclination to idolatry and consecrated to God only; and the *reward with him*, the deliverance wrought for them, shall denominate them the *redeemed of the Lord*, so redeemed as none but God could redeem them, and redeemed to be his, their bonds loosed, that they might be his servants.

Jerusalem shall then be called, *Sought out, a city not forsaken*. She had been forsaken for many years; there were neither traders nor worshippers that enquired the way to Jerusalem as formerly, when it was frequented by both. But now God will again make her considerable. She shall be sought out, visited, resorted to, and court made to her, as much as ever. When Jerusalem is called a *holy city*, then it is called *sought out*; for holiness puts an honour and beauty upon any place or person, which draws respect, and makes them to be admired, beloved, and enquired after. But this being proclaimed to the end of the world must have a reference to the gospel of Christ, which was to be preached to every creature; and it intimates, (1.) The glory of Christ. It is published immediately to the church, but is thence echoed to every nation: *Behold, thy salvation cometh*. Christ is not only the Saviour, but the salvation itself; for the happiness of believers is not only from him, but in him, ch. xii. 2. His salvation consists both in the work and in the reward which he brings with him; for those that are his shall neither be idle nor lose their labour. (2.) The beauty of the church. Christians shall be called *saints* (1 Cor. i. 2), *the holy people*, for they are chosen and called *to salvation through sanctification*. They shall be called the *redeemed of the Lord*; to him they owe their liberty, and therefore to him they owe their service, and they shall not be ashamed to own both. None are to be called the *redeemed of the Lord* but those that are the *holy people*; the people of God's purchase are a holy nation. And they shall be called, *Sought out*. God shall seek them out, and find them, wherever they are dispersed, eclipsed, or lost in a crowd; men shall seek them out, that they may join themselves to them, and not forsake them. It is good to associate with the *holy people*, that we may learn their ways, and with the *redeemed of the Lord*, that we may share in the blessings of the redemption.

CHAP. LXIII.

In this chapter we have, 1. God coming towards his people in ways of mercy and deliverance, and this is to be joined to the close of the foregoing chapter, where it was said to Zion, "Behold, thy salvation comes;" for here it is shown how it comes, v. 1-10. 2. God's people meeting him with their devotions, and addressing themselves to him with suitable affections; and this part of the chapter is carried on to the close of the next. In this we have, 1. A thankful acknowledgment of the great favours God had bestowed upon them, ver. 7. 2. The magnifying of these favours, from the consideration of God's relation to them (ver. 8), his compassionate concern for them (ver. 9), their unworthiness (ver. 10), and the occasion which it gave both him and them to call to mind former mercies, ver. 11-14. 3. A very humble and earnest prayer to God to appear for them in their present distress, pleading God's mercy (ver. 15), their relation to him (ver. 16), their desire towards him (ver. 17), and the insolence of their enemies, ver. 18, 19. So that, upon the whole, we learn to embrace God's promises with an active faith, and then to improve them, and make use of them, both in prayers and praises.

WHO is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this *that is* glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in right-

eousness, mighty to save. 2 Wherefore *art thou* red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat? 3 I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people *there was none* with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. 4 For the day of vengeance *is* in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. 5 And I looked, and *there was none* to help; and I wondered that *there was none* to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me. 6 And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth.

It is a glorious victory that is here enquired into first and then accounted for. 1. It is a victory obtained by the providence of God over the enemies of Israel; over the Babylonians (say some), whom Cyrus conquered and God by him, and they will have the prophet to make the first discovery of him in his triumphant return when he is in the country of Edom: but this can by no means be admitted, because the country of Babylon is always spoken of as the land of the north, whereas Edom lay south from Jerusalem, so that the conqueror would not return through that country; the victory therefore is obtained over the Edomites themselves, who had triumphed in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans (Ps. cxxxvii. 7) and cut off those who, making their way as far as they could from the enemy, escaped to the Edomites (Obad. 12, 13), and were therefore reckoned with when Babylon was; for no doubt that prophecy was accomplished, though we do not meet in history with the accomplishment of it (Jer. xlix. 13), *Bozrah shall become a desolation*. Yet this victory over Edom is put as an instance or specimen of the like victories obtained over other nations that had been enemies to Israel. This over the Edomites is named for the sake of the old enmity of Esau against Jacob (Gen. xxvii. 41) and perhaps with an allusion to David's glorious triumphs over the Edomites, by which it should seem, more than by any other of his victories, he *got himself a name*, Ps. lx., *title*, 2 Sam. viii. 13, 14. But this is not all: 2. It is a victory obtained by the grace of God in Christ over our spiritual enemies. We find the garments dipped in blood adorning him whose name is called *The Word of God*, Rev. xix. 13. And who that is we know

very well; for it is through him that we are more than conquerors over those principalities and powers which on the cross he spoiled and triumphed over.

In this representation of the victory we have,

I. An admiring question put to the conqueror, v. 1, 2. It is put by the church, or by the prophet in the name of the church. He sees a mighty hero returning in triumph from a bloody engagement, and makes bold to ask him two questions:—1. Who he is. He observes him to come from the country of Edom, to come in such apparel as was glorious to a soldier, not embroidered or laced, but besmeared with blood and dirt. He observes that he does not come as one either frightened or fatigued, but that he *travels in the greatness of his strength*, altogether unbroken.

Triumphant and victorious he appears, And honour in his looks and habit wears.

How strong he treads! how stately doth he go! Pompous and solemn is his pace, And full of majesty, as is his face;

Who is this mighty hero—who?—Mr. NORRIS.

The question, *Who is this?* perhaps means the same with that which Joshua put to the same person when he appeared to him with his sword drawn (Josh. v. 13): *Art thou for us or for our adversaries?* Or, rather, the same with that which Israel put in a way of adoration (Exod. xv. 11): *Who is a God like unto thee?* 2. The other question is, *Wherefore art thou red in thy apparel?* What hard service hast thou been engaged in, that thou carriest with thee these marks of toil and danger? Is it possible that one who has such majesty and terror in his countenance should be employed in the mean and servile work of *treading the wine-press?* Surely it is not. That which is really the glory of the Redeemer seems, *primâ facie*—at first, a disparagement to him, as it would be to a mighty prince to do the work of the wine-dressers and husbandmen; for he *took upon him the form of a servant*, and carried with him the marks of servitude.

II. An admirable answer returned by him.

1. He tells who he is: *I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save*. He is the Saviour. God was Israel's Saviour out of the hand of their oppressors; the Lord Jesus is ours; his name, *Jesus*, signifies a *Saviour*, for he *saves his people from their sins*. In the salvation wrought he will have us to take notice, (1.) Of the truth of his promise, which is therein performed: He speaks in *righteousness*, and will therefore make good every word that he has spoken with which he will have us to compare what he does, that, setting the word and the work the one over against the other, what he does may ratify what he has said and what he has said may justify what he does. (2.) Of the efficacy of his power, which is therein exerted.

He is *mighty to save*, able to bring about the promised redemption, whatever difficulties and oppositions may lie in the way of it.

'Tis I who to my promise faithful stand,

I, who the powers of death, hell, and the grave,
Have foil'd with this all-conquering hand,

I, who most ready am, and mighty too, to save.

MR. NORRIS.

2. He tells how he came to appear in this hue (v. 3): *I have trodden the wine-press alone*. Being compared to one that treads in the wine-fat, such is his condescension, in the midst of his triumphs, that he does not scorn the comparison, but admits it and carries it on. He does indeed *tread the wine-press*, but it is *the great wine-press of the wrath of God* (Rev. xiv. 19), in which we sinners deserved to be cast; but Christ was pleased to cast our enemies into it, and to *destroy him that had the power of death*, that he might deliver us. And of this the bloody work which God sometimes made among the enemies of the Jews, and which is here foretold, was a type and figure. Observe the account the conqueror gives of his victory.

(1.) He gains the victory purely by his own strength: *I have trodden the wine-press alone*, v. 3. When God delivered his people and destroyed their enemies, if he made use of instruments, he did not need them. But among his people, for whom the salvation was to be wrought, no assistance offered itself; they were weak and helpless, and had no ability to do any thing for their own relief; they were desponding and listless, and had no heart to do any thing; they were not disposed to give the least stroke or struggle for liberty, neither the captives themselves nor any of their friends for them (v. 5): "*I looked, and there was none to help*, as one would have expected, nothing of a bold active spirit appeared among them; nay, there was not only none to lead, but, which was more strange, *there was none to uphold*, none that would come in as a second, that had the courage to join with Cyrus against their oppressors; *therefore my arm brought about the salvation; not by created might or power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, my own arm*." Note, God can help when all other helpers fail; nay, that is his time to help, and therefore for that very reason he will put forth his own power so much the more gloriously. But this is most fully applicable to Christ's victories over our spiritual enemies, which he obtained by a single combat. He trod the wine-press of his Father's wrath alone, and triumphed over principalities and powers in himself, Col. ii. 15. *Of the people there was none with him*; for, when he entered the lists with the powers of darkness, *all his disciples forsook him and fled*. There was *none to help*, none that could, none that durst; and he might well wonder that among the children of men, whose concern it was, there was not only *none to uphold*, but that

there were so many to oppose and hinder it if they could.

(2.) He undertakes the war purely out of his own zeal. It is *in his anger*, it is *in his fury*, that he *treads down* his enemies (v. 3), and that *fury upholds him* and carries him on in this enterprise, v. 5. God wrought salvation for the oppressed Jews purely because he was very angry with the oppressing Babylonians, angry at their idolatries and sorceries, their pride and cruelty, and the injuries they did to his people, and, as they increased their abominations and grew more insolent and outrageous, his anger increased to fury. Our Lord Jesus wrought out our redemption in a holy zeal for the honour of his Father and the happiness of mankind, and a holy indignation at the daring attempts Satan had made upon both; this zeal and indignation upheld him throughout his whole undertaking. Two branches there were of this zeal that animated him:—[1.] He had a zeal against his and his people's enemies: *The day of vengeance is in my heart* (v. 4), the day fixed in the eternal counsels for taking vengeance on them; this was written in his heart, so that he could not forget it, could not let it slip; his heart was full of it, and it lay as a charge, as a weight, upon him, which made him push on this holy war with so much vigour. Note, There is a day fixed for divine vengeance, which may be long deferred, but will come at last; and we may be content to wait for it, for the Redeemer himself does so, though his heart is upon it. [2.] He had a zeal for his people, and for all that he designed to make sharers in the intended salvation: "*The year of my redeemed has come*, the year appointed for their redemption." There was a year fixed for the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, and God kept time to a day (Exod. xii. 41); so there was for their release out of Babylon (Dan. ix. 2); so there was for Christ's coming to destroy the works of the devil; so there is for all the deliverances of the church, and the deliverer has an eye to it. Observe First, With what pleasure he speaks of his people; they are his *redeemed*; they are his own, dear to him. Though their redemption is not yet wrought out, yet he calls them *his redeemed*, because it shall as surely be done as if it were done already. Secondly, With what pleasure he speaks of his people's redemption; how glad he is that *the time has come*, though he is likely to meet with a sharp encounter. "Now that the year of my redeemed has come, *Lo, I come*; delay shall be no longer. *Now will I arise*, saith the Lord. *Now thou shalt see what I will do to Pharaoh*." Note, The promised salvation must be patiently waited for till the time appointed comes; yet we must attend the promises with our prayers. Does Christ say, *Surely I come quickly*; let our hearts reply, *Even so come*; let the year of the redeemed come.

(3.) He will obtain a complete victory over them all. [1.] Much is already done; for he now appears *red in his apparel*; such abundance of blood is shed that the conqueror's garments are all stained with it. This was predicted, long before, by dying Jacob, concerning *Shiloh* (that is, *Christ*), that he should *wash his garments in wine and his clothes in the blood of grapes*, which perhaps this alludes to, Gen. xlix. 11.

With ornamental drops bedeck'd I stood,
And wrote my vict'ry with my en'my's blood.

MR. NORRIS.

In the destruction of the antichristian powers we meet with abundance of blood shed (Rev. xiv. 20, xix. 13), which yet, according to the dialect of prophecy, may be understood spiritually, and doubtless so may this here. [2.] More shall yet be done (v. 6): *I will tread down the people that yet stand it out against me, in my anger*; for the victorious Redeemer, when the *year of the redeemed shall have come*, will go on *conquering and to conquer*, Rev. vi. 2. When he begins he will also make an end. Observe how he will complete his victories over the enemies of his church. *First*, He will infatuate them; he will make them drunk, so that there shall be neither sense nor steadiness in their counsels; they shall drink of the cup of his fury, and that shall intoxicate them: or he will make them *drunk with their own blood*, Rev. xvii. 6. Let those that make themselves drunk with the cup of riot (and then they are in their fury) repent and reform, lest God make them drunk with the *cup of trembling*, the cup of his fury. *Secondly*, He will enfeeble them; he will *bring down their strength*, and so bring them down to the earth; for what strength can hold out against Omnipotence?

7 I will mention the loving-kindnesses of the LORD, and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses. 8 For he said, Surely they *are* my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour. 9 In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old. 10 But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them. 11 Then he remembered the days of

old, Moses, and his people, *saying*, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? Where is he that put his holy Spirit within him? 12 That led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name? 13 That led them through the deep, as a horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble? 14 As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the LORD caused him to rest: so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name.

The prophet is here, in the name of the church, taking a review, and making a thankful recognition, of God's dealings with his church all along, ever since he founded it, before he comes, in the latter end of this chapter and in the next, as a watchman upon the walls, earnestly to pray to God for his compassion towards her in her present deplorable state; and it was usual for God's people, in their prayers, thus to look back.

1. Here is a general acknowledgment of God's goodness to them all along, v. 7. It was said, in general, of God's prophets and people (*ch. lxii. 6*) that they *made mention of the Lord*; now here we are told what it is in God that they do especially delight to make mention of, and that is his goodness, which the prophet here so makes mention of as if he thought he could never say enough of it. He mentions the *kindness of God* (which never appeared so evident, so eminent, as in his love to mankind in *sending his Son* to save us, Tit. iii. 4), his loving-kindness, kindness that shows itself in every thing that is endearing; nay, so plenteous are the springs, and so various the streams, of divine mercy, that he speaks of it in the plural number—*his loving-kindnesses*; for, if we would count the fruits of his loving-kindness, they are *more in number than the sand*. With his loving-kindnesses he mentions his *praises*, that is, the thankful acknowledgments which the saints make of his loving-kindness, and the angels too. It must be mentioned, to God's honour, what a tribute of praise is paid to him by all his creatures in consideration of his loving-kindness. See how copiously he speaks, 1. Of the goodness that is from God, the gifts of his loving-kindness—all that the Lord has bestowed on us in particular, relating to life and godliness, in our personal and family capacity. Let every man speak for himself, speak as he has found, and he must own that he has had a great deal bestowed upon him by the divine bounty. But we must also mention the favours bestowed upon his church, his *great*

goodness towards the house of Israel, which he has bestowed on them. Note, We must bless God for the mercies enjoyed by others as well as for those enjoyed by ourselves, and reckon that bestowed on ourselves which is bestowed on the house of Israel. 2. Of the goodness that is in God. God does good because he is good; what he bestowed upon us must be traced up to the original; it is according to his mercies (not according to our merits) and according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses, which can never be spent. Thus we should magnify God's goodness, and speak honourably of it, not only when we plead it (as David, Ps. li. 1), but when we praise it.

II. Here is particular notice taken of the steps of God's mercy to Israel ever since it was formed into a nation.

1. The expectations God had concerning them that they would conduct themselves well, *v. 8*. When he brought them out of Egypt and took them into covenant with himself he said, "*Surely they are my people, I take them as such, and am willing to hope they will approve themselves so, children that will not lie,*" that will not *dissemble with God* in their covenantings with him, nor treacherously depart from him by breaking their covenant and starting aside like a broken bow. They said, more than once, *All that the Lord shall say unto us we will do and will be obedient*; and thereupon he took them to be his peculiar people, saying, *Surely they will not lie*. God deals fairly and faithfully with them, and therefore expects they should deal so with him. They are *children of the covenant* (Acts iii. 25), children of those that clave unto the Lord, and therefore it may be hoped that they will tread in the steps of their fathers' constancy. Note, God's people are *children that will not lie*; for those that will are not his children but the devil's.

2. The favour he showed them with an eye to these expectations. *So he was their Saviour* out of the bondage of Egypt and all the calamities of their wilderness-state, and many a time since he had been their Saviour. See particularly (*v. 9*) what he did for them as their Saviour. (1.) The principle that moved him to work salvation for them; it was *in his love and in his pity*, out of mere compassion to them and a tender affection for them, not because he either needed them or could be benefited by them. This is strangely expressed here: *In all their affliction he was afflicted*; not that the Eternal Mind is capable of grieving or God's infinite blessedness of suffering the least damage or diminution (God cannot be afflicted); but thus he is pleased to show forth the love and concern he has for his people in their affliction; thus far he sympathizes with them, that he takes what injury is done to them as done to himself and will reckon for it accordingly. Their cries move him

(Exod. iii. 7), and he appears for them as vigorously as if he were pained in their pain. *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* This is matter of great comfort to God's people in their affliction that God is so far from *afflicting willingly* (Lam. iii. 33) that, if they humble themselves under his hand, he is *afflicted in their affliction*, as the tender parents are in the severe operations which the case of a sick child calls for. There is another reading of these words in the original: *In all their affliction there was no affliction*; though they were in great affliction, yet the property of it was so altered by the grace of God sanctifying it to them for their good, the rigour of it was so mitigated and it was so allayed and balanced with mercies, they were so wonderfully supported and comforted under it, and it proved so short, and ended so well, that it was in effect no affliction. The troubles of the saints are not that to them which they are to others; they are not afflictions, but medicines; saints are enabled to call them *light*, and *but for a moment*, and, with an eye to heaven as all in all, to make nothing of them. (2.) The person employed in their salvation—the *angel of his face*, or presence. Some understand it of a created angel. The highest angel in heaven, even the angel of his presence, that attends next the throne of his glory, is not thought too great, too good, to be sent on this errand. Thus the little ones' angels are said to be those that *always behold the face of our Father*, Matt. xviii. 10. But this is rather to be understood of Jesus Christ, the eternal Word, that angel of whom God spoke to Moses (Exod. xxiii. 20, 21), whose *voice Israel was to obey*. He is called *Jehovah*, Exod. xiii. 21; xiv. 21, 24. He is the angel of the covenant, God's messenger to the world, Mal. iii. 1. He is the *angel of God's face*, for he is the *express image of his person*; and the glory of God shines in the face of Christ. He that was to work out the eternal salvation, as an earnest of that, wrought out the temporal salvations that were typical of it. (3.) The progress and perseverance of this favour. He not only redeemed them out of their bondage, but *he bore them and carried them all the days of old*; they were weak, but he supported them by his power, sustained them by his bounty; when they were burdened, and ready to sink, he bore them up; in the wars they made upon the nations he stood by them and bore them out; though they were peevish, he bore with them and suffered their manners, Acts xiii. 18. He carried them as the nursing father does the child, though they would have tired any arms but his; he carried them as the eagle her young upon her wings, Deut. xxxii. 11. And it was a long time that he was *troubled with them* (if we may so speak): *it was all the days of old*; his care of them was not at an end even when they had grown up and were settled in Canaan. All this was

in his love and pity, ex mero motu—of his mere good-will; he loved them because he would love them, as he says, Deut. vii. 7, 8.

3. Their disingenuous conduct towards him, and the trouble they thereby brought upon themselves (v. 10): *But they rebelled.* Things looked very hopeful and promising; one would have thought that they should have continued dutiful children to God, and then there was no doubt but he would have continued a gracious Father to them; but here is a sad change on both sides, and *on them be the breach.* (1.) They revolted from their allegiance to God and took up arms against him: *They rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit* with their unbelief and murmuring, besides the iniquity of the golden calf; and this had been their way and manner ever since. Though he was ready to say of them, *They will not lie*, though he had done so much for them, *borne them and carried them*, yet they thus ill requited him, like *foolish people and unwise*, Deut. xxxii. 6. This grieved him, Ps. xc. 10. The ungrateful rebellions of God's children against him are a vexation to his Holy Spirit. (2.) Thereupon he justly withdrew his protection, and not only so, but made war upon them, as a prince justly does upon the rebels. He who had been so much their friend was *turned to be their enemy and fought against them*, by one judgment after another, both in the wilderness and after their settlement in Canaan. See the malignity and mischievousness of sin; it makes God an enemy even to those for whom he has done the part of a good friend, and makes him angry who was all love and pity. See the folly of sinners; they wilfully lose him for a friend who is the most desirable friend, and make him their enemy who is the most formidable enemy. This refers especially to those calamities that were of late brought upon them by their captivity in Babylon for their idolatries and other sins. That which is both the original and the great aggravation of their troubles was that God was *turned to be their enemy*.

4. A particular reflection made, on this occasion, upon what God did for them when he first formed them into a people: *Then he remembered the days of old, v. 11.*

(1.) This may be understood either of the people or of God. [1.] We may understand it of the people. Israel then (spoken of as a single person) *remembered the days of old*, looked into their Bibles, read the story of God's bringing their fathers out of Egypt, considered it more closely than ever they did before, and reasoned upon it, as Gideon did (Judg. vi. 13), *Where are all the wonders that our fathers told us of? "Where is he that brought them up out of Egypt? Is he not as able to bring us up out of Babylon? Where is the Lord God of Elijah? Where is the Lord God of our fathers?"* This they consider as an inducement and an encour-

agement to them to repent and return to him; their fathers were a provoking people and yet found him a pardoning God; and why may not they find him so if they return to him? They also use it as a plea with God in prayer for the turning again of their captivity, like that *ch. li. 9, 10.* Note, When the present days are dark and cloudy it is good to *remember the days of old*, to recollect our own and others' experiences of the divine power and goodness and make use of them, to look back upon the years of the right hand of the Most High (Ps. lxxvii. 5, 10), and remember that he is God, and *changes not.* [2.] We may understand it of God; he put himself in mind of the days of old, of his covenant with Abraham (Lev. xxvi. 42); he said, *Where is he that brought Israel up out of the sea?* stirring up himself to come and save them with this consideration, "Why should not I appear for them now as I did for their fathers, who were as undeserving, as ill-deserving, as they are?" See how far off divine mercy will go, how far back it will look, to find out a reason for doing good to his people, when no present considerations appear but what make against them. Nay, it makes that a reason for relieving them which might have been used as a reason for abandoning them. He might have said, "I have delivered them formerly, but they have again brought trouble upon themselves (Prov. xix. 19); therefore I will deliver them no more," Judg. x. 13. But no; mercy rejoices against judgment, and turns the argument the other way: "I have formerly delivered them and therefore will now."

(2.) Which way soever we take it, whether the people plead it with God or God with himself, let us view the particulars, and they agree very much with the confession and prayer which the children of the captivity made upon a solemn fast-day (Neh. ix. 5. &c.), which may serve as a comment on these verses which call to mind *Moses and his people*, that is, what God did by Moses for his people, especially in bringing them through the Red Sea, for that is it that is here most insisted on; for it was a work which he much gloried in and which his people therefore may in a particular manner encourage themselves with the remembrance of. [1.] God led them by the right hand of Moses (v. 12) and the wonder-working rod in his hand. Ps. lxxvii. 20, *Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses.* It was not Moses that led them, any more than it was Moses that fed them (John vi. 32), but God by Moses; for it was he that qualified Moses for, called him to, assisted and prospered him in that great undertaking. Moses is here called the shepherd of his flock; God was the owner of the flock and the chief shepherd of Israel (Ps. lxxx. 1); but Moses was a shepherd under him, and he was inured to labour and patience, and so fitted for this pastoral care, by his being trained up to keep the flock

of his father Jethro. Herein he was a type of Christ the good shepherd, that *lays down his life for the sheep*, which was more than Moses did for Israel, though he did a great deal for them. [2.] *He put his holy Spirit within him; the Spirit of God was among them*, and not only his providence, but his grace, did work for them. Neh. ix. 20, *Thou gavest thy good Spirit to instruct them*. The Spirit of wisdom and courage, as well as the Spirit of prophecy, was put into Moses, to qualify him for that service among them to which he was called; and some of his spirit was put upon the seventy elders, Num. xi. 17. This was a great blessing to Israel, that they had among them not only inspired writings, but inspired men. [3.] He carried them safely through the Red Sea, and thereby saved them out of the hands of Pharaoh. *First, He divided the water before them* (v. 12), so that it gave them not only passage, but protection, not only opened them a lane, but erected them a wall on either side. *Secondly, He led them through the deep as a horse in the wilderness, or in the plain* (v. 13); they and their wives and children, with all their baggage, went as easily and readily through the bottom of the sea (though we may suppose it muddy or stony, or both) as a horse goes along upon even ground; so that they did not stumble, though it was an untrodden path, which neither they nor any one else ever went before. If God make us a way, he will make it plain and level; the road he opens to his people he will lead them in. *Thirdly, To complete the mercy, he brought them up out of the sea*, v. 11. Though the ascent, it is likely, was very steep, dirty, slippery, and unconquerable (at least by the women and children, and the men, considering how they were loaded, Exod. xii. 34, and how fatigued), yet God by his power brought them up from the depths of the earth; and it was a kind of resurrection to them; it was as *life from the dead*. [4.] He brought them safely to a place of rest: *As a beast goes down into the valley*, carefully and gradually, so *the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest*. Many a time in their march through the wilderness they had resting-places provided for them by the direction of the Spirit of the Lord in Moses, v. 11. And at length they were made to rest finally in Canaan, and the Spirit of the Lord gave them that rest according to the promise. It is by the Spirit of the Lord that God's Israel are caused to return to God and repose in him as their rest. [5.] All this he did for them by his own power, for his own praise. *First*, It was by his own power, as the God of nature, that has all the powers of nature at his command; he did it with his glorious arm, *the arm of his gallantry, or bravery*; so the word signifies. It was not Moses's rod, but God's glorious arm, that did it. *Secondly*, It was for his own praise, *to make himself an everlasting name* (v. 12), a *glorious name* (v.

14), that he might be glorified, everlastingly glorified, upon this account. This is that which God is doing in the world with his glorious arm, he is making to himself a glorious name, and it shall last to endless ages, when the most celebrated names of the great ones of the earth shall be written in the dust.

15 Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory: where *is* thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies toward me? Are they restrained? 16 Doubtless thou *art* our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O LORD, *art* our father, our Redeemer; thy name *is* from everlasting. 17 O LORD, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, *and* hardened our heart from thy fear? Return for thy servants' sake, the tribes of thine inheritance. 18 The people of thy holiness have possessed *it* but a little while: our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary. 19 We are *thine*: thou never barest rule over them; they were not called by thy name.

The foregoing praises were intended as an introduction to this prayer, which is continued to the end of the next chapter, and it is an affectionate, importunate, pleading prayer. It is calculated for the time of the captivity. As they had promises, so they had prayers, prepared for them against that time of need, that they might take with them words in turning to the Lord, and say unto him what he himself taught them to say, in which they might the better hope to prevail, the words being of God's own inditing. Some good interpreters think this prayer looks further, and that it expresses the complaints of the Jews under their last and final rejection from God and destruction by the Romans; for there is one passage in it (*ch. lxiv. 4*) which is applied to the grace of the gospel by the apostle (1 Cor. ii. 9), that grace for the rejecting of which they were rejected. In these verses we may observe,

I. The petitions they put up to God. 1. That he would take cognizance of their case and of the desires of their souls towards him: *Look down from heaven, and behold*, v. 15. They knew very well that God sees all, but they prayed that he would regard them, would condescend to favour them, would look upon them with an eye of compassion and concern, as he looked upon the affliction of his people in Egypt when he was about to appear for their deliverance. In begging that he would only look down upon them

and behold then. they did in effect appeal to his justice against their enemies, and pray for judgment against them (as Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xx. 11, 12, *Behold, how they reward us. Wilt thou not judge them?*), implicitly confiding in his mercy and wisdom as to the way in which he will relieve them (Ps. xxv. 18, *Look upon my affliction and my pain*): *Look down from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory.* God's holiness is his glory. Heaven is his habitation, the throne of his glory, where he most manifests his glory, and whence he is said to look down upon this earth, Ps. xxxiii. 14. His holiness is in a special manner celebrated there by the blessed angels (ch. vi. 3; Rev. iv. 8); there his holy ones attend him, and are continually about him; so that it is the *habitation of his holiness*. It is an encouragement to all his praying people, who desire to be holy as he is holy, that he *dwells in a holy place*. 2. That he would take a course for their relief (v. 17): "*Return*: change thy way towards us, and proceed not in thy controversy with us; return in mercy, and let us have not only a gracious look towards us, but thy gracious presence with us." God's people dread nothing more than his departures from them and desire nothing more than his returns to them.

II. The complaints they made to God. Two things they complained of:—1. That they were given up to themselves, and God's grace did not recover them, v. 17. It is a strange expostulation, "*Why hast thou made us to err from thy ways*, that is, many among us, the generality of us; and this complaint we have all of us some cause to make that *thou hast hardened our heart from thy fear*. Some make it to be the language of those among them that were impious and profane; when the prophets reprov'd them for the *error of their ways, their hardness of heart, and contempt of God's word and commandments*, they with a daring impudence charged their sin upon God, made him the author of it, and asked *why doth he then find fault?* Note, Those are wicked indeed that lay the blame of their wickedness upon God. But I rather take it to be the language of those among them that lamented the unbelief and impenitence of their people, not accusing God of being the author of their wickedness, but complaining of it to him. They owned that they had *erred from God's ways*, that their hearts had been *hardened from his fear*, that they had not received the impressions which the fear of God ought to make upon them and this was the cause of all their errors from his ways; or *from his fear* may mean from the true worship of God, and that is a hard heart indeed which is alienated from the service of a God so incontestably great and good. Now this they complain of, as their great misery and burden, that God had for their sins left them to this, had permitted them to *err from his ways* and had

justly withheld his grace, so that their hearts were *hardened from his fear*. When they ask, *Why hast thou done this?* it is not as charging him with wrong, but lamenting it as a sore judgment. God had *caused them to err and hardened their hearts*, not only by withdrawing his Spirit from them, because they had grieved, and vexed, and quenched him (v. 10), but by a judicial sentence upon them (*Go, make the heart of this people fat*, ch. vi. 9, 10) and by his providences concerning them, which had proved sad occasions for their departure from him. David complains of his banishment, because in it he was in effect bidden to *go and serve other gods*, 1 Sam. xxvi. 19. Their troubles had alienated many of them from God, and prejudiced them against his service; and, because the *rod of the wicked had lain long on their lot*, they were ready to *put forth their hand unto iniquity* (Ps. cxxv. 3), and this was the thing they complained most of; their afflictions were their temptations, and to many of them invincible ones. Note, Convinced consciences complain most of spiritual judgments and dread that most in an affliction which draws them from God and duty. 2. That they were given up to their enemies, and God's providence did not rescue and relieve them (v. 18): *Our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary*. As it was a grief to them that in their captivity the generality of them had lost their affection to God's worship, and had their hearts hardened from it by their affliction, so it was a further grief that they were deprived of their opportunities of worshipping God in solemn assemblies. They complained not so much of the adversaries treading down their houses and cities as of their treading down God's sanctuary, because thereby God was immediately affronted, and they were robbed of the comforts they valued most and took most pleasure in.

III. The pleas they urged with God for mercy and deliverance. 1. They pleaded the tender compassion God used to show to his people and his ability and readiness to appear for them, v. 15. The most prevailing arguments in prayer are those that are taken from *God himself*; such these are. *Where is thy zeal and thy strength?* God has a zeal for his own glory, and for the comfort of his people; his name is *Jealous*; and he is a jealous God; and he has strength proportionable to secure his own glory and the interest of his people, in despite of all opposition. Now where are these? Have they not formerly appeared? Why do they not appear now? It cannot be that divine zeal, which is infinitely wise and just, should be cooled, that divine strength, which is infinite, should be weakened. Nay, his people had experienced not only *his zeal and his strength*, but the *sounding of his bowels*, or rather the yearning of them, such a degree of compassion to them as in men causes a commotion and agitation within them, as Hos. xi. 8, *My*

heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together; and Jer. xxxi. 20, *My bowels are troubled (or sound) for him.* "Thus God used to be affected towards his people, and to express a multitude of mercies towards them; but where are they now? Are they restrained? Ps. lxxvii. 9. Has God, who so often remembered to be gracious, now forgotten to be so? *Has he in anger shut up his tender mercies?* It can never be." Note, We may ground good expectations of further mercy upon our experiences of former mercy.

2. They pleaded God's relation to them as their Father (v. 16): "Thy tender mercies are not restrained, for they are the tender mercies of a father, who, though he may be for a time displeased with his child, will yet, through the force of natural affection, soon be reconciled. *Doubtless thou art our Father, and therefore thy bowels will yearn towards us.*" Such good thoughts of God as these we should always keep up in our hearts. *However it be, yet God is good;* for he is our Father. They own themselves fatherless if he be not their Father, and so cast themselves upon him with whom the fatherless findeth mercy, Hos. xiv. 3. It was the honour of their nation that they had Abraham to their father (Matt. iii. 9), who was the friend of God, and Israel, who was a prince with God; but what the better were they for that unless they had God himself for their Father? "Abraham and Israel cannot help us; they have not the power that God has; they are dead long since, and are ignorant of us, and acknowledge us not; they know not what our case is, nor what our wants are, and therefore know not which way to do us a kindness. If Abraham and Israel were alive with us, they would intercede for us and advise us; but they have gone to the other world, and we know not that they have any communication at all with this world, and therefore they are not capable of doing us any kindness any further than that we have the honour of being called their children." When the father is dead his sons come to honour and he knows it not, Job xiv. 21. "But thou, O Lord! art our Father still (the fathers of our flesh may call themselves ever-loving; but they are not ever-living; it is God only that is the immortal Father, that always knows us, and is never at a distance from us), and therefore our Redeemer from everlasting is thy name, the name by which we will know and own thee. It is the name by which from of old thou hast been known; thy people have always looked upon thee as the God to whom they might appeal to redress their grievances and plead their cause. Nay" (according to the sense some give of this place), "though Abraham and Israel not only cannot, but would not, help us, thou wilt. They have not the pity thou hast. We are so degenerate and corrupt that Abraham and Israel would not own us for their children, yet we fly to thee as our Father. Abraham cast out his son Ishmael; Jacob disin-

herited his son Reuben and cursed Simeon and Levi; but our heavenly Father, in pardoning sin, is God, and not man," Hos. xi. 9.

3. They pleaded God's interest in them, that he was their Lord, their owner and proprietor "We are thy servants; what service we can do thou art entitled to, and therefore we ought not to serve strange kings and strange gods: *Return for thy servants' sake.*" As a father finds himself obliged by natural affection to relieve and protect his child, so a master thinks himself obliged in honour to rescue and protect his servant: "We are thine by the strongest engagements, as well as the highest endearments. Thou hast borne rule over us; therefore, Lord, assert thy own interest, maintain thy own right; for we are called by thy name, and therefore whither shall we go but to thee, to be righted and protected? *We are thine, save us* (Ps. cxix. 94), thy own, acknowledge us. We are the tribes of thy inheritance, not only thy servants, but thy tenants; we are thine, not only to do work for thee, but to pay rent to thee. The tribes of Israel are God's inheritance, whence issue the little praise and worship that he receives from this lower world; and wilt thou suffer thy own servants and tenants to be thus abused?"

4. They pleaded that they had had but a short enjoyment of the land of promise and the privileges of the sanctuary (v. 18): *The people of thy holiness have possessed it but a little while.* From Abraham to David were but fourteen generations, and from David to the captivity but fourteen more (Matt. i. 17), and that was but a little while in comparison with what might have been expected from the promise of the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession (Gen. xvii. 8) and from the power that was put forth to bring them into that land and settle them in it. "Though we are the people of thy holiness, distinguished from other people and consecrated to thee, yet we are soon dislodged." But this they might thank themselves for; they were, in profession, the people of God's holiness, but it was their wickedness that turned them out of the possession of that land.

5. They pleaded that those who had and kept possession of their land were such as were strangers to God, such as he had no service or honour from: "Thou never didst bear rule over them, nor did they ever yield thee any obedience; they were not called by thy name, but professed relation to other gods and were the worshippers of them. Will God suffer those that do not stand in any relation to him to trample upon those that do?" Some give another reading of this: "We have become as those over whom thou didst never bear rule and who were never called by thy name; we are rejected and abandoned, despised and trampled upon, as if we never had been in thy service nor had thy name called upon us." Thus the shield of Saul

was vilely cast away, as though he had not been anointed with oil. But the covenant that seems to be forgotten shall be remembered again.

CHAP. LXIV.

This chapter goes on with that pathetic pleading prayer which the church offered up to God in the latter part of the foregoing chapter. They had argued from their covenant-relation to God and his interest and concern in them; now here, I. They pray that God would appear in some remarkable and surprising manner for them against his and their enemies, ver. 1, 2. II. They plead what God had formerly done, and was always ready to do, for his people, ver. 3-5. III. They confess themselves to be sinful and unworthy of God's favour, and that they had deserved the judgments they were now under, ver. 6, 7. IV. They refer themselves to the mercy of God as a Father, and submit themselves to his sovereignty, ver. 8. V. They represent the very deplorable condition they were in, and earnestly pray for the pardon of sin and the turning away of God's anger, ver. 9-12. And this was not only intended for the use of the captive Jews, but may serve for direction to the church in other times of distress, what to ask of God and how to plead with him. Are God's people at any time in affliction, in great affliction? Let them pray, let them thus pray.

OH that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence, 2 As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence! 3 When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence. 4 For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him. 5 Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways: behold, thou art wroth; for we have sinned: in those is continuance, and we shall be saved.

Here, I. The petition is that God would appear wonderfully for them now, v. 1, 2. Their case was represented in the close of the foregoing chapter as very sad and very hard, and in this case it was time to cry, "Help, Lord; O that God would manifest his zeal and his strength!" They had prayed (*ch. lxiii.* 15) that God would look down from heaven; here they pray that he would come down to deliver them, as he had said, *Exod. iii.* 8. 1. They desire that God would in his providence manifest himself both to them and for them. When God works some extraordinary deliverance for his people he is said to *shine forth*, to show himself strong; so, here, they pray that he would *rend the heavens and come down*, as when he delivered David he is said to *bow the heavens, and come down* (*Ps. xviii.* 9), to display his power, and justice, and goodness, in an extraordinary

manner, so that all may take notice of them and acknowledge them. This God's people desire and pray for, that they themselves having the satisfaction of seeing him though his way be in the sea, others may be made to see him when his way is in the clouds. This is applicable to the second coming of Christ, when *the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.* 2. They desire that he would vanquish all opposition and that it might be made to give way before him: *That the mountains might flow down at thy presence*, that the fire of thy wrath may burn so fiercely against thy enemies as even to dissolve the rockiest mountains and melt them down before it, as metal in the furnace, which is made liquid and cast into what shape the operator pleases; so *the melting fire burns, v. 2.* Let things be put into a ferment, in order to a glorious revolution in favour of the church: *As the fire causes the waters to boil.* There is an allusion here, some think, to the volcanoes, or burning mountains, which sometimes send forth such sulphureous streams as make the adjacent rivers and seas to boil, which, perhaps, are left as sensible intimations of the power of God's wrath and warning-pieces of the final conflagration. 3. They desire that this may tend very much to the glory and honour of God, *may make his name known*, not only to his friends (they knew it before, and trusted in his power), but to his adversaries likewise, that they may know it and tremble at his presence, and may say, with the men of Bethshemesh, *Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God? Who knows the power of his anger?* Note, Sooner or later God will make his name known to his adversaries and force those to tremble at his presence that would not come and worship in his presence. God's name, if it be not a strong-hold for us, into which we may run and be safe, will be a strong-hold against us, out of the reach of which we cannot run and be safe. The day will come when nations shall be made to tremble at the presence of God, though they be ever so numerous and strong.

II. The plea is that God had appeared wonderfully for his people formerly; and *thou hast, therefore thou wilt*, is good arguing at the throne of grace, *Ps. x.* 17

1. They plead what he had done for his people Israel in particular when he brought them out of Egypt, v. 3. He then *did terrible things* in the plagues of Egypt, which they looked not for; they despaired of deliverance, so far were they from any thought of being delivered with such a high hand and outstretched arm. Then he came down upon Mount Sinai in such terror as made that and the adjacent mountains to flow down at his presence, to skip like rams (*Ps. cxiv.* 4), to tremble, so that they were scattered and the perpetual hills were made to bow, *Hab.*

iii. In the many great salvations God wrought for that people he did *terrible things which they looked not for*, made great men, that seemed as stately and strong as mountains, to fall before him, and great opposition to give way. See Judg. v. 4, 5; Ps. lxxviii. 7, 8. Some refer this to the defeat of Sennacherib's powerful army, which was as surprising an instance of the divine power as the melting down of rocks and mountains would be.

2. They plead what God had been used to do, and had declared his gracious purpose to do, for his people in general. The provision he has made for the safety and happiness of his people, even of all those that seek him, and serve him, and trust in him, is very rich and very ready, so that they need not fear being either disappointed of it, for it is sure, or disappointed in it, for it is sufficient.

(1.) It is very rich, v. 4. Men have not heard nor seen what God has *prepared for those that wait for him*. Observe the character of God's people; they are such as wait for him in the way of duty, wait for the salvation he has promised and designed for them. Observe where the happiness of this people is bound up; it is *what God has prepared for them*, what he has designed for them in his counsel and is in his providence and grace preparing for them and preparing them for, what he has *done or will do*, so it may be read. Some of the Jewish doctors have understood this of the blessings reserved for the days of the Messiah, and to them the apostle applies these words; and others extend them to the glories of the world to come. It is all that goodness which God has *laid up for those that fear him, and wrought for those that trust in him*, Ps. xxxi. 19. Of this it is here said that *since the beginning of the world*, in the most prying and inquisitive ages of it, men have not, either by hearing or seeing, the two learning senses, come to the full knowledge of it. None have seen, nor heard, nor can understand, but God himself, what the provision is that is made for the present and future felicity of holy souls. For, [1.] Much of it was concealed in former ages; they knew it not, because the *unsearchable riches of Christ were hidden in God*, were *hidden from the wise and prudent*; but in latter ages they were revealed by the gospel; so the apostle applies this (1 Cor. ii. 9), for it follows (v. 10), *But God has revealed them unto us by his Spirit*; compare Rom. xvi. 25, 26, with Eph. iii. 9. That which men had not heard *since the beginning of the world* they should hear before the end of it, and at the end of it should see, when the veil shall be rent to introduce the glory that is yet to be revealed. God himself knew what he had in store for believers, but none knew besides him. [2.] It cannot be fully comprehended by the human understanding, no,

not when it is revealed; it is spiritual, and refined from those ideas which our minds are most apt to receive in this world of sense; it is very great, and will far outdo the utmost of our expectations. Even the present peace of believers, much more their future bliss, is such as surpasses all conception and expression, Phil. iv. 7. None can comprehend it but God himself, whose understanding is infinite. Some give another reading of these words, referring the transcendency not so much to the work itself as to the author of it: *Neither has the eye seen a god besides thee, who doth so* (or has done or can do so) *for him that waits for him*. We must infer from God's works of wondrous grace, as well as from his works of wondrous power, from the kind things, as well as from the great things, he does, that there is *no god like him*, nor any among the sons of the mighty to be compared with him.

(2.) It is very ready (v. 5): *"Thou meetest him that rejoices and works righteousness, meetest him with that good which thou hast prepared for him (v. 4), and dost not forget those that remember thee in thy ways."* See here what communion there is between a gracious God and a gracious soul. [1.] What God expects from us, in order to our having communion with him. *First*, We must make conscience of doing our duty in every thing, we must *work righteousness*, must do that which is good and which the Lord our God requires of us, and must do it well. *Secondly*, We must be cheerful in doing our duty, we must *rejoice and work righteousness*, must delight ourselves in God and in his law, must be cheerful in his service and sing at our work. God loves a cheerful giver, a cheerful worshipper. We must *serve the Lord with gladness*. *Thirdly*, We must conform ourselves to all the methods of his providence concerning us and be suitably affected with them, must *remember him in his ways*, in all the ways wherein he walks, whether he walks towards us or walks contrary to us. We must mind him and make mention of him with thanksgiving when his ways are ways of mercy (*in a day of prosperity be joyful*), with patience and submission when he contends with us. *In the way of thy judgments we have waited for thee*; for in a day of adversity we must *consider*. [2.] We are here told what we may expect from God if we thus attend him in the way of duty: *Thou meetest him*. This intimates the friendship, fellowship, and familiarity to which God admits his people; he meets them, to converse with them, to manifest himself to them, and to receive their addresses, Exod. xx. 24; xxix. 43. It likewise intimates his freeness and forwardness in doing them good; he will *anticipate them with the blessings of his goodness*, will *rejoice to do good to those that rejoice in working righteousness*, and wait to be gracious to those that *wait for him*. He meets him

penitent people with a pardon, as the father of the prodigal met his returning son, Luke xv. 20. He meets his praying people with an answer of peace, while they are yet speaking, *ch. lxxv. 24.*

3. They plead the unchangeableness of God's favour and the stability of his promise, notwithstanding the sins of his people and his displeasure against them for their sins: "*Behold, thou hast many a time been wroth with us because we have sinned, and we have been under the tokens of thy wrath; but in those, those ways of thine, the ways of mercy in which we have remembered thee, in those is continuance,*" or "*in those thou art ever*" (his mercy endures for ever), "*and therefore we shall at last be saved, though thou art wroth, and we have sinned.*" This agrees with the tenour of God's covenant, that, if we forsake the law, he will visit our transgression with a rod, but his loving-kindness he will not utterly take away, his covenant he will not break (Ps. lxxxix. 30, &c.), and by this his people have been many a time saved from ruin when they were just upon the brink of it; see Ps. lxxviii. 38. And by this continuance of the covenant we hope to be saved, for its being an everlasting covenant is all our salvation. Though God has been angry with us for our sins, and justly, yet his anger has endured but for a moment and has been soon over; but in his favour is life, because in it is continuance; in the ways of his favour he proceeds and perseveres, and on that we depend for our salvation, see *ch. liv. 7, 8.* It is well for us that our hopes of salvation are built not upon any merit or sufficiency of our own (for in that there is no certainty, even Adam in innocency did not abide), but upon God's mercies and promises, for in those, we are sure, is continuance.

6 But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. 7 And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities. 8 But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand. 9 Be not wroth very sore, O LORD, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people. 10 Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. 11 Our holy and our beautiful house, where

our fathers praised thee, is burned up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste. 12 Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, O LORD? Wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?

As we have the Lamentations of Jeremiah, so here we have the Lamentations of Isaiah; the subject of both is the same—the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans and the sin of Israel that brought that destruction—only with this difference, Isaiah sees it at a distance and laments it by the Spirit of prophecy, Jeremiah saw it accomplished. In these verses,

I. The people of God in their affliction confess and bewail their sins, thereby justifying God in their afflictions, owning themselves unworthy of his mercy, and thereby both improving their troubles and preparing for deliverance. Now that they were under divine rebukes for sin they had nothing to trust to but the mere mercy of God and the continuance of that; for among themselves there is none to help, none to uphold, none to stand in the gap and make intercession, for they are all polluted with sin and therefore unworthy to intercede, all careless and remiss in duty and therefore unable and unfit to intercede.

1. There was a general corruption of manners among them (*v. 6*): *We are all as an unclean thing, or as an unclean person, as one overspread with a leprosy, who was to be shut out of the camp.* The body of the people were like one under a ceremonial pollution, who was not admitted into the courts of the tabernacle, or like one labouring under some loathsome disease, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot nothing but wounds and bruises, *ch. i. 6.* We have all by sin become not only obnoxious to God's justice, but odious to his holiness; for sin is that abominable thing which the Lord hates, and cannot endure to look upon. *Even all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.*

(1.) "The best of our persons are so; we are all so corrupt and polluted that even those among us who pass for righteous men, in comparison with what our fathers were who rejoiced and wrought righteousness (*v. 5*), are but as filthy rags, fit to be cast to the dung-hill. The best of them is as a brier." (2.) "The best of our performances are so. There is not only a general corruption of manners, but a general defection in the exercises of devotion too; those which pass for the sacrifices of righteousness, when they come to be enquired into, are the torn, and the lame, and the sick, and therefore are provoking to God, as nauseous as filthy rags." Our performances, though they be ever so plausible, if we depend upon them as our righteousness and think to merit by them at God's hand, are as filthy rags—rags,

and will not cover us—filthy rags, and will but defile us. True penitents cast away their idols as filthy rags (*ch. xxx. 22*), odious in their sight; here they acknowledge even their righteousness to be so in God's sight if he should deal with them in strict justice. Our best duties are so defective, and so far short of the rule, that they are as rags, and so full of sin and corruption cleaving to them that they are as filthy rags. When we would do good evil is present with us; and the iniquity of our holy things would be our ruin if we were under the law.

2. There was a general coldness of devotion among them, *v. 7*. The measure was filled by the abounding iniquity of the people, and nothing was done to empty it. (1.) Prayer was in a manner neglected: "*There is none that calls on thy name*, none that seeks to thee for grace to reform us and take away sin, or for mercy to relieve us and take away the judgments which our sins have brought upon us." Therefore people are so bad, because they do not pray; compare *Ps. xiv. 3, 4*, *They have altogether become filthy, for they call not upon the Lord*. It bodes ill to a people when prayer is restrained among them. (2.) It was very negligently performed. If there was here and there one that called on God's name, it was with a great deal of indifference: *There is none that stirs up himself to take hold of God*. Note, [1.] To pray is to take hold of God, by faith to take hold of the promises and the declarations God has made of his good-will to us and to plead them with him,—to take hold of him as of one who is about to depart from us, earnestly begging of him not to leave us, or of one that has departed, soliciting his return,—to take hold of him as he that wrestles takes hold of him he wrestles with; for the seed of Jacob wrestle with him and so prevail. But when we take hold of God it is as the boatman with his hook takes hold on the shore, as if he would pull the shore to him, but really it is to pull himself to the shore; so we pray, not to bring God to our mind, but to bring ourselves to his. [2.] Those that would take hold of God in prayer so as to prevail with him must stir up themselves to do it; all that is within us must be employed in the duty (and all little enough), our thoughts fixed and our affections flaming. In order hereunto all that is within us must be engaged and summoned into the service; we must stir up the gift that is in us by an actual consideration of the importance of the work that is before us and a close application of mind to it; but how can we expect that God should come to us in ways of mercy when there are none that do this, when those that profess to be intercessors are mere triflers?

II. They acknowledge their afflictions to be the fruit and product of their own sins and God's wrath. 1. They brought their

troubles upon themselves by their own folly. "*We are all as an unclean thing, and therefore we do all fade away as a leaf* (*v. 6*), we not only wither and lose our beauty, but we fall and drop off" (so the word signifies "as leaves in autumn; our profession of religion withers, and we grow dry and sapless; our prosperity withers and comes to nothing; we fall to the ground, as despicable and contemptible; and then our iniquities like the wind have taken us away and hurried us into captivity, as the winds in autumn blow off, and then blow away, the faded withered leaves," *Ps. i. 3, 4*. Sinners are blasted, and then carried away, by the malignant and violent wind of their own iniquity; it withers them and then ruins them). 2. God brought their troubles upon them by his wrath (*v. 7*): *Thou hast hidden thy face from us*; hast been displeased with us and refused to afford us any succour. When they made themselves as an unclean thing no wonder that God turned his face away from them, as loathing them. Yet this was not all: *Thou hast consumed us because of our iniquities*. This is the same complaint with that (*Ps. xc. 7, 8*), *We are consumed by thy anger*; thou hast melted us, so the word is God had put them in the furnace, not to consume them as dross, but to melt them as gold, that they might be refined and new cast.

III. They claim relation to God as their God, and humbly plead it with him, and in consideration of it cheerfully refer themselves to him (*v. 8*): "*But now, O Lord, thou art our Father*: though we have conducted ourselves very undutifully and ungratefully towards thee, yet still we have owned thee as our Father; and, though thou hast corrected us, yet thou hast not cast us off. Foolish and careless as we are, poor and despised and trampled upon as we are by our enemies, yet still thou art our Father to thee therefore we return in our repentance, as the prodigal arose and came to his father; to thee we address ourselves by prayer from whom should we expect relief and succour but from our Father? It is the wrath of a Father that we are under, who will be reconciled and not keep his anger for ever. God is their Father, 1. By creation; he gave them their being, formed them into people, shaped them as he pleased: "*We are the clay and thou our potter*, therefore we will not quarrel with thee, however thou art pleased to deal with us, *Jer. xviii. 6*. Nay, therefore we will hope that thou wilt deal well with us, that thou who madest us will new-make us, new-form us, though we have unmade and deformed ourselves: *We are all as an unclean thing, but we are all the work of thy hands*, therefore do away our uncleanness, that we may be fit for thy use; the use we were made for. We are the work of thy hands, therefore forsake us not," *Ps. cxxxviii. 8*. 2. By covenant; this is pleaded

c. 9): "*Behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people, all the people thou hast in the world, that make open profession of thy name. We are called thy people, our neighbours look upon us as such, and therefore what we suffer reflects upon thee, and the relief that our case requires is expected from thee. We are thy people; and should not a people seek unto their God? ch. viii. 19. We are thine; save us,*" Ps. cxix. 94. Note, When we are under providential rebukes from God it is good to keep fast hold of our covenant-relation to him.

IV. They are importunate with God for the turning away of his anger and the pardoning of their sins (v. 9): "*Be not wroth very sore, O Lord! though we have deserved that thou shouldst, neither remember iniquity for ever against us.*" They do not expressly pray for the removal of the judgment they were under; as to that, they refer themselves to God. But, 1. They pray that God would be reconciled to them, and then they can be easy whether the affliction be continued or removed: "*Be not wroth to extremity, but let thy anger be mitigated by the clemency and compassion of a father.*" They do not say, *Lord, rebuke us not*, for that may be necessary, but *Not in thy anger, not in thy hot displeasure*. It is but in a little wrath that God hides his face. 2. They pray that they may not be dealt with according to the desert of their sin: *Neither remember iniquity for ever*. Such is the evil of sin that it deserves to be remembered for ever; and this is that which they deprecate, that consequence of sin, which is for ever. Those make it to appear that they are truly humbled under the hand of God who are more afraid of the terror of God's wrath, and the fatal consequences of their own sin, than of any judgment whatsoever, looking upon these as the sting of death.

V. They lodge in the court of heaven a very melancholy representation, or memorial, of the lamentable condition they were in and the ruins they were groaning under. 1. Their own houses were in ruins, v. 10. The cities of Judah were destroyed by the Chaldeans and the inhabitants of them were carried away, so that there was none to repair them or take any notice of them, which would in a few years make them look like perfect deserts: *Thy holy cities are a wilderness*. The cities of Judah are called *holy cities*, for the people were unto God a kingdom of priests. The cities had synagogues in them, in which God was served; and therefore they lamented the ruins of them, and insisted upon this in pleading with God for them, not so much that they were stately cities, rich or ancient ones, but that they were holy cities, cities in which God's name was known, professed, and called upon. "These cities are a wilderness; the beauty of them is sullied; they are neither inhabited nor visited, as formerly. *They have burnt up*

all the synagogues of God in the land," Ps. lxxiv. 8. Nor was it only the smaller cities that were thus left as a wilderness unfrequented, but even "*Zion is a wilderness; the city of David itself lies in ruins; Jerusalem, that was beautiful for situation and the joy of the whole earth, is now deformed, and has become the scorn and scandal of the whole earth; that noble city is a desolation, a heap of rubbish.*" See what devastations sin brings upon a people; and an external profession of sanctity will be no fence against them; *holy cities*, if they become wicked cities, will be soonest of all turned into a wilderness, Amos iii. 2. 2. God's house was in ruins, v. 11. This they lament most of all, that *the temple was burnt with fire*; but, as soon as it was built, they were told what their sin would bring it to. 2 Chron. vii. 21, *This house, which is high, shall be an astonishment*. Observe how pathetically they bewail the ruins of the temple. (1.) *It was their holy and beautiful house*; it was a most sumptuous building, but the holiness of it was in their eye the greatest beauty of it, and consequently the profanation of it was the saddest part of its desolation and that which grieved them most, that the sacred services which used to be performed there were discontinued. (2.) It was the place *where their fathers praised God* with their sacrifices and songs; what a pity is it that that should lie in ashes which had been for so many ages the glory of their nation! It aggravated their present disuse of the songs of Zion that their fathers had so often praised God with them. They interest God in the cause when they plead that it was the house where *he had been praised*, and put him in mind too of his covenant with their fathers by taking notice of their fathers' praising him. (3.) *With it all their pleasant things were laid waste*, all their desires and delights, all those things which were employed by them in the service of God, which they had a great delight in; not only the furniture of the temple, the altars and table, but especially the sabbaths and new moons, and all their religious feasts, which they used to keep with gladness, their ministers and solemn assemblies, these were all a desolation. Note, God's people reckon their sacred things their most delectable things; rob them of holy ordinances and the means of grace, and you *lay waste all their pleasant things*. What have they more? Observe here how God and his people have their interest twisted and interchanged; when they speak of the cities for their own habitation they call them *thy holy cities*, for to God they were dedicated; when they speak of the temple wherein God dwelt they call it *our beautiful house* and its furniture *our pleasant things*, for they had heartily espoused it and all the interests of it. If thus we interest God in all our concerns by devoting them to his service, and interest our-

selves in all his concerns by laying them near our hearts, we may with satisfaction leave both with him, for he will perfect both.

VI. They conclude with an affectionate expostulation, humbly arguing, with God concerning their present desolations (v. 12): "*Will thou refrain thyself for these things? Or, Canst thou contain thyself at these things? Canst thou see thy temple ruined and not resent it, not revenge it? Has the jealous God forgotten to be jealous? Ps. lxxiv. 22, Arise, O God! plead thy own cause. Lord, thou art insulted, thou art blasphemed; and wilt thou hold thy peace and take no notice of it? Shall the highest affronts that can be done to Heaven pass unrebuked?*" When we are abused we hold our peace, because vengeance does not belong to us, and because we have a God to refer our cause to. When God is injured in his honour it may justly be expected that he should speak in the vindication of it; his people prescribe not to him what he shall say, but their prayer is (as here) Ps. lxxxiii. 1, *Keep not thou silence, O God!* and Ps. cix. 1, *"Hold not thy peace, O God of my praise! Speak for the conviction of thy enemies, speak for the comfort and relief of thy people; for wilt thou afflict us very grievously, or afflict us for ever?"* It is a sore affliction to good people to see God's sanctuary laid waste and nothing done towards the raising of it out of its ruins. But God has said that he *will not contend for ever*, and therefore his people may depend upon it that their afflictions shall be neither to extremity nor to eternity, but *light and for a moment*.

CHAP. LXV.

We are now drawing towards the conclusion of this evangelical prophecy, the last two chapters of which direct us to look as far forward as the new heavens and the new earth, the new world which the gospel dispensation should bring in, and the separation that should by it be made between the precious and the vile. "For judgment" says Christ "have I come into this world." And why should it seem absurd that the prophet here should speak of that to which all the prophets bore witness? 1 Pet. i. 10, 11. The rejection of the Jews, and the calling in of the Gentiles, are often mentioned in the New Testament as that which was foreseen and foretold by the prophets, Acts x. 43; xiii. 40; Rom. xvi. 26. In this chapter we have, I. The anticipating of the Gentiles with the gospel call, ver. 1. II. The rejection of the Jews for their obstinacy and unbelief, ver. 2-7. III. The saving of a remnant of them by bringing them into the gospel church, ver. 8-10. IV. The judgments of God that should pursue the rejected Jews, ver. 11-16. V. The blessings reserved for the Christian church, which should be its joy and glory, ver. 17-25. But these things are here prophesied of under the type and figure of the difference God would make between some and others of the Jews after their return out of captivity, between those that feared God and those that did not, with reproofs of the sins then found among them and promises of the blessings then in reserve for them.

I AM sought of *them that asked not for me*; I am found of *them that sought me not*: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation *that was not called by my name*. 2 I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way *that was not good*, after their own thoughts; 3 A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my

face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick: 4 Which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments, which eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable *things is in their vessels*; 5 Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These *are* a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day. 6 Behold, *it is* written before me: I will not keep silence, but will recompense, even recompense into their bosom, 7 Your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith the LORD, which have burned incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed me upon the hills: therefore will I measure their former work into their bosom.

The apostle Paul (an expositor we may depend upon) has given us the true sense of these verses, and told us what was the event they pointed at and were fulfilled in, namely, the calling in of the Gentiles and the rejection of the Jews, by the preaching of the gospel, Rom. x. 20, 21. And he observes that herein *Esaias is very bold*, not only in foretelling a thing so improbable ever to be brought about, but in foretelling it to the Jews, who would take it as a gross affront to their nation, and therein Moses's words would be made good (Deut. xxxii. 21), *I will provoke you to jealousy by those that are no people*.

I. It is here foretold that the Gentiles, who had been afar off, should be made nigh, v. 1. Paul reads it thus: *I was found of those that sought me not; I was made manifest to those that asked not for me*. Observe what a wonderful and blessed change was made with them and how they were surprised into it. 1. Those who had long been without God in the world shall now be seeking him; those who had not said, *Where is God my maker?* shall now begin to enquire after him. Neither they nor their fathers had called upon his name, but either lived without prayer or prayed to stocks and stones, the work of men's hands. But now they shall be *baptized and call on the name of the Lord*, Acts ii. 21. With what pleasure does the great God here speak of his being sought unto, and how does he glory in it, especially by those who in time past had not asked for him! For there is joy in heaven over great sinners who repent. 2. God shall anticipate their prayers with his blessings: *I am found of those that sought me not*. This happy acquaintance and correspondence between God and the Gentile world began on his side; they came to know God because they were known of him (Gal. iv. 9), to seek

God and find him because they were first sought and found of him. Though in after-communion God is found of those that seek him (Prov. viii. 17), yet in the first conversion he is found of those that seek him not; or *therefore we love him because he first loved us*. The design of the bounty of common providence to them was *that they might seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him*, Acts xvii. 27. But they sought him not; still he was to them an *unknown God*, and yet God was found of them. 3. God gave the advantages of a divine revelation to those who had never made a profession of religion: *I said, Behold me, behold me* gave them a sight of me and invited them to take the comfort and benefit of it) to those who were *not called by my name*, as the Jews for many ages had been. When the apostles went about from place to place, preaching the gospel, this was the substance of what they preached: "*Behold God, behold him, turn towards him, fix the eyes of your minds upon him, acquaint yourselves with him, admire him, adore him; look off from your idols that you have made, and look upon the living God who made you.*" Christ in them said, *Behold me, behold me* with an eye of faith; *look unto me, and be you saved*. And his was said to those that had long been *lo-ammi*, and *lo-ruhamah* (Hos. i. 8, 9), *not a people*, and *that had not obtained mercy*, Rom. ix. 25, 26.

II. It is here foretold that the Jews, who had long been a people near to God, should be cast off and set at a distance, v. 2. The apostle applies this to the Jews in his time, as a seed of evil-doers. Rom. x. 21, *But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people*. Here observe,

1. How the Jews were courted to the divine grace. God himself, by his prophets, by his Son, by his apostles, *stretched forth his hands to them*, as Wisdom did, Prov. i. 24. *God spread out his hands to them*, as one reasoning and expostulating with them, not only beckoned to them with the finger, but *spread out his hands*, as being ready to embrace and entertain them, reaching forth the tokens of his favour to them, and importuning them to accept them. When Christ was crucified his hands were *spread out and stretched forth*, as if he were preparing to receive returning sinners into his bosom; and this *all the day*, all the gospel-day. He waited to be gracious, and was not weary of waiting; even those that came in at the eleventh hour of the day were not rejected.

2. How they rebelled the invitation; it was given to a rebellious and gainsaying people; they were invited to the wedding-supper, and would not come, but *rejected the counsel of God against themselves*. Now here we have,

(1.) The bad character of this people. The world shall see that it was not for no-

thing that they were rejected of God; no, it was for their whoredoms that they were put away.

[1.] Their character in general was such as one would not expect of those who had been so much the favourites of Heaven. First, They were very wilful. Right or wrong they would do as they had a mind. "*They generally walk on in a way that is not good, not the right way, not a safe way, for they walk after their own thought, their own devices and desires.*" If our guide be our own thoughts, our way is not likely to be good; for *every imagination of the thought of our hearts is only evil*. God had told them his thoughts, what his mind and will were, but they would walk *after their own thoughts*, would do what they thought best. Secondly, They were very provoking. This was God's complaint of them all along—they grieved him, they *vexed his Holy Spirit*, as if they would contrive how to make him their enemy. They *provoke me to anger continually to my face*. They cared not what affront they gave to God, though it were in his sight and presence, in a downright contempt of his authority and defiance of his justice; and this *continually*; it had been their way and manner ever since they were a people, witness the *day of temptation in the wilderness*.

[2.] The prophet speaks more particularly of *their iniquities and the iniquities of their fathers*, as the ground of God's casting them off, v. 7. Now he gives instances of both.

First, The most provoking iniquity of their fathers was idolatry; this, the prophet tells them, was provoking God to his face; and it is an iniquity which, as appears by the second commandment, God often *visits upon the children*. This was the sin that brought them into captivity, and, though the captivity pretty well cured them of it, yet, when the final ruin of that nation came, that was again brought into the account against them; for in the day when God visits he will visit that, Exod. xxxii. 34. Perhaps there were many, long after the captivity, who, though they did not worship other gods, were yet guilty of the disorders here mentioned; for they married strange wives. 1. They forsook God's temple, and *sacrificed in gardens or groves*, that they might have the satisfaction of doing it in their own way, for they liked not God's institutions. 2. They forsook God's altar, and *burnt incense upon bricks*, altars of their own contriving (they burnt incense according to their own inventions, which were of no more value, in comparison with God's institution, than an altar of bricks in comparison with the golden altar which God appointed them to burn incense on), or *upon tiles* (so some read it), such as they covered their flat-roofed houses with, and on them sometimes they burnt incense to their idols, as appears, 2 Kings xxiii. 12, where we read of altars *on the top of the upper chamber of Ahas*, and Jer. xix. 13, of their

burning incense to the host of heaven upon the roofs of their houses. 3. "They used necromancy, or consulting with the dead, and, in order to that, they remained among the graves, and lodged in the monuments," to seek for the living to the dead (*ch.* viii. 19), as the witch of Endor. Or they used to consult the evil spirits that haunted the sepulchres. 4. They violated the laws of God about their meat, and broke through the distinction between clean and unclean before it was taken away by the gospel. They ate swine's flesh. Some indeed chose rather to die than to eat swine's flesh, as Eleazar and the seven brethren in the story of the Maccabees; but it is probable that many ate of it, especially when it came to be a condition of life. In our Saviour's time we read of a vast herd of swine among them, which gives us cause to suspect that there were many then who made so little conscience of the law as to eat swine's flesh, for which they were justly punished in the destruction of the swine. And the broth, or pieces, of other forbidden meats, called here *abominable things*, was in their vessels, and was made use of for food. The forbidden meat is called an *abomination*, and those that meddle with it are said to *make themselves abominable*, Lev. xi. 42, 43. Those that durst not eat the meat yet made bold with the broth, because they would come as near as might be to that which was forbidden, to show how they coveted the forbidden fruit. Perhaps this is here put figuratively for all forbidden pleasures and profits which are obtained by sin, that *abominable thing which the Lord hates*; they loved to be dallying with it, to be tasting of its broth. But those who thus take a pride in venturing upon the borders of sin, and the brink of it, are in danger of falling into the depths of it. But,

Secondly, The most provoking iniquity of the Jews in our Saviour's time was their pride and hypocrisy, that sin of the scribes and Pharisees against which Christ denounced so many woes, v. 5. They say, "Stand by thyself, keep off" (*get thee to thine*, so the original is); "keep to thy own companions, but come not near to me, lest thou pollute me; touch me not; I will not allow thee any familiarity with me, for I am holier than thou, and therefore thou art not good enough to converse with me; I am not as other men are, nor even as this publican." This they were ready to say to every one they met with, so that, in saying, *I am holier than thou*, they thought themselves holier than any, not only very good, as good as they should be, as good as they needed to be, but better than any of their neighbours. These are a smoke in my nose (says God), such a smoke as comes not from a quick fire, which soon becomes glowing and pleasant, but from a fire of wet wood, which burns all the day, and is nothing but smoke. Note, Nothing in men is more odious and offensive

to God than a proud conceit of themselves and contempt of others; for commonly those are most unholy of all that think themselves holier than any.

(2.) The controversy God had with them for this. The proof against them is plain. Behold, it is written before me, v. 6. It is written, to be remembered against them, I will come; for they may not perhaps be immediately reckoned with. The sinners, and particularly the vainglorious boasts and scorns of hypocrites, are laid up in store with God, Deut. xxxii. 34. And what is written shall be read and proceeded upon. "I will not keep silence always, though I may keep silence long." They shall not think him altogether such a one as themselves, as sometimes they have done; but he will recompense, even recompense into their bosom. Those basely abuse religion, this honourable and sacred thing, who make the profession of it the matter of their pride, and the jealous God will reckon with them for it; the profession they boast of shall but serve to aggravate their condemnation. [1.] The iniquity of their fathers shall come against them; not but that their own sin deserved whatever judgments God brought upon them, and much heavier; and this they owned, Ezra ix. 13. But God would not have wrought so great a desolation upon them if he had not therein had an eye to the sins of their fathers. Therefore in the destruction of Jerusalem God is said to bring upon them the blood of the Old-Testament martyrs, even that of Abel, Matt. xxiii. 35. God will reckon with them, not only for the fathers' idols, but for their high places, the burning incense upon the mountains and the hills, though perhaps it was to the true God only. This was blaspheming or reproaching God; it was a reflection upon the choice he had made of the place where he would record his name, and the promise he had made that there he would meet them and bless them. [2.] Their own with that shall bring ruin upon them: Your iniquities and the iniquities of your fathers together, the one aggravating the other, constitute the form of work, which, though it may seem to be overlooked and forgotten, shall be measured in their bosom. God will render into the bosom not only of his open enemies (Ps. lxxix. 12) but of his false and treacherous friends, that reproach wherewith they have reproached him.

8 Thus saith the LORD, As the new wine is found in the cluster, an one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all. 9 And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there. 10 And

Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in, for my people that have sought me.

This is expounded by St. Paul, Rom. xi. 1—5, where, when, upon occasion of the rejection of the Jews, it is asked, *Hath God then cast away his people?* he answers, No; for *at this time there is a remnant according to the election of grace.* This prophecy has reference to that distinguished remnant. When that hypocritical nation is to be destroyed God will separate and secure to himself some from among them; some of the Jews shall be brought to embrace the Christian faith, shall be added to the church, and so be saved. And our Saviour has told us that *for the sake of these elect the days of the destruction of the Jews should be shortened, and a stop put to the desolation, which otherwise would have proceeded to such a degree that no flesh should be saved,* Matt. xxiv. 22. Now,

I. This is illustrated here by a comparison, v. 8. When a vine is so blasted and withered that there seems to be no sap nor life in it, and therefore the dresser of the vineyard is inclined to pluck it up or cut it down, yet, if ever so little of the juice of the grape, fit to make new wine, be found, though but in one cluster, a stander-by interposes, and says, *Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it*; there is life in the root, and hope that yet it may become good for something. Good men are blessings to the places where they live; and sometimes God spares whole cities and nations for the sake of a few such in them. How ambitious should we be of this honour, not only to be distinguished from others, but serviceable to others!

II. Here is a description of those that shall make up this saved saving remnant. 1. They are such as serve God. It is *for my servants' sake* (v. 8), and they are *my servants that shall dwell there*, v. 9. God's faithful servants, however they are looked upon, are the best friends their country has; and those who serve him do therein *serve their generation*. 2. They are such as seek God, make it the end of their lives to glorify God and the business of their lives to call upon him. It is *for my people that have sought me*. Those that seek God shall find him, and shall find him their bountiful rewarder.

III. Here is an account of the mercy God has in store for them. The remnant that shall return out of captivity shall have a happy settlement again in their own land, and that by an hereditary right, as a *seed out of Jacob*, in whom the family is kept up and the entail preserved; and from whom, as from the seed sown, shall spring a numerous increase; and these typify the remnant of Jacob that shall be incorporated into the gospel church by faith. 1 They shall have

a good portion for themselves. They shall inherit *my mountains*, the holy mountains on which Jerusalem and the temple were built or the mountains of Canaan, *the land of promise*, typifying the covenant of grace, which all God's servants, his elect, both inhabi and inherit; they make it their refuge, their rest and residence, so they dwell in it, are at home in it; and they have taken it to be their heritage for ever, and it shall be to them an inheritance incorruptible. God's chosen, the spiritual seed of praying Jacob, shall be the inheritors of his mountains of bliss and joy, and shall be carried safely to them through the vale of tears. 2. They shall have a green pasture for their flocks, v. 10. *Sharon and the valley of Achor* shall again be as well replenished as ever they were with cattle. Sharon lay westward, near Joppa; Achor lay eastward, near Jordan. It is therefore intimated that they shall recover the possession of the whole land, that they shall have wherewith to stock it all, and that they shall peaceably enjoy it and there shall be none to disturb them nor make them afraid. Gospel-ordinances are the fields and valleys where the sheep of Christ *shall go in and out and find pasture* (John x. 9), and where they are *made to lie down* (Ps. xxiii. 2), as Israel's herds in the *valley of Achor*, Hos ii. 15.

11 But ye are they that forsake the LORD, that forget my holy mountain, that prepare a table for that troop, and that furnish the drink-offering unto that number. 12 Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter: because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear; but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose *that* wherein I delighted not. 13 Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: 14 Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit. 15 And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: for the Lord God shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name: 16 That he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth; because the former

troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes.

Here the different states of the godly and wicked, of the Jews that believed and of those that still persisted in unbelief, are set the one over-against the other, as life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse.

I. Here is the fearful doom of those that persisted in their idolatry after the deliverance out of Babylon, and in infidelity after the preaching of the gospel of Christ. Observe,

1. What the doom is that is here threatened: "*I will number you to the sword as sheep for the slaughter, and there shall be no escaping, no standing out; you shall all bow down to it,*" v. 12. God's judgments come, (1.) Regularly, and are executed according to the commission. Those fall by the sword that are numbered or counted out to it, and none besides. Though the sword seems to devour promiscuously *one as well as another*, yet it is made to know its number and shall not exceed. (2.) Irresistibly. The strongest and most stout-hearted sinners shall be forced to bow before them; for none ever hardened their hearts against God and prospered.

2. What the sins are that number them to the sword. (1.) Idolatry was the ancient sin (v. 11): "*You are those who, instead of seeking me and serving me as my people, forsake the Lord*, disown him, and cast him off to embrace other gods, who *forget my holy mountain* (the privileges it confers and the obligations it lays you under) to burn incense upon the mountains of your idols (v. 7), and have deserted the one only living and true God." They *prepared a table for that troop of dæmons* which the heathen worship and *poured out drink-offerings to that numberless number of them*; for those that thought one God too little never thought scores and hundreds sufficient, but were still adding to the number of them, till they had as many gods as cities and their altars were as thick as *heaps in the furrows of the field*, Hos. xii. 11. Some take *Gad and Meni*, which we translate *a troop* and *a number*, to be the proper names of two of their idols, answering to Jupiter and Mercury. Whatever they were, their worshippers spared no cost to do them honour; they prepared a table for them, and filled out mixed wine for drink-offerings to them; they would pinch their families rather than stint their devotions, which should shame the worshippers of the true God out of their niggardliness. (2.) Infidelity was the sin of the later Jews (v. 12): *When I called, you did not answer*, which refers to the same that v. 2 did (*I have stretched out my hands to a rebellious people*), and that is applied to those who rejected the gospel. Our Lord Jesus himself called (he *stood and cried*, John vii. 37), but they did not hear, they would not answer; they were not convinced

by his reasonings nor moved by his exhortations; both the fair warnings he gave them of death and ruin and the fair offer he made them of life and happiness were slighted and made no impression upon them. Yet this was not all: *You did evil before my eyes*, not by surprise, or through inadvertency, but with deliberation: *You did choose that wherein I delighted not*; he means that which he utterly detested and abhorred. It is not strange that those who will not be persuaded to choose that which is good persist in their choice and pursuit of that which is evil. See the malignity of sin; it is evil in God's eyes, highly offensive to him, and yet it is committed before his eyes, in his sight and presence, and in contempt of him. It is likewise a contradiction to the will of God; it is doing that, of choice, which we know will displease him.

II. The aggravation of this doom, from the consideration of the happy state of those that were brought to repentance and faith.

1. The blessedness of those that serve God, and the woeful condition of those that rebel against him, are here set the *one over-against the other*, that they may serve as a foil to each other, v. 13—16. (1.) God's servants may well think themselves happy, and for ever indebted to that free grace which made them so, when they see how miserable some of their neighbours are for want of that grace, who are hardened, and likely to perish for ever in unbelief, and what a narrow escape they had of being among them. See ch. lxvi. 24. (2.) It will add to the grief of those that perish to see the happiness of God's servants (whom they had hated, and vilified, and looked upon with the utmost disdain), and especially to think that they might have shared in their bliss if it had not been their own fault. It made the torment of the rich man in hell the more grievous that he *saw Abraham, Isaac, and Lazarus in his bosom*, Luke xvi. 23. See Luke xiii. 28. Sometimes the providence of God makes such a difference as this between good and bad in this world, and the prosperity of the righteous becomes a grievous eye-sore and vexation of heart to the wicked (Ps. cxii. 10), and it will certainly be so in the great day. *We fools counted his life madness and his end without honour; but now how is he numbered with the saints and his lot is among the chosen*. Now,

2. The difference of their states lies in two things:—

(1.) In point of comfort and satisfaction [1.] God's servants shall eat and drink; they shall have the bread of life to feed, to feast upon, continually, shall be abundantly replenished with the goodness of his house and shall want nothing that is good for them. Heaven's happiness will be to them an everlasting feast; they shall be filled with that which now they hunger and thirst after. But those who set their hearts upon

the world, and place their happiness in that, shall be hungry and thirsty, always empty, always craving; for it is not bread; it surfeits, but it satisfies not. In communion with God, and dependence upon him, there is full satisfaction; but in sinful pursuits there is nothing but disappointment. [2.] God's servants *shall rejoice and sing for joy of heart*. They have constant cause for joy, and there is nothing that may be an occasion of grief to them but they have an allay sufficient for it; and, as far as faith is in act and exercise, they have a heart to rejoice, and their joy is their strength. They shall rejoice in their hope, because it shall not make them ashamed. Heaven will be a world of everlasting joy to all that are now sowing in tears. But, on the other hand, those that forsake the Lord shut themselves out from all true joy, for *they shall be ashamed* of their vain confidence in themselves, and their own righteousness, and the hopes they had built thereon. When the expectations of bliss wherewith they had flattered themselves are frustrated, O what confusion will fill their faces! Then shall they *cry for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit*, perhaps in this world, when their laughter shall be turned into mourning and their joy into heaviness, and certainly in that world where the torment will be endless, easeless, and remediless—nothing but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, to eternity. Let these two be compared, *Now he is comforted and thou art tormented*, and which of the two will we choose to take our lot with?

(2.) In point of honour and reputation, v. 15, 16. *The memory of the just is, and shall be, blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot*. [1.] The name of the idolaters and unbelievers shall be left for a curse, shall be loaded with ignominy and made for ever infamous. It shall be used in giving bad characters—*Thou art as cruel as a Jew*; and in imprecation—*God make thee as miserable as a Jew*. It shall be for a curse to God's chosen, that is, for a warning to them; they shall be afraid of falling under the curse upon the Jewish nation, of perishing after the same example of unbelief. The curse of those whom God rejects should make his chosen stand in awe. *The Lord God shall slay thee*; he shall quite extirpate the Jews and cut them off from being a people; they shall no longer live as a nation, nor ever be incorporated again. [2.] The name of God's chosen shall become a blessing: *He shall call his servants by another name*. The children of the covenant shall no longer be called *Jews*, but *Christians*; and to them, under that name, all the promises and privileges of the new covenant shall be secured. This other name shall be an honourable name; it shall not be confined to one nation, but with it men shall *bless themselves in the earth*, all the world over. God shall have servants out of all nations who shall all be

dignified with this new name. They shall bless themselves *in the God of truth*. *First*, They shall give honour to God both in their prayers and in their solemn oaths, in their addresses for his favour as their felicity and their appeals to his justice as their Judge. This is a part of the homage we owe to God; we must bless ourselves in him, that is, we must reckon that we have enough to make us happy, that we need no more, and can desire no more, if we have him for our God. It is of great consequence what we bless ourselves in, what we most please ourselves with and value ourselves by our interest in. Worldly people bless themselves in the abundance they have of this world's goods (Ps. xlix. 18; Luke xii. 19); but God's servants bless themselves in him, as a God all-sufficient for them. He is their crown of glory and diadem of beauty, their strength and portion. By him also *they shall swear*, and not by any creature or any false god. To his judgment they shall refer their cause, from whom every man's judgment doth proceed. *Secondly*, They shall give honour to him as *the God of truth, the God of the Amen* (so the word is); some understand it of Christ who is himself the Amen, the faithful witness (Rev. iii. 14), and in whom all the promises are *yea and amen*, 2 Cor. i. 20. In him we must bless ourselves, and by him we must swear unto the Lord and covenant with him. He that is *blessed in the earth* (so some read it) *shall be blessed in the true God*, for Christ is the true God and eternal life, 1 John v. 20. And it was promised of old that *in him all the families of the earth should be blessed*, Gen. xii. 3. Some read it, *He shall bless himself in the God of the faithful people*, in God as the God of all believers, desiring no more than to share in the blessings wherewith they are blessed, to be dealt with as he deals with them. *Thirdly*, They shall give him honour as the author of this blessed change which they have the experience of; they shall think themselves happy in having him for their God who has made them to forget their former troubles, the remembrance of them being swallowed up in their present comforts: *Because they are hidden from God's eyes*, that is, they are quite taken away; for, if there were any remainder of their troubles, God would be sure to have his eye upon it, in compassion to them and concern for them. They shall no longer feel them; for God will no longer see them. He is pleased to speak as if he would make himself easy by making them easy; and therefore they shall with a great deal of satisfaction bless themselves in him.

17 For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. 18 But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create:

for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. 19 And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. 20 There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die a hundred years old; but the sinner *being* a hundred years old shall be accursed. 21 And they shall build houses, and inhabit *them*; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. 22 They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree *are* the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. 23 They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they *are* the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them. 24 And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. 25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust *shall be* the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.

If these promises were in part fulfilled when the Jews, after their return out of captivity, were settled in peace in their own land and brought as it were into a new world, yet they were to have their full accomplishment in the gospel church, militant first and at length triumphant. *The Jerusalem that is from above is free and is the mother of us all.* In the graces and comforts which believers have in and from Christ we are to look for this new heaven and new earth. It is in the gospel that *old things have passed away and all things have become new*, and by it that those who are in Christ are *new creatures*, 2 Cor. v. 17. It was a mighty and happy change that was described v. 16, that the *former troubles were forgotten*; but here it rises much higher: even the *former world* shall be *forgotten and shall no more come into mind*. Those that were converted to the Christian faith were so transported with the comforts of it that all the comforts they were before acquainted with became as nothing to them; not only their foregoing griefs, but their foregoing joys, were lost and swallowed up in this. The glorified saints will there-

fore have forgotten this world, because they will be entirely taken up with the other: *For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth.* See how inexhaustible the divine power is; the same God that created one heaven and earth can create another. See how entire the happiness of the saints is; it shall be all of a piece; with the new heavens God will create them (if they have occasion for it to make them happy) a new earth too. *The world is yours if you be Christ's*, 1 Cor. iii. 22. When God is reconciled to us, which gives us a new heaven, the creatures too are reconciled to us, which gives us a new earth. The future glory of the saints will be so entirely different from what they ever knew before that it may well be called *new heavens and a new earth*, 2 Pet. iii. 13. *Behold, I make all things new*, Rev. xxi. 5.

I. There shall be new joys. For, 1. All the church's friends, and all that belong to her, shall rejoice (v. 18): *You shall be glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create.* The new things which God creates in and by his gospel are and shall be matter of everlasting joy to all believers. *My servants shall rejoice* (v. 18), at last they shall, though now they mourn. *Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.* 2 The church shall be the matter of their joy, so pleasant, so prosperous, shall her condition be: *I create Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy.* The church shall not only rejoice but be rejoiced in. Those that have sorrowed with the church shall rejoice with her. 3. The prosperity of the church shall be a rejoicing to God himself, who has pleasure in the prosperity of his servants (v. 19): *I will rejoice in Jerusalem's joy, and will joy in my people*; for in all their affliction *he was afflicted*. God will not only rejoice in the church's well-doing, but will himself *rejoice to do her good and rest in his love* to her, Zeph. iii. 17. What God rejoices in it becomes us to rejoice in. 4. There shall be no alloy of this joy, nor any alteration of this happy condition of the church: *The voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her.* If this relate to any state of the church in this life, it means no more than that the former occasions of grief shall not return, but God's people shall long enjoy an uninterrupted tranquillity. But in heaven it shall have a full accomplishment, in respect both of the perfection and the perpetuity of the promised joy; there *all tears shall be wiped away*.

II. There shall be new life, v. 20. Untimely deaths by the sword or sickness shall be no more known as they have been, and by this means there shall be *no more the voice of crying*, v. 19. When there shall be *no more death* there shall be *no more sorrow*, Rev. xxi. 4. As death has reigned by sin, so life shall reign by righteousness, Rom. v. 14, 21. 1. Believers through Christ shall be satisfied with life, though it be ever so short on earth. If an infant end its days

quickly, yet it shall not be reckoned to die untimely; for the shorter its life is the longer will its rest be. Though death reign over those that have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, yet they, dying in the arms of Christ, the second Adam, and belonging to his kingdom, are not to be called infants of days, but even the child shall be reckoned to die a hundred years old, for he shall rise again at full age, shall rise to eternal life. Some understand it of children who in their childhood are so eminent for wisdom and grace, and by death nipped in the blossom, that they may be said to die a hundred years old. And, as for old men, it is promised that *they shall fill their days with the fruits of righteousness*, which they shall still bring forth in old age, to show that the Lord is upright, and then it is a good old age. An old man who is wise, and good, and useful, may truly be said to have filled his days. Old men who have their hearts upon the world have never filled their days, never have enough of this world, but would still continue longer in it. But that man dies old, and *satur dierum—full of days*, who, with Simeon, having seen God's salvation, desires now to depart in peace. 2. Unbelievers shall be unsatisfied and unhappy in life, though it be ever so long. The sinner, though he live to be a hundred years old, shall be accursed. His living so long shall be no token to him of the divine favour and blessing, nor shall it be any shelter to him from the divine wrath and curse. The sentence he lies under will certainly be executed, and his long life is but a long reprieve; nay, it is itself a curse to him, for the longer he lives the more wrath he treasures up against the day of wrath and the more sins he will have to answer for. So that the matter is not great whether our lives on earth be long or short, but whether we live the lives of saints or the lives of sinners.

III. There shall be a new enjoyment of the comforts of life. Whereas before it was very uncertain and precarious, their enemies inhabited the houses which they built and ate the fruit of the trees which they planted, now it shall be otherwise; they shall build houses and inhabit them, shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them, v. 21, 22. This intimates that the labour of their hands shall be blessed and be made to prosper; they shall gain what they aimed at, and what they have gained shall be preserved and secured to them; they shall enjoy it comfortably, and nothing shall embitter it to them, and they shall live to enjoy it long. Strangers shall not break in upon them, to expel them, and plant themselves in their room, as sometimes they have done: *My elect shall wear out, or long enjoy, the work of their hands*; it is honestly got, and it will wear well; it is the work of their hands, which they themselves have laboured for, and it is most comfortable to enjoy that, and not to eat the bread

of idleness, or bread of deceit. If we have a heart to enjoy it, that is the gift of God's grace (Eccl. iii. 13); and, if we live to enjoy it long, it is the gift of God's providence, for that is here promised: *As the days of a tree are the days of my people; as the days of an oak* (ch. vi. 13), *whose substance is in it, though it cast its leaves*; though it be stripped every winter, it recovers itself again, and lasts many ages; as the days of the tree of life; so the LXX. Christ is to them the tree of life, and in him believers enjoy all those spiritual comforts which are typified by the abundance of temporal blessings here promised; and it shall not be in the power of their enemies to deprive them of these blessings or disturb them in the enjoyment of them.

IV. There shall be a new generation rising up in their stead to inherit and enjoy these blessings (v. 23): *They shall not labour in vain*, for they shall not only enjoy the work of their hands themselves, but they shall leave it with satisfaction to those that shall come after them, and not with such a melancholy prospect as Solomon did, Eccl. ii. 18, 19. They shall not beget and bring forth children for trouble; for they are themselves the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and there is a blessing entailed upon them by descent from their ancestors which their offspring with them shall partake of, and shall be, as well as they, the seed of the blessed of the Lord. They shall not bring forth for trouble; for, 1. God will make their children that rise up comforts to them; they shall have the joy of seeing them walk in the truth. 2. He will make the times that come after comfortable to their children. As they shall be good, so it shall be well with them; they shall not be brought forth to days of trouble; nor shall it ever be said, *Blessed is the womb that bore not*. In the gospel church Christ's name shall be borne up by a succession. *A seed shall serve him* (Ps. xxii. 30), *the seed of the blessed of the Lord*.

V. There shall be a good correspondence between them and their God (v. 24): *Even before they call, I will answer*. God will anticipate their prayers with the blessings of his goodness. David did but say, *I will confess*, and God forgave, Ps. xxxii. 5. The father of the prodigal met him in his return. While they are yet speaking, before they have finished their prayer, I will give them the thing they pray for, or the assurances and earnest of it. These are high expressions of God's readiness to hear prayer; and this appears much more in the grace of the gospel than it did under the law; we owe the comfort of it to the mediation of Christ as our advocate with the Father and are obliged in gratitude to give a ready ear to God's calls.

VI. There shall be a good correspondence between them and their neighbours (v. 25):

The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, as they did in Noah's ark. God's people, though they are as sheep in the midst of wolves, shall be safe and unhurt; for God will not so much break the power and tie the hands of their enemies as formerly, but he will turn their hearts, will alter their dispositions by his grace. When Paul, who had been a persecutor of the disciples (and who, being of the tribe of Benjamin, ravened as a wolf, Gen. xlix. 27) joined himself to them and became one of them, then *the wolf and the lamb fed together*. So also when the enmity between Jews and Gentiles was slain, all hostilities ceased, and they fed together as one sheepfold under Christ the great Shepherd, John x. 16. The enemies of the church ceased to do the mischief they had done, and its members ceased to be so quarrelsome with and injurious to one another as they had been, so that there was none either from without or from within to hurt or destroy, none to disturb it, much less to ruin it, *in all the holy mountain*; as was promised, ch. xi. 9. For, 1. Men shall be changed: *The lion shall no more be a beast of prey*, as perhaps he never would have been if sin had not entered, but *shall eat straw like the bullock*, shall know his owner, and his master's crib, as the ox does. When those that lived by spoil and rapine, and coveted to enrich themselves, right or wrong, are brought by the grace of God to accommodate themselves to their condition, to live by honest labour, and to be content with such things as they have—when those that stole steal no more, but work with their hands the thing that is good—then this is fulfilled, that *the lion shall eat straw like the bullock*. 2. Satan shall be chained, the dragon bound; *for dust shall be the serpent's meat again*. That great enemy, when he has been let loose, has glutted and regaled himself with the precious blood of saints, who by his instigation have been persecuted, and with the precious souls of sinners, who by his instigation have become persecutors and have ruined themselves for ever; but now he shall be confined to dust, according to the sentence, *On thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat*, Gen. iii. 14. All the enemies of God's church, that are subtle and venomous as serpents, shall be conquered and subdued, and be made to lick the dust. Christ shall reign as Zion's King till all the enemies of his kingdom be made his footstool, and theirs too. In the holy mountain above, and there only, shall this promise have its full accomplishment, that there shall be none to hurt nor destroy.

CHAP. LXVI.

The scope of this chapter is much the same as that of the foregoing chapter and many expressions of it are the same; it therefore looks the same way, to the different state of the good and bad among the Jews at their return out of captivity, but that typifying the rejection of the Jews in the days of the Messiah, the conversion of the Gentiles, and the setting up of the gospel-kingdom in the world. The first verse of this chapter is applied by Stephen to the dismantling of the temple by the planting of the Christian church (Acts vii. 46, 50), which may serve as a key to the whole chapter. We have here, I. The contempt God puts upon cere-

monial services in comparison with moral duties, and an intimation therein of his purpose shortly to put an end to the temple, and sacrifice and reject those that adhered to them, ver. 1-5. II. The salvation God will in due time work for his people out of the hands of their oppressors (ver. 5), speaking terror to the persecutors (ver. 6) and comfort to the persecuted, a speedy and complete deliverance (ver. 7-9), a joyful settlement (ver. 10, 11), the accession of the Gentiles to them, and abundance of satisfaction therein, ver. 12-14. III. The terrible vengeance which God will bring upon the enemies of his church and people, ver. 15-18. IV. The happy establishment of the church upon large and sure foundations, its constant attendance on God and triumph over its enemies, ver. 19-24. And we may well expect that this evangelical prophet, here, in the close of his prophecy, should (as he does) look as far forward as to the latter days, to the last day, to the days of eternity.

THUS saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? 2 For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. 3 He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. 4 I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not.

Here, I. The temple is slighted in comparison with a gracious soul, v. 1, 2. The Jews in the prophet's time, and afterwards in Christ's time, gloried much in the temple and promised themselves great things from it; to humble them therefore, and to shake their vain confidence, both the prophets and Christ foretold the ruin of the temple, that God would leave it and then it would soon be desolate. After it was destroyed by the Chaldeans it soon recovered itself and the ceremonial services were revived with it; but by the Romans it was made a perpetual desolation, and the ceremonial law was abolished with it. That the world might be prepared for this, they were often told, as here, of what little account the temple was with God. 1. That he did not need it. Heaven is the throne of his glory and government; there he sits, infinitely exalted in the highest dignity and dominion, above all blessing and praise. The earth is his footstool, on which he stands, overruling all the affairs of it according to his will. If God has so bright a throne, so large a footstool, where then is the house they can

build unto God, that can be the residence of his glory, or where is the place of his rest? What satisfaction can the Eternal Mind take in a house made with men's hands? What occasion has he, as we have, for a house to repose himself in, who *faints not neither is weary*, who neither slumbers nor sleeps? Or, if he had occasion, he *would not tell us* (Ps. 1. 12), for *all these things hath his hand made*, heaven and all its courts, earth and all its borders, and all the hosts of both. *All these things have been*, have had their beginning, by the power of God, who was happy from eternity before they were, and therefore could not be benefited by them. *All these things are* (so some read it); they still continue, upheld by the same power that made them; so that *our goodness extends not to him*. If he required a house for himself to dwell in, he would have made one himself when he made the world; and, if he had made one, it would have continued to this day, as other creatures do, according to his ordinance; so that he had no need of a temple made with hands. 2. That he would not heed it as he would a humble, penitent, gracious heart. He has a heaven and earth of his own making, and a temple of man's making; but he overlooks them all, that he may look with favour to him that is poor in spirit, humble and serious, self-abasing and self-denying, whose heart is truly contrite for sin, penitent for it, and in pain to get it pardoned, and who *trembles at God's word*, not as Felix did, with a transient qualm that was over when the sermon was done, but with an habitual awe of God's majesty and purity and an habitual dread of his justice and wrath. Such a heart is a living temple for God; he dwells there, and it is the place of his rest; it is like heaven and earth, his throne and his footstool.

II. Sacrifices are slighted when they come from ungracious hands. *The sacrifice of the wicked is not only unacceptable, but it is an abomination to the Lord* (Prov. xv. 8); this is largely shown here, v. 3, 4. Observe, 1. How detestable their sacrifices were to God. The carnal Jews, after their return out of captivity, though they relapsed not to idolatry, grew very careless and loose in the service of God; they brought the *torn, and the lame, and the sick for sacrifice* (Mal. i. 8, 13), and this made their services abominable to God; they had no regard to their sacrifices, and therefore how could they think God would have any regard to them? The unbelieving Jews, after the gospel was preached and in it notice given of the offering up of the great sacrifice, which put an end to all the ceremonial services, continued to offer sacrifices, as if the law of Moses had been still in force and could *make the comers thereunto perfect*: this was an abomination. *He that kills an ox for his own table is welcome to do it*; but he that now kills it, that thus kills it, for God's altar, *is as if he slew a man*; it is as

great an offence to God as murder itself; he that does it does in effect set aside Christ's sacrifice, *treads under foot the blood of the covenant*, and makes himself accessory to the guilt of the body and blood of the Lord, setting up what Christ died to abolish. *He that sacrifices a lamb*, if it be a corrupt thing, and not the male in his flock, the best he has, if he think to put God off with any thing, he affronts him, instead of pleasing him; it is *as if he cut off a dog's neck*, a creature in the eye of the law so vile that, whereas an ass might be redeemed, the price of a dog was never to be brought into the treasury, Deut. xxiii. 18. *He that offers an oblation*, a meat-offering or drink-offering, is as if he thought to make atonement with *swine's blood*, a creature that must not be eaten nor touched, the *broth of it* was abominable (ch. lxx. 4), much more the blood of it. *He that burns incense to God*, and so puts contempt upon the incense of Christ's intercession, is *as if he blessed an idol*; it was as great an affront to God as if they had paid their devotions to a false god. Hypocrisy and profaneness are as provoking as idolatry. 2. What their wickedness was which made their sacrifices thus detestable. It was *because they had chosen their own ways*, the ways of their own wicked hearts, and not only their hands did but *their souls delighted in their abominations*. They were vicious and immoral in their conversations, chose the way of sin rather than the way of God's commandments, and took pleasure in that which was provoking to God; this made their sacrifices so offensive to God, ch. i. 11—15. Those that pretend to honour God by a profession of religion, and yet live wicked lives, put an affront upon him, as if he were the patron of sin. And that which was an aggravation of their wickedness was that they persisted in it, notwithstanding the frequent calls given them to repent and reform; they turned a deaf ear to all the warnings of divine justice and all the offers of divine grace: *When I called, none did answer*, as before, ch. lxx. 12. And the same follows here that did there: *They did evil before my eyes*. Being deaf to what he said, they cared not what he saw, but chose that in which they knew he *delighted not*. How could those expect to please him in their devotions who took no care to please him in their conversations, but, on the contrary, designed to provoke him? 3. The doom passed upon them for this. *They chose their own ways*, therefore, says God, I also will choose their delusions. *They have made their choice* (as Mr. Gataker paraphrases it), and now I will make mine; *they have taken what course they pleased with me, and I will take what course I please with them*. I will choose their *illusions, or mockeries* (so some); as they have mocked God and dishonoured him by their wickedness, so God will give them up to their enemies, to be trampled upon and

insulted by them. Or they shall be deceived by those vain confidences with which they have deceived themselves. God will make their sin their punishment; they shall be beaten with their own rod and hurried into ruin by their own delusions. God will *bring their fears upon them*, that is, will bring upon them that which shall be a great terror to them, or that which they themselves have been afraid of and thought to escape by sinful shifts. Unbelieving hearts, and unpurified unpacified consciences, need no more to make them miserable than to have their own fears brought upon them.

5 Hear the word of the LORD, ye that tremble at his word; your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the LORD be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed. 6 A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the LORD that rendereth recompence to his enemies. 7 Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. 8 Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. 9 Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the LORD: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? saith thy God. 10 Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her: 11 That ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. 12 For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. 13 As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem. 14 And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like a herb: and the hand of the LORD shall be known toward his ser-

vants, and his indignation toward his enemies.

The prophet, having denounced God's judgments against a hypocritical nation, that made a jest of God's word and would not answer him when he called to them, here turns his speech to those that trembled at his word, to comfort and encourage them; they shall not be involved in the judgments that are coming upon their unbelieving nation. Ministers must distinguish thus, that, when they speak terror to the wicked, they may not make the hearts of the righteous sad. *Bone Christiane, hoc nihil ad te—Good Christian, this is nothing to thee.* The prophet, having assured those that tremble at God's word of a gracious look from him (v. 2), here brings them a gracious message from him. The word of God has comforts in store for those that by true humiliation for sin are prepared to receive them. There were those (v. 4) who, when God spoke, would not hear; but, if some will not, others will. If the heart tremble at the word, the ear will be open to it. Now what is here said to them?

1. Let them know that God will plead their just but injured cause against their persecutors (v. 5). *Your brethren that hated you said, Let the Lord be glorified. But he shall appear to your joy.* This perhaps might have reference to the case of some of the Jews at their return out of captivity; but nothing like it appears in the history, and therefore it is rather to be referred to the first preachers and professors of the gospel among the Jews, to whose case it is very applicable. Observe, 1. How the faithful servants of God were persecuted: *Their brethren hated them.* The apostles were Jews by birth, and yet even in the cities of the Gentiles the Jews they met with there were their most bitter and implacable enemies and stirred up the Gentiles against them. The spouse complains (Cant. i. 6) that her mother's children were angry with her. Pilate upbraided our Lord Jesus with this, *Thy own nation have delivered thee unto me*, John xviii. 35. Their brethren, who should have loved them and encouraged them for their work's sake hated them, and cast them out of their synagogues, excommunicated them as if they had been the greatest blemishes, when they were really the greatest blessings, of their church and nation. This was a fruit of the old enmity in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman. Those that hated Christ hated his disciples, because they supported his kingdom and interest (John xv. 18), and they cast them out for his name's sake, because they were called by his name, and called upon his name, and laid out themselves to advance his name. Note, It is no new thing for church censures to be misapplied, and for her artillery, which was intended for her defence, to be turned against her best friends, by the treachery of

ier governors. And those that did this said, *Let the Lord be glorified; they pretended conscience and a zeal for the honour of God and the church in it, and did it with all the formalities of devotion.* Our Saviour explains this, and seems to have reference to it, John xvi. 2. *They shall put you out of their synagogues, and whosoever kills you will think that he does God service. In nomine Domini incipit omne malum—In the name of the Lord commences evil of every kind.* Or we may understand it as spoken in defiance of God. "You say God will be glorified in your deliverance; let him be glorified then; let him make speed and hasten his work (ch. v. 19); let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." Some take it to be the language of the profane Jews in captivity, bantering their brethren that hoped for deliverance, and ridiculing the expectations they often comforted themselves with, that God would shortly be glorified in it. They thus did what they could to *shame the counsel of the poor*, Ps. xiv. 6. 2. How they were encouraged under these persecutions: "Let your faith and patience hold out yet a little while; your enemies hate you and oppress you, your brethren hate you and cast you out, but your Father in heaven loves you, and will appear for you when no one else will or dare. His providence shall order things so as shall be for comfort to you; he shall appear for your joy and for the confusion of those that abuse you and trample on you; they shall be ashamed of their enmity to you." This was fulfilled when, upon the signals given of Jerusalem's approaching ruin, the Jews' hearts failed them for fear; but the disciples of Christ, whom they had hated and persecuted, lifted up their heads with joy, knowing that their redemption drew nigh, Luke xxi. 26, 28. Though God seem to hide himself, he will in due time show himself.

II. Let them know that God's appearances for them will be such as will make a great noise in the world (v. 6): There shall be a voice of noise from the city, from the temple. Some make it the joyful and triumphant voice of the church's friends, others the frightful lamenting voice of her enemies, surprised in the city, and fleeing in vain to the temple for shelter. These voices do but echo to the voice of the Lord, who is now rendering a recompence to his enemies; and those that will not hear him speaking this terror shall hear them returning the alarms of it in doleful shrieks. We may well think what a confused noise there was in the city and temple when Jerusalem, after a long siege, was at last taken by the Romans. Some think this prophecy was fulfilled in the prodigies that went before that destruction of Jerusalem, related by Josephus in his History of the Wars of the Jews (lib. 7. cap. 31), that the temple-doors flew open suddenly of their own accord, and the priests heard a noise of motion or shifting in the

most holy place, and presently a voice, saying, *Let us depart hence.* And, some time after, one Jesus Bar-Annas went up and down the city, at the feast of tabernacles, continually crying, *A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the temple, a voice against all this people.*

III. Let them know that God will set up a church for himself in the world, which shall be abundantly replenished in a little time (v. 7): *Before she travailed she brought forth.* This is to be applied in the type to the deliverance of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon, which was brought about very easily and silently, without any pain or struggle, such as was when they were brought out of Egypt; that was done by might and power (Deut. iv. 34), but this by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, Zech. iv. 6. The man-child of the deliverance is rejoiced in, and yet the mother was never in labour for it; *before her pain came she was delivered.* This is altogether surprising, uncommon, and without precedent, unless in the story which the Egyptian midwives told of the Hebrew women (Exod. i. 19), that they were lively and were delivered ere the midwives came in unto them. But shall the earth be made to bring forth her fruits in one day? No, it is the work of some weeks in the spring to renew the face of the earth and cover it with its products. Some read this to the same purport with the next clause, *Shall a land be brought forth in one day, or shall a nation be born at once?* Is it to be imagined that a woman at one birth should bring children sufficient to people a country and that they should in an instant grow up to maturity? No; something like this was done in the creation; but God has since rested from all such works, and leaves second causes to produce their effects gradually. *Nihil facit per saltum—He does nothing abruptly.* Yet, in this case, as soon as Zion travailed she brought forth. Cyrus's proclamation was no sooner issued out than the captives were formed into a body and were ready to make the best of their way to their own land. And the reason is given (v. 9), because it is the Lord's doing; he undertakes it whose work is perfect. If he bring to the birth in preparing his people for deliverance, he will cause to bring forth in the accomplishment of the deliverance. When every thing is ripe and ready for their release, and the number of their months is accomplished, so that the children are brought to the birth, shall not I then give strength to bring forth, but leave mother and babe to perish together in the most miserable case? How will this agree with the divine pity? Shall I begin a work and not go through with it? How will that agree with the divine power and perfection? *Am I he that causes to bring forth* (so the following clause may be read) *and shall I restrain her?* Does God cause mankind, and

all the species of living creatures, to propagate, and replenish the earth, and will he restrain Zion? Will he not make her fruitful in a blessed offspring to replenish the church? Or, *Am I he that begat, and should I restrain from bringing forth?* Did God beget the deliverance in his purpose and promise, and will he not bring it forth in the accomplishment and performance of it? But this was a figure of the setting up of the Christian church in the world, and the replenishing of that family with children which was to be named from Jesus Christ. When the Spirit was poured out, and the gospel went forth from Zion, multitudes were converted in a little time and with little pains compared with the vast product. The apostles, even before they travailed, brought forth, and the children born to Christ were so numerous, and so suddenly and easily produced, that they were rather like the dew from the morning's womb than like the son from the mother's womb, Ps. cx. 3. The success of the gospel was astonishing; that light, like the morning, strangely diffused itself till it took hold even of the ends of the earth. Cities and nations were born at once to Christ. The same day that the Spirit was poured out there were 3000 souls added to the church. And, when this glorious work was once begun, it was carried on wonderfully, beyond what could be imagined, *so mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.* He that brought to the birth in conviction of sin caused to bring forth in a thorough conversion to God.

IV. Let them know that their present sorrows shall shortly be turned into abundant joys, v. 10, 11. Observe, 1. How the church's friends are described; they are such as *love her, and mourn* with her and *for her*. Note, All that love God love Jerusalem; they love the church of God, and lay its interest very near their heart. They admire the beauty of the church, take pleasure in communion with it, and heartily espouse its cause. And those that have a sincere affection for the church have a cordial sympathy with her in all the cares and sorrows of her militant state. They mourn for her; all her grievances are their griefs; if Jerusalem be in distress, their harps are hung on the willow-trees. 2. How they are encouraged: *Rejoice with her, and again and again I say, Rejoice.* This intimates that Jerusalem shall have cause to rejoice; the days of her mourning shall be at an end, and she shall be comforted according to the time that she has been afflicted. It is the will of God that all her friends should join with her in her joys, for they shall share with her in those blessings that will be the matter of her joy. *If we suffer with Christ* and sorrow with his church, *we shall reign with him* and rejoice with her. We are here called, (1.) To bear our part in the church's praises: "Come, rejoice with her, rejoice for joy with her, rejoice greatly,

rejoice and know why you rejoice, rejoice on the days appointed for public thanksgiving. You that mourned for her in her sorrows cannot but from the same principle rejoice with her in her joys." (2.) To take our part in the church's comforts. *We must suck and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations.* The word of God, the covenant of grace (especially the promises of that covenant), the ordinances of God, and all the opportunities of attending on him and conversing with him, are the breasts, which the church calls and counts the *breasts of her consolations*, where her comforts are laid up, and whence by faith and prayer they are drawn. With her therefore we must suck from these breasts, by an application of the promises of God to ourselves and a diligent attendance on his ordinances; and with the consolations which are drawn hence we must be satisfied, and not be dissatisfied though we have ever so little of earthly comforts. It is the glory of the church that she has the Lord for her God, that to her *pertain the adoption and the service of God*; and with the abundance of this glory we must be delighted. We must take more pleasure in our relation to God and communion with him than in all the delights of the sons and daughters of men. Whatever is the glory of the church must be *our glory and joy*, particularly her purity, unity, and increase.

V. Let them know that he who gives them this call to rejoice will give them cause to do so and hearts to do so, v. 12—14.

1. He will give them cause to do so. For, (1.) They shall enjoy a long uninterrupted course of prosperity: *I will extend, or am extending, peace to her* (that is, all good to her) *like a river* that runs in a constant stream, still increasing till it be swallowed up in the ocean. The gospel brings with it, wherever it is received in its power, such peace as this, which shall go on *like a river*, supplying souls with all good and making them fruitful, as a river does the lands it passes through, such a *river of peace* as the springs of the world's comforts cannot send forth and the dams of the world's troubles cannot stop nor drive back nor its sands rack up, such a river of peace as will carry us to the ocean of boundless and endless bliss. (2.) There shall be large and advantageous additions made to them: *The glory of the Gentiles shall come to them like a flowing stream.* Gentile converts shall come pouring into the church, and swell the river of her peace and prosperity; for they shall *bring their glory* with them; their wealth and honour, their power and interest, shall all be devoted to the service of God and employed for the good of the church: "Then shall you suck from the breasts of her consolations. When you see such crowding for a share in those comforts you shall be the more solicitous and the more vigorous to secure your share, not for fear of having the less for others coming in to

partake of Christ" (there is no danger of that; he has enough for all and enough for each), "*but their zeal shall provoke you to a holy jealousy.*" It is well when it does so, Rom. xi. 14; 2 Cor. ix. 2. (3.) God shall be glorified in all, and that ought to be more the matter of our joy than any thing else (v. 14): *The hand of the Lord shall be known towards his servants*, the protecting supporting hand of his almighty power, the supplying enriching hand of his inexhaustible goodness; the benefit which his servants have by both these *shall be known* to his glory as well as theirs. And, to make this the more illustrious, he will at the same time make known *his indignation towards his enemies*. God's mercy and justice shall both be manifested and for ever magnified.

2. God will not only give them cause to rejoice, but will speak comfort to them, will speak it to *their hearts*; and it is he only that can do that, and make it fasten there. See what he will do for the comfort of all the sons of Zion. (1.) Their country shall be their tender nurse: You shall be *carried on her sides*, under her arms, as little children are, and shall be *dandled upon her knees*, as darlings are, especially when they are weary and out of humour, and must be got to sleep. Those that are joined to the church must be treated thus affectionately. The great Shepherd *gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them in his bosom*, and so must the undershepherds, that they may not be discouraged. Proselytes should be favourites. (2.) God will himself be their powerful comforter: *As one whom his mother comforts*, when he is sick or sore, or upon any account in sorrow, *so will I comfort you*; not only with the rational arguments which a prudent father uses, but with the tender affections and compassions of a loving mother, that bemoans her afflicted child when it has fallen and hurt itself, that she may quiet it and make it easy, or endeavours to pacify it after she has chidden it and fallen out with it (Jer. xxxi. 20): *Since I spoke against him, my bowels are troubled for him*; he is a dear son, he is a pleasant child. Thus the mother comforts. Thus *you shall be comforted in Jerusalem*, in the favours bestowed on the church, which you shall partake of, and in the thanksgivings offered by the church, which you shall concur with. (3.) They shall feel the blessed effects of this comfort in their own souls (v. 13): *When you see this*, what a happy state the church is restored to, not only your tongues and your countenances, but *your hearts shall rejoice*. This was fulfilled in the wonderful satisfaction which Christ's disciples had in the success of their ministry. Christ, with an eye to that, tells them (John xvi. 22), *Your heart shall rejoice and your joy no man taketh from you*. Then *your bones*, that were dried and withered (the marrow of them quite exhausted), shall recover a youthful strength

and vigour and *shall flourish like a herb*. Divine comforts reach the inward man; they are narrow and moistening to the bones, Prov. iii. 8. The bones are the strength of the body; those shall be made to flourish with these comforts. *The joy of the Lord will be your strength*, Neh. viii. 10.

15 For, behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. 16 For by fire and by his sword will the LORD plead with all flesh: and the slain of the LORD shall be many. 17 They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the LORD. 18 For I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory. 19 And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal, and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. 20 And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the LORD out of all nations, upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the LORD, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD. 21 And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the LORD. 22 For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. 23 And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD. 24 And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire

be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.

These verses, like the pillar of cloud and fire, have a dark side towards the enemies of God's kingdom and all that are rebels against his crown, and a bright side towards his faithful loyal subjects. Probably they refer to the Jews in captivity in Babylon, of whom some are said to have been sent thither for their hurt, and with them God here threatens to proceed in his controversy; they hated to be reformed, and therefore should be ruined by the calamity (Jer. xxiv. 9); others were sent thither for their good, and they should have the trouble sanctified to them, should in due time get well through it and see many a good day after it. Many of the expressions here used are accommodated to that glorious dispensation; but doubtless the prophecy looks further, to the judgment for which Christ did come once, and will come again, into this world, and to the distinction which his word in both makes *between the precious and the vile*.

I. Christ will appear to the confusion and terror of all those that stand it out against him. Sometimes he will appear in temporal judgments. The Jews that persisted in infidelity were cut off *by fire and by his sword*. The ruin was very extensive; *the Lord then pleaded with all flesh*; and, it being his sword with which they are cut off, they are called *his slain*, sacrificed to his justice, and they *shall be many*. In the great day the wrath of God will be his fire and sword, with which he will cut off and consume all the impenitent; and his word, when it takes hold of sinners' consciences, burns like fire, and is sharper than any two-edged sword. Idolaters will especially be contended with in the day of wrath, v 17. Perhaps some of those who returned out of Babylon retained such instances of idolatry and superstition as are here mentioned, had their *idols in their gardens* (not daring to set them up publicly in the high places) and there *purified themselves* (as the worshippers of the true God used to do) when they went about their idolatrous rites, *one after another*, or, as we read it, *behind one tree in the midst*, behind *Ahad* or *Ehad*, some idol that they worshipped by that name and in honour of which they *ate swine's flesh* (which was expressly forbidden by the law of God), and other *abominations*, as the *mouse*, or some other like animal. But the prophecy may refer to all those judgments which the wrath of God, according to the word of God, will bring upon provoking sinners, that live in contempt of God and are devoted to the world and the flesh: *They shall be consumed together*. From the happiness of heaven we find expressly excluded all idolaters, and *whosoever worketh abomination*, Rev. xxi. 27; xxii. 15. In the day of vengeance secret wickedness will be brought to light and

brought to the account; for (v. 18), *I know their works and their thoughts*. God knows both what men do and from what principle and with what design they do it; and therefore is fit to judge the world, because he can *judge the secrets of men*, Rom. ii. 16.

II. He will appear to the comfort and joy of all that are faithful to him in the setting up of his kingdom in this world, the kingdom of grace, the earnest and first-fruits of the kingdom of glory. The time shall come that he will *gather all nations and tongues to himself*, that they may come and see his glory as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, v. 18. This was fulfilled when all nations were to be discipled and the gift of tongues was bestowed in order thereunto. The church had hitherto been confined to one nation and in one tongue only God was worshipped; but in the days of the Messiah the partition-wall should be taken down, and those that had been strangers to God should be brought acquainted with him and should *see his glory in the gospel*, as the Jews had seen it in the *sanctuary*. As to this, it is here premised,

1. That some of the Jewish nation should, by the grace of God, be distinguished from the rest, and marked for salvation: I will not only set up a *gathering ensign* among them, to which the Gentiles shall seek (as is promised, ch. xi. 12), but there shall be those, among them on whom *I will set a differing sign*; for so the word signifies. Though they are a corrupt degenerate nation, yet God will set apart a remnant of them, that shall be devoted to him and employed for him, and a mark shall be set upon them, with such certainty will God own them, Ezek. ix. 4. *The servants of God shall be sealed in their foreheads*, Rev. vii. 3. The Lord knows those that are his. Christ's sheep are marked.

2. That those who are themselves distinguished thus by the grace of God shall be commissioned to invite others to come and take the benefit of that grace. Those that escape the power of those prejudices by which the generality of that nation is kept in unbelief shall be *sent to the nations* to carry the gospel among them, and preach it to every creature. Note, Those who themselves have escaped the wrath to come should do all they can to snatch others also as brands out of the burning. God chooses to send those on his errands that can deliver their message feelingly and experimentally, and warn people of their danger by sin as those who have themselves narrowly escaped the danger. (1.) They shall be *sent to the nations*, several of which are here named, Tarshish, and Pul, and Lud, &c. It is uncertain, nor are interpreters agreed, what countries are here intended. *Tarshish* signifies in general *the sea*, yet some take it for Tarsus in Cilicia. *Pul* is mentioned sometimes as the name of one of the kings of Assyria; perhaps some part of that country

might likewise bear that name. *Lud* is supposed to be *Lydia*, a warlike nation, famed for archers: the *Lydians* are said to *handle and bend the bow*, Jer. xlv. 9. *Tubal*, some think, is Italy or Spain; and *Javan* most agrees to be Greece, the *Iones*; and the *isles of the Gentiles*, that were peopled by the posterity of Japhet (Gen. x. 5), probably are here meant by the *isles afar off, that have not heard my name, neither have seen my glory*. In *Judah* only was God known, and there only his name was great for many ages. Other countries sat in darkness, heard not the joyful sound, saw not the joyful light. This deplorable state of theirs seems to be spoken of here with compassion; for it is a pity that any of the children of men should be at such a distance from their Maker as not to hear his name and see his glory. In consideration of this, (2.) Those that are sent to the nations shall go upon God's errand, to declare his glory among the *Gentiles*. The Jews that shall be dispersed among the nations shall declare the glory of God's providence concerning their nation all along, by which many shall be invited to join with them, as also by the appearances of God's glory among them in his ordinances. Some out of all languages of the nations shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, entreating him to take notice of them; to admit them into his company, and to stay a little while for them, till they are ready, "for we will go with you, having heard that God is with you," Zech. viii. 23. Thus the glory of God was in part declared among the *Gentiles*; but more clearly and fully by the apostles and early preachers of the gospel, who were sent into all the world, even to the isles afar off, to publish the glorious gospel of the blessed God: They went forth and preached every where, the Lord working with them, Mark xvi. 20.

3. That many converts shall hereby be made, v. 20.

(1.) They shall bring all your brethren (for proselytes ought to be owned and embraced as brethren) for an offering unto the Lord. God's glory shall not be in vain declared to them, but they shall be both invited and directed to join themselves to the Lord. Those that are sent to them shall succeed so well in their negotiation that thereupon there shall be as great flocking to Jerusalem as used to be at the time of a solemn feast, when all the males from all parts of the country were to attend there, and not to appear empty. Observe, [1.] The conveniences that they shall be furnished with for their coming. Some shall come upon horses, because they came from far and the journey was too long to travel on foot, as the Jews usually did to their feasts. Persons of quality shall come in chariots, and the aged, and sickly, and little children, shall be brought in litters or covered wagons, and the young men on mules and swift beasts. This intimates their zeal and for-

wardness to come. They shall spare no trouble nor charge to get to Jerusalem. Those that cannot ride on horseback shall come in litters; and in such haste shall they be, and so impatient of delay, that those that can shall ride upon mules and swift beasts. These expressions are figurative, and these various means of conveyance are heaped up to intimate (says the learned Mr. Gataker) the abundant provision of all those gracious helps requisite for the bringing of God's elect home to Christ. All shall be welcome, and nothing shall be wanting for their assistance and encouragement. [2.] The character under which they shall be brought. They shall come, not as formerly they used to come to Jerusalem, to be offerers, but to be themselves an offering unto the Lord, which must be understood spiritually, of their being presented to God as living sacrifices, Rom. xii. 1. The apostle explains this, and perhaps refers to it, Rom. xv. 16, where he speaks of his ministering the gospel to the *Gentiles*, that the offering up, or sacrificing, of the *Gentiles* might be acceptable. They shall offer themselves, and those who are the instruments of their conversion shall offer them, as the spoils which they have taken for Christ and which are devoted to his service and honour. They shall be brought as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel, with great care that they be holy, purified from sin, and sanctified to God. It is said of the converted *Gentiles* (Acts xv. 9) that their hearts were purified by faith. Whatever was brought to God was brought in a clean vessel, a vessel appropriated to religious uses. God will be served and honoured in the way that he has appointed, in the ordinances of his own institution, which are the proper vehicles for these spiritual offerings. When the soul is offered up to God the body must be a clean vessel for it, possessed in sanctification and honour, and not in the lusts of uncleanness (1 Thess. iv. 4, 5); and converts to Christ are not only purged from an evil conscience, but have their bodies also washed with pure water, Heb. x. 22. Now,

(2.) This may refer, [1.] To the Jews, devout men, and proselytes out of every nation under heaven, that flocked together to Jerusalem, expecting the kingdom of the Messiah to appear, Acts ii. 5, 6, 10. They came from all parts to the holy mountain of Jerusalem, as an offering to the Lord, and there many of them were brought to the faith of Christ by the gift of tongues poured out on the apostles. Methinks there is some correspondence between that history and this prophecy. The eunuch some time after came to worship at Jerusalem in his chariot and took home with him the knowledge of Christ and his holy religion. [2.] To the *Gentiles*, some of all nations, that should be converted to Christ, and so added to his church, which, though a spiritual accession,

is often in prophecy represented by a local motion. The apostle says of all true Christians that they have come to Mount Zion, and the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb. xii. 22), which explains this passage, and shows that the meaning of all this parade is only that they shall be brought into the church by the grace of God, and in the use of the means of that grace, as carefully, safely, and comfortably, as if they were carried in chariots and litters. Thus God shall persuade Japhet and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem, Gen. ix. 27.

4. That a gospel ministry shall be set up in the church, it being thus enlarged by the addition of such a multitude of members to it (v. 21): *I will take of them* (of the proselytes, of the Gentile converts) *for priests and for Levites*, to minister in holy things and to preside in their religious assemblies, which is very necessary for doctrine, worship, and discipline. Hitherto the priests and Levites were all taken from among the Jews and were all of one tribe; but in gospel times God will take of the converted Gentiles to minister to him in holy things, to teach the people, to bless them in the name of the Lord, to be the stewards of the mysteries of God as the priests and Levites were under the law, to be pastors and teachers (or bishops), to give themselves to the word and prayer, and deacons to serve tables, and, as the Levites, to take care of the outward business of the house of God, Phil. i. 1; Acts vi. 2—4. The apostles were all Jews, and so were the seventy disciples; the great apostle of the Gentiles was himself a Hebrew of the Hebrews; but, when churches were planted among the Gentiles, they had ministers settled who were of themselves, elders in every church (Acts xiv. 23, Tit. i. 5), which made the ministry to spread the more easily, and to be the more familiar, and, if not the more venerable, yet the more acceptable; gospel grace, it might be hoped, would cure people of those corruptions which kept a prophet from having honour in his own country. God says, *I will take*, not *all of them*, though they are all in a spiritual sense made to our God kings and priests, but *of them*, some of them. It is God's work originally to choose ministers by qualifying them for and inclining them to the service, as well as to make ministers by giving them their commission. *I will take them*, that is, I will admit them, though Gentiles, and will accept of them and their ministrations. This is a great honour and advantage to the Gentile church, as it was to the Jewish church that God raised up of their sons for prophets and their young men for Nazarites, Amos ii. 11.

5. That the church and ministry, being thus settled, shall continue and be kept up in a succession from one generation to another, v. 22. The change that will be made by the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah is here described to be, (1.) A very great and universal change; it shall be a new

world, the new heavens and the new earth promised before, ch. lxxv. 17. *Old things have passed away, behold all things have become new* (2 Cor. v. 17), the old covenant of peculiarity is set aside, and a new covenant, a covenant of grace, established, Heb. viii. 13. We are now to serve in newness of the spirit, and not in the likeness of the letter, Rom. vii. 6. New commandments are given relating both to heaven and earth, and new promises relating to both, and both together make a New Testament; so that they are new heavens and a new earth that God will create, and these a preparative for the new heavens and new earth designed at the end of time, 2 Pet. iii. 13. (2.) A change of God's own making; he will create the new heavens and the new earth. The change was made by him that had authority to make new ordinances, as well as power to make new worlds. (3.) It will be an abiding lasting change, a change never to be changed, a new world that will be always new, and never wax old, as that does which is ready to vanish away. *It shall remain before me unalterable*; for the gospel dispensation is to continue to the end of time and not to be succeeded by any other. The kingdom of Christ is a kingdom that cannot be moved; the laws and privileges of it are things that cannot be shaken, but shall for ever remain, Heb. xii. 27, 28. It shall therefore remain, because it is before God; it is under his eye, and care, and special protection. (4.) It will be maintained in a seed that shall serve Christ: *Your seed*, and in them *your name, shall remain*—a seed of ministers, a seed of Christians; as one generation of both passes away, another generation shall come; and thus the name of Christ, with that of Christians, shall continue on earth while the earth remains, and his throne as the days of heaven. The gates of hell, though they fight against the church, shall not prevail, nor wear out the saints of the Most High.

6. That the public worship of God in religious assemblies shall be carefully and constantly attended upon by all that are thus brought as an offering to the Lord, v. 23. This is described in expressions suited to the Old-Testament dispensation, to show that though the ceremonial law should be abolished, and the temple service should come to an end, yet God should be still as regularly, constantly, and acceptably worshipped as ever. Heretofore only Jews went up to appear before God, and they were bound to attend only three times a year, and the males only; but now all flesh, Gentiles as well as Jews, women as well as men, shall come and worship before God, in his presence, though not in his temple at Jerusalem, but in religious assemblies dispersed all the world over, which shall be to them as the tabernacle of meeting was to the Jews. God will in them record his name, and, though but two or three come together, he will be among them,

will meet them, and bless them. And they shall have the benefit of these holy convocations frequently, every new moon and every sabbath, not, as formerly, at the three annual feasts only. There is no necessity of one certain place, as the temple was of old. Christ is our temple, in whom by faith all believers meet, and now that the church is so far extended it is impossible that all should meet at one place; but it is fit that there should be a certain time appointed, that the service may be done certainly and frequently, and a token thereby given of the spiritual communion which all Christian assemblies have with each other by faith, hope, and holy love. The *new moons* and the *sabbaths* are mentioned because, under the law, though the yearly feasts were to be celebrated at Jerusalem, yet the new moons and the sabbaths were religiously observed all the country over, in the *schools of the prophets* first and afterwards in the *synagogues* (2 Kings iv. 23, Amos viii. 5, Acts xv. 21), according to the model of which Christian assemblies seem to be formed. Where the Lord's day is weekly sanctified, and the Lord's supper monthly celebrated, and both are duly attended on, there this promise is fulfilled, there the Christian new moons and sabbaths are observed. See, here, (1.) That God is to be worshipped in solemn assemblies, and that it is the duty of all, as they have opportunity, to wait upon God in those assemblies: *All flesh must come*; though flesh, weak, corrupt, and sinful, let them come that the flesh may be mortified. (2.) In worshipping God we present ourselves before him, and are in a special manner in his presence. (3.) For doing this there ought to be stated times, and are so; and we must see that it is our interest as well as our duty constantly and conscientiously to observe these times.

7. That their thankful sense of God's distinguishing favour to them should be very much increased by the consideration of the fearful doom and destruction of those that persist and perish in their infidelity and impiety, *v. 24*. Those that have been worshipping the Lord of hosts, and rejoicing before him in the goodness of his house, shall, in order to affect themselves the more with their own happiness, take a view of the misery of the wicked. Observe, (1.) Who they are whose misery is here described. They are men that have *transgressed against God*, not only broken his laws, but broken covenant with him, and thought themselves able to contend with him. It may be meant

especially of the unbelieving Jews that rejected the gospel of Christ. (2.) What their misery is. It is here represented by the frightful spectacle of a field of battle, covered with the *carcasses* of the slain, that lie rotting above ground, full of *worms* crawling about them and feeding on them; and, if you go to burn them, they are so scattered, and it is such a noisome piece of work to get them together, that it would be endless, and the *fire would never be quenched*; so that they are an *abhorring to all flesh*, nobody cares to come near them. Now this is sometimes accomplished in temporal judgments, and perhaps never nearer the letter than in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation by the Romans, in which destruction it is computed that above two millions, first and last, were cut off by the sword, besides what perished by famine and pestilence. It may refer likewise to the spiritual judgments that came upon the unbelieving Jews, which St. Paul looks upon, and shows us, Rom. xi. 8, &c. They became dead in sins, twice dead. The church of the Jews was a *carcase* of a church; all its members were putrid carcasses; *their worm died not*, their own consciences made them continually uneasy, and the fire of their rage against the gospel was not quenched, which was their punishment as well as their sin; and they became, more than ever any nation under the sun, *an abhorring to all flesh*. But our Saviour applies it to the everlasting misery and torment of impenitent sinners in the future state, where *their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched* (Mark ix. 44); for the soul, whose conscience is its constant tormentor, is immortal, and God, whose wrath is its constant terror, is eternal. (3.) What notice shall be taken of it. Those that worship God shall *go forth and look upon them*, to affect their own hearts with the love of their Redeemer, when they see what misery they are redeemed from. As it will aggravate the miseries of the damned to see others in the kingdom of heaven and *themselves thrust out* (Luke xiii. 28), so it will illustrate the joys and glories of the blessed to see what becomes of those that died in their transgression, and it will elevate their praises to think that they were themselves as brands plucked out of that burning. To the honour of that free grace which thus distinguished them let the redeemed of the Lord with all humility, and not without a holy trembling, sing their triumphant songs.

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